Threads of the Indus: the subtle forms of power in craft development in Sindh, Pakistan

Seher T Mirza
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The Royal College of Art

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Author's declaration

1. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification.

2. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

Seher T Mirza

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Abstract

This research asks whether textile practice may offer empowerment strategies for critically reflective spaces, that allow for social transformation, in the context of traditional textile communities of women in rural Sindh, Pakistan where development opportunities are limited. It uses the reflective practice of its researcher, an urban designer/maker and Pakistani woman, to explore established power relations, as well as search for new dialogues that build meaningful relationships for creating new forms of power in interrelated social, development and design contexts.

This is a practice based PhD that approaches the research context with a phenomenological epistemological mindset informing my overall thinking. I use action research for investigating the relations and links to design through agencies, NGOs and government bodies. In my research with traditional makers I use participatory design research for collaborative exploration of new creative expressions with a central focus on improving power relations for the women I worked with. I reflect on my own practices in relation to creative outputs throughout the duration of the research as the central focus of my development as a design researcher.

This research study makes an original contribution by developing a combined methodology, through 'Power Signifiers', for a critically reflective approach for social and design practice building on the social sciences discourse of power analysis and power relations frameworks through forms of non-obvious power in developing contexts. It makes an original contribution to the field through the use of the 'textile' as a flexible space, both as language and a surface for stimulating dialogue and exchange that could generate new meaning and relationships of power.

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List of Abbreviations

AKRSP_____ Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
CEO_____ Chief Executive Officer
DFID_____Department For International Development
EDU_____ Enterprise Development Unit
EFU_____Enterprise Facilitation Unit
KADO_____Karakoram Area Development Organisation
NGO_____ Non Governmental Organisation
RSPN_____ Rural Support Programmes Network
SRSO_____ Sindh Rural Support Organisation
TRDP_____Thardeep Rural Development Programme
UN _____ United Nations

Preface

My research focuses on village-based traditional craftswomen with a rich heritage of textile making in Sindh, Pakistan.[1] Here, I first started to note the relationships of power in the local context were particularly complex while working on a women's empowerment project in 2007 for a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) with multiple artisanal communities in the development sector in two of the country's four provinces (KhyberPakhtunkhwa and Sindh).[2] The aim of this NGO project was described as 'socio-economic empowerment' for women artisans to earn an income through traditional textile crafts to 'uplift their social status', as income earners they would have more decision-making in the household and community, thus more power. I started as a design intern running workshops with artisans – my role was to interpret design briefs and monitor products for UK based designers through to completion. In my next role as the project manager I visited craft projects and liaised with local and foreign consultants, government officials, senior managers, donor agency staff, field staff, designers and artisans and their local communities. I noted an apparent paradox where the craft development worker, who meant to facilitate empowerment directly and/or indirectly by affecting change through trade, was instead creating a different dominant power relation through ensuring factory-style uniformity of commodity in handmade objects. This often resulted from the large number of communities and community members that projects 'have' to work with simultaneously to ensure that management/donor agency targets are met. These frameworks can be limiting as they do not acknowledge the context of each community individually but apply a universal method to all communities in a somewhat impersonal approach.

As a contemporary trained designer who values and finds joy in the activity of making I questioned whether there were alternative approaches in the role of the designer collaborating with artisan communities that was not limited to traditional market mechanism but activated a new set of questions, reflection and meaning that may lead to a different sense of empowerment for all involved. This drove me to investigate interdisciplinary methods that bridge the field of design, of material culture, of development and of positive social change that transforms the way people learn, think and behave through their own life experiences and evolving processes. Qualities of empowerment and social change are examined and defined in a context of human development and well-being towards a more self-sustaining way of change for craft communities, rather than focusing on development economics. The outer rings of power relations or the broader socio-political context take longer to change, as they are part of larger more complex systems. This research focuses on the inner rings of power relations, in the one-to-one direct relationships especially of facilitators, taking into consideration the broader contexts of power that affect craft communities in its combined methodology of 'Power Signifiers'.

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[1] The region of Sindh was annexed to the Bombay Presidency under British Rule but in 1937 it was made a separate province in British India. This province acceded in its entirety to Pakistan. Although there is a Sindhi diaspora in India and internationally, historic and present reference to Sindh has always been to the present region as there were no changes to its borders. This region shares some textile similarities with Rajasthan and Gujarat, particularly Kutch, in India but is different to provinces like Punjab that were split into two.

[2] A joint women's empowerment project by Enterprise Facilitation Unit, Rural Support Programmes Network, Pakistan and the Gender section at the Commonwealth Secretariat, UK

Figure 1
Chronology of relationship with communities and actors in Upper Sindh

2007	Met **AGJ** Women.
	Design intern for women's empowerment joint project by Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN), Pakistan and the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec), UK.
	Workshops held at regional NGO, Sindh Rural Support Organisation's (SRSO) human resource development centre.
	First ever craft development project for AGJ village. At the start, the male project manager could not 'enter' the village, while a male AGJ member followed the women's transport van to the SRSO human resource centre.
2008	Assumed **Project manager** role RSPN/ComSec project.
	First project phase culminated in an exhibition in London after which I decided to pursue this research.
	Project ended abruptly due to international financial downturn, funds cut at the ComSec.
	Participating communities whose expectations had been raised as to what they might achieve as part of this project were left disappointed.
2009	Third phase of my relationship with the AGJ women.
	Laid out my **research project** with support from SRSO.
	Based on initial discussion with AGJ women, mutual goals set out.
	Parallel enterprise *S jo* set up as platform committing to sell the work and generate steady income for artisans investing their time and effort with project.
	Mutual agreement with AGJ: I would not develop similar products with other communities, and the women would not develop similar products with other designers or NGOs.
2010 – 2011	Started working with other rural craft communities in the region for varying lengths of time with the potential of developing and selling skill-specific products realised in workshops, while others were trainings and workshops given on behalf of SRSO as part of our arrangement. In total I was introduced to 7 communities by SRSO.
	Met **NKS**, a women's group specialising in interlacing stitch or *Hormuch* needlework. I provided materials and payments.
	Met **AMB**, a mixed gender group, mainly male weavers, specialising in *Khes*. I provided materials and payments.
	Met **YIP**, a women's group specialising in hand crochet. I provided materials and payments.
	This exposed issues facing craft communities in upper Sindh whereas my previous work with RSPN provided insight into issues effecting craft communities as a whole in Pakistan.
	Started selling and testing products made by the AGJ women at London markets and fairs, including suitable products made by the three communities mentioned above. Products were aimed at mid to high-end retail for the international market.
2012	In addition to work the AGJ women were already selling to local NGOs (different to S jo products), they started working with a local designer, N.
	While our joint practice created new outcomes as well as confidence to undertake design briefs in the women, it also brought the complication of others wanting to replicate the outcomes. Although creating access to more work, N using the design ideas the women and I were making, without acknowledgement caused a disruption to our commercial agreement.
	Some SRSO staff collected and held onto and/or sold products YIP women made for S jo with materials I provided, after a series of S jo product and design development workshops.
2013	SRSO support ended with the arrival of new senior management.
	The AGJ women reported they were 'asked' to produce similar products for SRSO at prices they considered too low. I stood by them in not making the products. The comparison the AGJ women used was most likely prices for their work/time paid by RSPN earlier and S jo. When the women refused to make these products, several threats were made, including cutting off all SRSO support, even that extended to the AGJ men and hindering my field visits. Eventually the women made the products. I lodged a complaint to collective higher management.
	While inquiries were made at SRSO they resulted in the conclusion that the AGJ women made the products 'of their free will' with 'no coercion'. Interaction with YIP community also ended. They did not respond to phone calls or return products I had provided materials for.
2014	Direct **self-funded association** as **individual** with AGJ community as well as NKS and AMB.
	Previously flying into Sukkur the nearest city, now journey by road from Karachi to Sukkur (7-8 hrs).
	Research field-work unaffected, new association formed with the AGJ community unhampered by mediatory relationship with local organisations.
	Social interaction and (urban privileged) perception of travel of educated urban Pakistanis, especially young women with no family associations in remote villages is rare.

Introduction

Questions about the nature of empowerment in typical craft development encounters in rural Pakistan between outsiders and traditional artisans, particularly craftswomen, were the starting point of my research. The Sindh province has an especially acute complexity of power historically (Figure 2); it has a thriving feudal system with defined social structures and widespread socio-educational issues. Outsiders consist of development and government organisation staff as well as designers and research practitioners who are intervening facilitators of development and/or income and/or heritage through the premise of craft. Some facilitators are also a part of the local social structure. Not only are rural communities geographically remote in a majority of cases, artisanal communities and women in particular are at the bottom of this culturally ingrained hierarchy and lack autonomy. This may lead to artisanal communities being socially marginalised, subjugated and/or disenfranchised. On the other hand, Sindh also has a rich history of material culture, in particular hand embroidery and stitch-craft, which is largely the domain of women. The research question at the heart of this research is:

In what ways can textile practice offer empowerment strategies for critically reflective spaces (that allow for transformation)?

To address the central question, I wanted to explore the forms of communication, 'belonging' and 'privilege' found in craft praxis that are accessible to traditional craftswomen who are experts in their skill. The sub-question relating to methodology is:

- **Whether new meaning can be generated in traditional craft practices through emotional and interpersonal connections created as a result of the subjective encounter of shared textile practice between the women artisans and a contemporary female research practitioner?**

This refers to encounters with the self, with the other and between each one's respective crafts of weave and stitch that might challenge each one's preconceptions and build new cultural and social connections. Further research sub-questions are:

- **In what ways is power relevant in this context of rural artisanal community practice?**

- **What kind of dialogues can designers trigger to open up new conversations for expression and development that facilitates empowerment processes in this context?**

- **What impact can conceptual and contemporary forms of creative practice have on traditional makers' agency in relation to questioning, exhibiting and articulating their power or lack thereof?**

Figure 2 Map of Sindh Districts

The regional legacy of craft

Each region in Pakistan has its own set of indigenous skills defining its regional identity (Askari and Crill 1997). Sindh has a particularly significant history of material culture as testified by crafted objects such as the Priest King statue found in Mohenjo-daro in upper Sindh, one of the ancient hubs of the Indus Valley Civilization (3000 – 5000 BC). Impressions of woven cloth were found around earthenware pots believed to be cotton

because of large finds of cotton seed alongside and the shawl worn by the Priest King in the terracotta statue is depicted with a distinct pattern that could be printed, woven or embroidered (Askari and Crill 1997; Edwards 2011). Needles were also found, although there is no evidence to suggest they were used for embroidery – there are suggestions they were used for stitching garments – we know that ancient Indus dwellers liked to decorate objects and to wear ornaments. These artefacts reveal how longstanding some of the Indus craft traditions are (MacGregor 2010; Kenoyer 1998). MacGregor highlights the significance of the Indus Valley and its cultures by naming the Indus seal as one of the most significant objects in the British Museum's collections (*A history of the world in 100 objects,* 2010).

The context of the women artisans

This research concentrates on rural craft communities of women who have a rich history of textiles, who have traditionally practiced their craft at home for themselves and others, and currently as home-based producers who might produce in or for local 'craft centres' run by NGOs and local philanthropists. This research centres on one group of such women in upper Sindh who define themselves as (of) Sindhi ethnicity and language although some speak the national language Urdu. For the purpose of this research I shall refer to the women's village in Khairpur, Sindh and their community as AGJ. The terms 'artisans', 'rural makers', and 'women' are used for my collaborators in the study due to their remote location and the indigenous nature of their craft, which is passed down from generation to generation among women. This primary research group consists of about 45 women practising an array of textile-crafts:[3] mainly expert needlework, but also applique, binding, patchwork, hand stitch and some hand crochet. I have used the terms 'needlework', 'embroidery' but also 'stitch-craft' and 'stitch' to encompass the richness and breadth of textile techniques used, in reference to the AGJ women's textile craft.[4]

Traditionally AGJ women have led isolated lives. While the city of Sukkur is accessible to them by local mini-bus, rickshaw, donkey cart or motorcycle owned by male members of the community taking up to 45 minutes one way, this means either paying the local fare

[3] This diversity in textile making is not uncommon among other women's groups in Sindh, and reflects the province's rich traditions.

[4] Askari and Crill (1997) note it as 'folk embroidery', Frater as 'folk art' (1995), while Gillow (2010) describes this as 'domestic embroidery' and, in the craft development field and in local markets where craftwork is derived for commercial purposes it is often referred to as 'handicraft'. Elsewhere in contemporary terminology not specific to Pakistani textiles, Hemmings (2015) uses the term 'embroidery' for Kashmiri artisanal embroidery and technically specific terms such as 'chain-stitch', while Millar (2018) uses 'traditional [textile] practice' for textiles emerging from strong or reflecting particular cultures.

or asking a male member to accompany them. Women have been unable to access the necessities like local hospitals and the amenities of (shopping or selling at) markets that close proximity to a city provides, as they were dependent on their men to grant permission and to accompany them even in an emergency (see Appendix 1 for fuller description). Conventionally researchers, facilitators and/or designers have two channels of primary 'access' to rural craft communities, either through landlords of the area (where embedded socio-political structures might oblige artisans to comply) or through a local NGO network, approaching artisans directly is nearly impossible.[5] I chose to work with an NGO initially due to my previous project link and then directly with the women as the NGO association ended in 2013.

This text provides a critical context to accompany the artefacts and documents – the outcome of a seven-year research study and project.[6] I undertook 13 field visits during this time, each consisting of between a week and ten days. I regularly called the women over the phone while in the UK and from 2014 onwards we use Whatsapp to communicate as well, as 3 or 4 younger women now own smart phones. For a short period, while the computer and Internet were up and running at an artisan's house, we also communicated through Skype.

Challenges for 'empowerment' in this context

There are layers to consider when talking of empowerment in the context of the main research question: specifically the types of oppression the women are faced with in their social lives and how 'empowerment' is viewed and carried out in craft development projects by NGOS and researchers. Collin's (2004:109) description of the 'interlocking nature of oppression' highlights the interdependent nature of power and empowerment through its experience, she calls for investigating 'what the links are among these systems'.

In Pakistan empowerment in craft development projects is most often labelled as socio-economic. This type of empowerment is applied primarily on the basis of monetary benefit and economic uplift, in turn giving higher social status such as in the RSPN project which I was directly involved in and others (UNESCAP 2000; see also Appendix 2 and 4). The RSPN project's objectives for socio-economic empowerment, the focus on

[5] This is due to a lack of infrastructure and the remoteness of villages. There is no visible signposting meaning local knowledge of whereabouts is essential

[6] Field work conducted between December 2009 to January 2016 while visits for ongoing project work continue

generating income yet lack of attention to the nature of collaboration in craft (Rhodes 2014), by being 'given' design briefs, inevitably and inadvertently placed the women at the bottom of the power chain (illustrated in Figure 3) similar to the subjugation the women routinely experience in other spheres of their daily lives. These design briefs, some of which were far removed from the women's traditional making, asserted a top-down flow of knowledge, decisions and unwittingly privilege. This is because two-way communication remained mainly between the top levels.

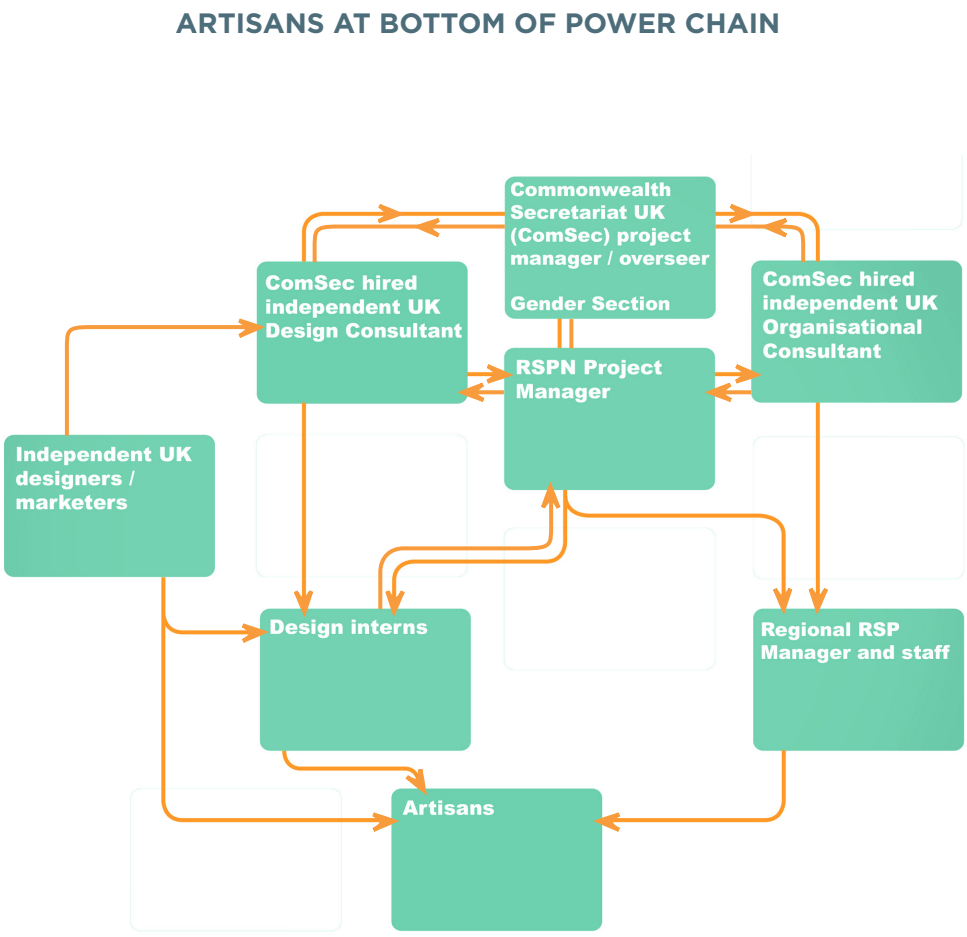

Figure 3 RSPN project Management, training and workshop relation and structure diagram

Regionally in South Asia, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in Gujarat, India and The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh provide successful examples of economic development in the region. SEWA (2016) uses a self-employed women's co-operative model that represents a variety of trades through a registered trade union, it works to

collective organisation principles. Grameen bank (2016) uses a micro-credit model and lends primarily to women with conditions such as enrolling girl children in school. These models have been replicated in Pakistan, the former in SABAH Pakistan (Homeworkers association) and the latter within social mobilisation NGOs for example.[7] Other models or methods in neighbouring India focus on aims such as preserving cultural heritage and enabling rural artisans through income generation. Dastkari Haat provides exhibition spaces for Indian and Asian artisans and the NGO Dastkar conducts training, Gramshree (2018) provides an online marketplace model where artisans can sell their products directly to global customers, Shrujan (2017; 2017b) in Kutch, provides a preservation of craft heritage through enterprise model where craft is used as the means for income generation, all these models anticipate sustaining cultural traditions of making through trade whereas Somaiya Kala Vidhalaya (2017) gives individual artisans the tools for market access and enterprise through an educational approach. The ultimate goal and success of these projects is still based on income and business. The latter two examples are discussed in Chapter 1 alongside others to discuss their power narratives because their aims and motivations are not exclusive to income generation.

The case for economic empowerment through craft has already been researched extensively and successfully within differing perspectives including Raina (2009) in relation to new roles in post-conflict situations and Scott (2012) to new markets. However I explore other contextually relevant aspects of empowerment for traditional makers that are especially attuned to tacit and implicit senses for whom craft is inextricably linked to identity and culture, and thus their everyday lives. This research is creative practice led, questions of power and empowerment are examined through this lens. It places practice and the dialogues between women textile makers in two different contexts at the centre of its inquiry, necessarily gender is an important part of the social equation especially in relation to power. However this is taken in a distinctly different manner, note to a more sociological, feminist and cultural anthropology approach even though these contribute to the context of this research.

Proponents of economic methods suggest that if a woman in a traditional family structure earns an income for her family, she will have more say in how it is used either for her children's benefit or as she deems necessary. They also perceive that the personal and social development of women will emerge as a result of economic contribution. I

[7] Sindh Rural Support Organisation is an example of a social mobilisation NGO where they use the micro-credit model for small loans to both farmers and crafts producers.

argue that, while a woman in an urban environment or different context may change her social status as a result of becoming an economic contributor to the household and in the community, it is not necessarily the case in a rural, marginalised and patriarchal environment (see Agha and Syed et al 2018).[8] In Sindh province women often work all day in the fields, just to have their husbands / fathers / brothers waiting at the end of day to collect their wages directly from the employer. In other villages, women work and help in harvesting or cultivating crop, yet receive no recompense. In the Tharparkar region of Sindh, women work in bonded-labour-type of indebted craft repayments (Khangarani, in conversation 2008). As explained above, in AGJ village, the women were not allowed to travel unaccompanied even to a doctor in the case of an emergency until they had changed their own perception and were confident about being able to do so, in neighbouring villages this remains unchanged despite women earning an income. Similarly, the AGJ women (and men) recognise their right to choose a marriage partner and hope for it to happen yet for this change to occur it will require a few generations of transformation in traditional thinking and behaviours. I am not refuting income generation is a necessary stage towards empowerment in environments charged by patriarchy, but that more is required to build change where socio-political situations and thus mindsets transform to overcome this context where craft, despite its social underpinning, is relegated in favour of income. The human development approach advocates that social and economic aspects are dealt with simultaneously noting that, 'social problems cannot be left aside until economic development has taken place' (UNDP 1998:19). Similarly, development economist Sen[9] (1999:113) suggests that employment without choice and the nature of work can itself be a 'major deprivation' rather than a freedom where archaic power structures linger, explaining that the free market dynamic is only liberating where other basic freedoms and business ethics are in place first. In a 2015 video discussing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Sen highlights the importance of the qualitative rather than the quantitative when trying to achieve development stating, 'the goal is language not just numbers' and that 'the practice of democracy, human security and human rights' remain extremely important despite 'that they may not be as easy to measure'.

Pakistan's human development and well-being challenges range from widespread institutional corruption to prevailing social hierarchies that form distinct established

[8] See Agha & Syed et al. 2018 for conditioned patriarchy in Sindh in domestic roles and paid work, and Syed & Tabassum et al. 2015 for general patriarchy trends in Pakistan.

[9] Development and welfare economist

power relationships and social inequity (Rahman 2012; Weiss and Khattak 2013). In particular, large landholding systems (mainly in rural areas) intertwined with political strongholds maintain a power pyramid to this day (Naqvi 2013; Rahman 2012). Geographical distances and societal isolation limits outside interaction of non-privileged rural communities with others in Pakistan exacerbating the situation. The idea of 'others' and 'outsiders' described here is as the 'dominant' (Bourdieu 1986; Foucault 1994; Gramsci 1971; Labaree 2002) – in perceived social class, geography, cultures, knowledge and thus power – in relation to remote artisans. Conventional education is defined as the main instrument for societies to transform socially through learning (Friere 1973; Mezirow 2000). The process of self-reflection and critical thought that results from education gives us 'power' to change our society and ourselves. However, in the socio-political climate in Pakistan, those in power historically have done little to enable this change (Lall 2011; Rahman 2012). The assertion of and the phenomenological conditioning of power also plays an adverse role where it may delay the development of these communities because there are hardly any spaces of mutual interaction and collaboration with outsiders that contribute to learning about the 'self' and 'other', and evolving through the critical assessment of relationships or as Fine (1994) puts it 'working the hyphen'. This negatively impacts marginalised communities' own belief in and consciousness of their own abilities to create change (Bandura 1995; Chambers 1983).

Method

The inert and overt forms of power that form layers made phenomenology an essential guiding factor for this study or as van Manen (2007:12) notes phenomenology is 'reflecting on experience' that is 'free from theoretical, prejudicial, and suppositional intoxications'. This study did not use phenomenology as a research method such as that noted by Holstein and Gubrium (1994) in qualitative research, instead it uses philosophical phenomenology as a rationale that allowed for three-dimensional thinking to develop the methodology for this research context. This study uses the philosophy of phenomenology as epistemology in being able to define the invisible threads of embodied perception and 'lived experience' (Merleau-Ponty 1945) that link us together: a matrix of communication and connections that are embedded in and feed our past, current and future actions.

This allowed me to use a layered approach – not singularly applying participatory design, action research or phenomenological epistemology – in how these three systems layer

up and create the space for the 'dialogue' between power and craft practice. This builds on Pettit's ideas of 'embodied practices for transforming power' (2020:76). This practice-led research uses phenomenological thinking as a rationale that sets up the platform where one can 'speak' with the women on the surface of the fabric and in our joint experiences of making. This form of knowledge is embodied through our series of exchanges or experiences in making, whereas tacit knowledge is what the women innately know and not necessarily realise or are able to articulate.

I identified the main spaces of this research based on a phenomenological epistemology. Then, how each of the complicated and interrelated challenges of power in the socio-cultural and gender context might be understood. I looked at existing power related discourse and frameworks within the complicit disciplines of sociology, gender and cultural anthropology. Appropriate methods were used to undertake the breadth of research required to access the multiple layers within the study.

Theory

In regard to the questions of empowerment in craft development projects and layers of power none are more central to practice related research than power relations in the context of a privileged designer/facilitator and socially marginalised rural women artisans. Starting from a philosophical standpoint Foucault (1994) suggests power can be controlled and asserted through knowledge in how it is disseminated and historically established. In other words the 'history of truth' might be dependent on the relationships that established it. He proposes multiple truths emerge from multiple experiences because the 'relationship in which the subject is' is 'modified by that experience'. While Dowding disagrees with Foucault on how 'domination' occurs, he notes the interdependency of structures and individuals in wielding power in 'social power' and 'outcome power' (2019; 2006; 1995). The importance of power relations has been argued: in social change theory by Freire (1970; 1973; 1974) in particular the student-teacher relationship for social transformation; in community psychology linking empowerment to agency (Bandura 1995; Maton 2008; Zimmerman 2000); in development studies based on social constructs in the forms of power (Chambers 1983; Gaventa 2006; Miller and VeneKlasen 2006; Pettit 2012); by feminists on gender-based knowledge creation such as the 'outsider within' and in standpoint theory (Collins 2004; Fonow and Cook 1991; Harding 2004; Lather 1991; Reinharz 1992); similarly in the insider/outsider debate (Headland, Pike and Harris 1990; Kanhua 2000); in theory on dominant society and culture such as 'the forms of capital' by Bourdieu (1986), 'cultural

hegemony' by Gramsci (1971), in 'orientalism' by Said (2003) and in mobilising agency against colonial oppression in the Indian subcontinent by Iqbal (1935). Each of these sets of ideas, that theorise different structures as to why powerlessness exists or the systems that lead to diminished power and therefore agency, are applicable to this context of women artisans in Sindh in their practices and interactions with others.

Research approach

Based on the above in this research power relates to the perceptions, actions and interactions between people that form our practices. Using the fundament of Foucault (1994) creating change requires multiple and different experiences. To develop my methodology of searching for empowerment in this research's craft making context, I searched for ideas in design that focused on collective and participatory approaches that may overlap with the extensive power relations' discourse. Design discourse has much less to offer in terms of addressing power relations in a rural craft context that does not relate to craft for financial gain. However, the concepts of participatory design, user-led design and co-creation are methods that consider the role of the designer not as an expert but as an equal partner (Bjogvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren 2012; Ramaswamy 2011; Sanders and Stappers 2008). These methods, nevertheless, do not investigate power relations in sufficient depth nor create spaces of 'empowerment' especially in the context of contemporary designer and rural artisans where power is skewed in more ways than one, such as in the case of Sindh. In the co-creative craft context Rhodes (2014; 2016) notes a positive nature of interaction between designers and artisans in a one-to-one approach in her research study in South Africa by providing a 'co-creative prompt' to enable the collaborating artisan to 'reply' in their own way by producing another object in their respective craft. She encourages a more equitable relationship dynamic that involves engagement between the researcher and participants and not using artisan production as a mere means of marketing. I would like to build on Rhodes's focus of the co-creation of craft objects related to the crafted result, by including the phenomenological dialogue that occurs alongside the craft activity that has a bearing on the experience of making – both historical and future experiences of making for the collaborators. Building on Akama and Prendiville (2013) and Mazzarella's (2018) discussion in service design for the role of the designer in 'crafting meaningful social innovation' methods in the textile artisan community context, the need to adopt collaborative and phenomenological approaches that 'are deeply rooted in the locale' is emphasised. This means that the role of the designer needed is not just utilitarian, providing a means to an end (in beautifully designed products to sell), but one that is

conceptual, that uses the innate and phenomenological aspects of making as a method in itself to understand making communities better and/or for communities to have spaces for critical reflection.

Foth and Axup (2006) discuss a combined approach in participatory design (PD) and action research (AR) that is applicable in this context. PD aims towards 'understanding communication and interaction needs to help form requirements and iterative design prototypes' while AR ensures 'any potential shifts in communication habits, interaction patterns and power relationships associated with the rollout and uptake of new design solutions is adequately captured by further critical reflection, evaluation and informed action' (Foth and Axup 2006:96). This methodology was useful in trying to address some of the more complex sub-questions that relate to both social considerations and what Sanders and Stappers (2008) define as the 'fuzzy front end' that informs design research by determining 'what is to be designed and sometimes what should not be designed and manufactured' followed by the usual design process of concepts, prototypes and so on. For instance, AGJ artisans of all ages strongly suggested the significance of their craft as their *Pehchaan* (material and cultural identity) (see Appendix 3, AGJ conversation 2009) yet young women did not readily engage with its practice; the women make *Gajj* (traditional embroidered tunic) to sell[10] but did not want to sell their own Gajj when asked by customers at a fair; the women want to earn an income but did not desire to give up their identity in craft practice. The AGJ women (in conversation 2009) described their craft (work) as giving them two forms of identity: an established identity that refers to identity in their material culture, as in their traditional clothing and an emerging identity subtly referred to was of craft the women employ for purposes other than their clothes that bears their mark of making, representing them as the maker.[11] This research navigated through the choices I understood the women would like to make if they had the opportunity or 'space'. I addressed this idea through exploring an evolving identity of the traditional craft of which younger women felt an active part and had a renewed sense of connection with their craft. A wide vocabulary of craft relevant to the material culture of the community was built during this research. It did not take away from the indigenous craft practices (such as stitches or patterns) or claim these new crafted objects were 'better' but rather it showed, through the participatory practice with the

[10] Through SRSO and through S jo.

[11] See Chapter 1 for artisan expressing her desire to do 'their work' for designers. This may have also come about due to the craft work where each piece was marked with the name of the maker.

researcher, that another way of engaging with their craft was available to the women to partake in if they so chose.

Research definitions and working concepts

There are some main working concepts in this research such as 'agency', 'power', 'empowerment', 'phenomenological', 'articulation', 'dialogue', 'critical reflection' and 'creative practice' the use of which is defined below and discussed in greater detail in the chapters. As a first step I unraveled the ideas of agency and empowerment, questioning whether these were western or alien concepts being levied on rural communities by myself as an urban western-educated Pakistani. As an outsider I was no doubt intervening but wanted this to be as self-reflective and considered a process as was possible in this situation as it had an emancipatory agenda (Fine 1994; Lather 1991).

One of the foremost ideas I drew on that relate to empowerment, critical reflection and agency for transformation is the concept of 'Khudi' by philosopher and poet Mohammed Iqbal (1935) a twentieth century thinker and reformer from the Indian sub-continent, a mainstay of the freedom struggle against British colonial oppression. Iqbal in *Bal-e-jibril* (1935) famously wrote about 'Khudi' which can best be translated as awakening the 'sense of self' through autonomy, consciousness and awareness or critically questioning oneself for collective liberation in the verses:

Khudi ko kar buland itna ke har taqdeer se pehle
Khuda Bande se khud pooche, bata teri raza kya hai

The verses above were widely circulated in British colonial times through pamphlets and have been immortalised in popular local songs to this day. This verse means, 'raise [or empower] the sense of self to such heights that God himself asks you what is your will before [writing] every destiny'. This, to me, defines **agency** and **empowerment**, not in the sense of agency being 'obtained' from others or empowerment that is 'provided' by others, but creating awareness by searching for one's agency and power within the self through a **critically reflective** process that is personal to each one.

Similar to the above, the idea of rote-learning mirrors the dominant and subordinate power relation in its mechanical aspect of 'obeying or repeating without questioning' rather than interactive critical inquiry and re-inquiry which leads to liberation (Freire 1970; 1973). A similar relationship can exist in rural craft development and enterprise,

between a facilitator and craft communities. The facilitator can be a development worker, a designer and/or an entrepreneur. In some cases the entrepreneur may be local such as a middleman or an artisan-designer. This is not to suggest that the learning of craft can be done without memorising some aspects but rather that once techniques are learnt, the interaction with one's craft as maker can evolve to allow for different dialogues and reflexivity between the maker and the practice.

Berg (2015) notes the textile trade has been at the centre of power narratives between the west and South Asia since the seventeenth century. The quintessential textile that deals with power is Mahatma Gandhi's 'Khadi' – the metaphor for unity, empowerment and freedom from colonial suppression in the 'Swadeshi Movement' (Bean 1989; Gonsalves 2012). In this project I want to take the role of cloth further and push its agency as a form of dialogue about power and the subjective power of **agency** in our making. Our textiles are not simply embellished or woven cloth, they are project specific signifiers of power of our own agency as contextually different women makers.

Power is multifaceted. In development projects power is often described as shifting the locus of control of resources and decision-making in the household and community to stakeholders. In development studies Kabeer (1999) describes power as having control over life choices without the constrain of circumstances, while Pettit (2012) notes 'informal' and 'formal' forms of power in how it is internalised due to social norms and conditioning, whereas Miller and Veneklasen (2006) note negative power as 'power over' (others) while positive power as 'power to' (act), 'power with' (collective action and agency) and 'power within' (refers to confidence, dignity, self-esteem). While Chambers (1983) notes knowledge as a negative and positive form of power. Guerrero et al. (2014) concur power as resource based, in available choices, in prerogative but also suggest power is perceived based on communication and relationships, enabling or disabling agency. French and Raven (1959) note power as relational to perception. In social and political theory, Foucault (1994) notes power as a form of domination, Bourdieu (1984; 1986) describes a kind of power in social and cultural distinctions and classifications whereas Iqbal provides a critical self-awareness or potential within the self as a definition of power as mobilising agency. Meanwhile, feminist Lather (1991:57) argues for 'a mutual negotiation of meaning and power' through reciprocity, implying give and take, alluding to relationships. Similar to Foucault, Lather attributes power to being shaped by language and knowledge.

Power in this research is based on these contexts, and the negative and positive power within making that is considered **subtle**. Miller and Veneklasen's (2006) definitions can be used to define power in this research with the AGJ women:
Power over – outsiders in design contexts controlling decision-making
Power with – mutual learning with facilitators and relationship development
Power within – self-belief about abilities to reflect critically and create transformation
Power to – create change by transforming perceptions of self, realising one's choices and acting on them
These forms of power in being able to retain one's identity, of being able to express oneself, of positive reciprocal experiences with outsiders enabling new meaning, of being free in how to interact with and use one's craft, to enable a critical self-reflective dialogue with oneself and one's community, can lead to transforming circumstances and acting on the choices one recognises after becoming aware of them.

Undeniably, income is important for a better quality of life yet focusing on income as the sole arbitrator towards empowerment of less privileged others without the opportunity of autonomy, transformation and a range of options in a mutually reflective space, propagates the idea of 'giving' or 'providing' empowerment which ironically contributes to a cycle of oppression by privileged outsiders.

In this research study I have used **phenomenological** as a way to describe something that can be read by more than participatory observation – that which is embodied. 'No force is as powerful in shaping identity as the feedback we get and the self-image we form from observing ourselves behave and interact' (Guerrero et al. 2014:154). This refers to all the senses being employed in understanding information alongside participation by the researcher, it also includes reflection on perceptions, lived experience, not just of the research participants, but also the researcher and how they may or may not impact the other and influence the making. This continuous dialogue is reflected in my use of the phenomenological.

Creative practice research is defined in this study as research that relies on the use of creativity through practical solutions enabling ways of thinking and facilitating craft praxis.

The definition of **articulation** and **dialogues** in this research relates to two things: one is power and the other is the local culture of language and communication. Historical

power and class structures afford no spaces to communities at the lower end of local hierarchies to voice their opinions much less of autonomy (Rahman 2012). For women the exception may be the 'domestic' space where they express and share their concerns with other women. Fonow and Cook (1991:11) encourage the study of the 'mundane features of everyday life' in their feminist epistemology. The local culture of communication may be considered subtle – visual, tacit, implicit and metaphoric – therefore, the articulation I searched for was a phenomenology in a form of dialogue beyond words but including words with the women.

Framework of this research study

This is a practice based PhD that approaches the research context with a phenomenological epistemological mindset informing my overall thinking. I use action research for investigating the relations and links to design through agencies, NGOs and government bodies. In my research with traditional makers I use participatory design research for collaborative exploration of new creative expressions with a central focus on improving power relations for the women I worked with. I reflect on my own practices in relation to creative outputs throughout the duration of the research as the central focus of my development as a design researcher.

The framework of this doctoral study consists of layers from meta to applied levels.

Epistemology – Phenomenology provided the mindset approach for this research. I embraced my subjectivity as a young female researcher / textile practitioner originally from Pakistan. The 'subjective' and 'subjectivity' defined in this study is not an absence of objectivity in the research process or inquiry but the specific connections and contextual positioning 'of lived experience' and 'social arrangements' (Merleau-Ponty 1945) that enables the revealing of different knowledge of objects and people in certain arrangements like relationships. My embodied experiences and emotions were used to inform my study yet of course this also means that my role had some inevitable motivations of social activism as someone connected to the overall context and driven by a long-term ambition to activate positive spaces for development for fellow women makers who have not had the same privileges and opportunities as I did. I have been aware of this throughout so as to not let it bias this research.

Action research – This is the method for researching the agencies, NGOs and governmental bodies in my fieldwork context. My action research was informed by criteria for practice based on contextual literature review that creates spaces and

opportunities for learning, change and transformation of the women communities involved. This also overlaps with the core research concern of power relations. A cyclical process of critical inquiry, reflection and re-inquiry was followed whilst developing relationships and connections between the researcher and participant women's community.

Participatory design research – This is the method of my collaborative practice with participants. Through this I used my textile making of weave as a substrate for the women to stitch into, inviting a different kind of dialogue and inquiry. Using my textile making as my own method of inquiry in this research I asked the question of whether designers/researchers can play an active role to open up new conversations for expression, development and reflection when working with traditional women artisans.

Power relations – Power relations with women textile makers is the core research concern and evidence focus area. Reflecting back on my findings of what the women would like alongside the action research, this study reflected on my approaches as a privileged outsider, based on the way that power might be read and understood in this context.

Reflective practice – Through reflective practice I developed my own design research approach in action research and participatory design research. This relates to my combined methodology.

Within the framework of spaces for this research I intend to offer conscious reflections on the experiences of gender, age, national and ethnic identities as components of the agency of the maker/craftswoman that relate to power. Especially significant is the conscious, emotional, ethical and political fact of relationality through which power can be read and understood subjectively in its given context.

As an upper middle class urban Pakistani woman born and raised in the largest city, Karachi, I am privileged. I studied at top-rated private schools in the country and am fluent in writing and speaking two languages: English and Urdu. I also had the good fortune of having the opportunity to study in renowned UK universities. My parents (also raised in Karachi) are educated and liberal individuals who encouraged their children to make their own decisions and lead independent lives. Ethnically my family is 'Urdu speaking' (as more politically correct urban circles might note) or more commonly used *Muhajir* (literally translated as 'immigrant', used for migrants to Pakistan who were originally from areas in present-day India). I am aware of these stark differences to the women I worked with as they form inevitable perceptions in each.

My subjectivity involved working and shifting between roles as a co-worker, a liaison point between the NGOs and as a practitioner/academic. Part of my research methodology is the movement between these layers and how the researcher negotiates that movement (Collins 2004; Fine 1994). Influenced by the work of Merleau-Ponty (1945), Bronfenbrenner (1995), Tilley (2006) and Maton (2008) of how social positionings enable the creation of knowledge this research defined five phenomenological spaces of inquiry as illustrated below (explained further in Chapter 2).

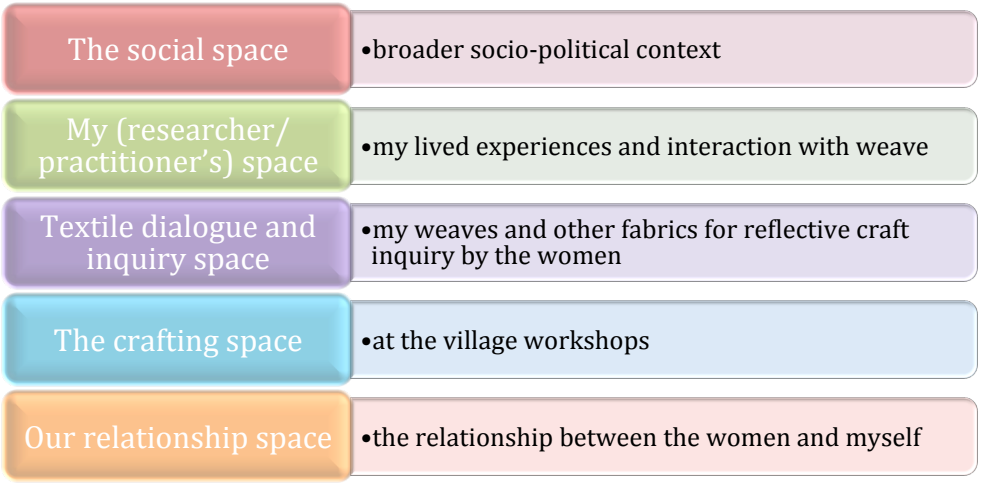

Figure 4 The research's social and material spaces

My subjectivity within this research becomes of importance to the methodology as to the kind of knowledge my researcher role can generate. My role as a researcher no doubt falls into the categorisation of 'native' (Kanuha 2000), 'indigenous' (Fahim 1977), 'emic' (Headland, Pike, & Harris 1990) but Labaree (2002), Kanuha (2000), Collins (2004) and Harris (1990) offer a realistic balance to the debate with the 'insider-outsider', 'outsider within' and of the emic perspective not being solely subjective. Although the insider has access to intimate knowledge or cultural understandings, the very institutionalisation of the insider's way of seeing gives them an outsider perspective (Collins 2004), or as Kanuha (2000: 445) notes, native researchers are required to 'place those insider experiences in some separate and impartial context' when acting in our 'contrasting roles as our Others'. An example, in addition to having the same national and gender identity, is knowing how to access craft groups in Sindh, I chose not to go through the landlord channel specifically as that could openly challenge the power status quo and possibly impede the project. This decision was based on my understanding of the local

social structure and systems. Here I act as an insider. On the other hand although I am a craft maker myself, giving me a degree of insider status on the tacit processes of making, I am not an embroiderer or share the material culture of the AGJ women where I am an outsider.

Through this method I studied and attempted to mediate the perception of my power as an outsider. As the researcher, I used myself – my body, influences and relationships – as the main tool for investigation into the spaces of craft, making and the communities that are conjoined with traditional craft practices. Both the existing relationships, and the new ones built, were crucial in attaining a different kind of knowledge and questioning conventional frameworks and practices that relate to power. It is this form of making which is least well understood within ethnographic methods of investigation and observation, and which is spontaneously generated in the friendships characteristic of the collaborative cultures of young women. I suggest that this is the most empowering aspect of participatory workshops. The research traces the way that relationships of reciprocity, trust, anticipation, attachment, loyalty and curiosity were developed and sustained through a syntactic, tacit, and subtle dialogue between different uses of 'threads'. Threads have been used both in the literal and symbolic sense of thoughts and connections that tie different people and communities together, and sometimes keep at a distance. My weaving was used by craftswomen of the Indus as substrates for their stitching, and the dialogues that developed were a unique conversation of shared experience and differences. The research aims to show how textiles are especially appropriate in offering a fertile medium for this interface between cultures.

Claims for new knowledge

The innovation of this research is in its methodology. This research developed a new methodology of critical self-reflection on the many dialogues that we as outsiders have with members of rural craft communities which are unstated and form part of the phenomenological landscape of collaboration, interaction and making. I used the 'textile' as a flexible space, both as language and a site for stimulating dialogue and exchange that could generate new meaning and relationships of power.

1. I make a claim for an original contribution to the field in the unique methodology of combining a phenomenological epistemology with action research and participatory design research with a focus on power relations for women textile makers in Sindh province Pakistan.

2. I make a claim for new knowledge in eliciting new evidence for how collaborative design practice can improve power relations for women textile makers in Sindh province Pakistan.
3. I make a contribution to the field and offer practice based case studies for design researchers in textiles who want to explore how design can tackle endemic socio-educational and gender based power issues.
4. I offer a new example of how phenomenological epistemology, action research and participatory design layer up as systems to create space for 'dialogue', enabling rural craft makers in complex socio-cultural contexts to have a voice through their practice and therefore agency.

Research ethics

Placing the artisans at the centre of an initiative can mean seeing your own (research/project/business) objectives and aims at par or as secondary to the concerns of the women for more equitable dialogues of power. My ethics approach relied on informed consent (Kvale 1996) and recognition in research practice that the signing of formal documents at the start of a project can impede the building of trust required in forming an effective relationship between the researcher and informants (Hammersley and Atkinson 2006; Stankard 2010). It also relied on what I had learnt in the University College London (UCL) Anthropology Research Methods Course that I attended in 2011. The UCL course highlighted that good practice in research involves researchers to not be 'data exploitative', ignoring important concerns of the community itself but by exploring mutually beneficial outcomes.

In my initial meeting with the community with local NGO Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) staff present, I ensured the women were aware of my research project by explaining verbally that they were free to take part or withdraw at any time. I described the project's aims and asked what they would like to see from the project. I did not ask the women – the majority are non-literate – to sign or thumb print any 'document' at the start of the project. In this part of the world signing documents is more commonly associated with government and other authorities, which I was keen was not an association made with the work I was doing. The women's response to my question regarding what they would like from this project and if they had any questions for me was that, 'if your [studies] project includes something that is [commercially] feasible for us then we will work [with you], if our work goes [to be sold] to an international city,

that will be beneficial for us, beneficial for our team, our team will have an identity [be recognised] there […] the last [RSPN] project ended and nothing became of our work […] we should get something out of it as what happens when your studies end? It should be beneficial for us' (Field notes, December 2009). SRSO also wanted me to compensate the women for their time, and manage expectations that arise from conducting design-and-craft-based workshops.

The women and I came to an understanding and made a verbal agreement that I would start a parallel initiative where I committed to help develop, market and sell products created in project workshops and that the women would not make those particular products for others to sell. In response to the women's concerns I formulated and set up a pilot project in 2009 aligned with SRSO (until 2013) to provide a platform to undertake this study alongside a creative outlet or social initiative, S jo.

The terms 'this study', 'my research', 'my study' and 'research project' are all in reference to the research project I set up in late 2009 (not to be confused with the women's empowerment project I worked for from 2007 to 2008). I have referred to the social business initiative using the terms 'S jo', 'parallel initiative', 'enterprise', 'creative outlet' and 'social business'. The project initiative is ongoing.

Towards the latter part of the project, once I established a relationship with the women where they seemed comfortable in relaying their concerns directly to me as well as questioning me, I drafted a letter of affirmation for permission to use the information I had gathered and to acknowledge the original designs conceived as part of this project which the women had not made before.[12] One of the main reasons I did this five years into the project was so the women could make an informed decision based on their experience during the project, rather than at the start where the power balance was heavily tipped in my favour. Another reason was to affirm that the women were still agreeable to the verbal terms initially agreed and with SRSO no longer involved I wanted to remove any doubt that the women had agreed to the project because of the influence of SRSO.

Kincheloe (2004) notes the dilemma of research ethics at the intersection of real lives becomes complex and inevitable. My approach of running a project alongside the research, to ensure the women were not losing valuable time for income, could be

[12] 2015

deemed to bring a bias to the work**.** Yet, my motivation was purely that it would also be 'unethical' to ignore the women's practical concerns for the sake of my research inquiry, an imposition of my privilege and social power. I have been conscious and cautious of this throughout my research process by making sure that I did not steer conversations or 'over brief' the textile dialogues and was mindful not to be perceived as someone who needed 'to be pleased' or 'could be pleased' to bring benefits in any way. I did this by maintaining as equal a relationship as possible with all the women participants, ensuring that the women understood that they could question my methods or me at any time.

Verbal permission was obtained to use information from others who contributed to my research and where it was not, their names have been omitted or substituted to protect their identity. A majority of these are personal conversations, conducted informally without structured questions and no digital recordings (sound or video), where either informed consent (Kvale 1996) was used or permission to use the information was sought later.

Chapter 1: Context of power in this study

Following the power relations' overview earlier this chapter explores the causes of diminished power for the AGJ craftswomen. Both negative and positive power relations lie at the heart of empowerment strategies which have been simplified in three ways in this setting (see Figure 5): power in a social context of privilege and dependence, in a design context in how craft from traditional material cultures is developed for heritage or commercial purposes, and in a development context of the artisans' transformation as well as in development work carried out. This chapter highlights the interrelationality of issues of power as they occur in these contexts through the use of primary and secondary craft project examples, with a central focus on power related design practice concerns.

Anthropologist Chris Tilley (2006) and craft theorist Richard Sennett (2008) note that our capacities as humans for developing material and social cultures are not unrelated but conjoined. Educator Paulo Freire (1970), psychologist Albert Bandura (1995) and sociologist Jack Mezirow's (2000) work on how people form their perceptions of themselves in relation to others, suggests that unregulated craft enterprise has the capacity to have adverse effects on the social transformation of local people's perception of their own agency and potential and vice versa. This subsequently can affect the ability to evolve or even sustain craft culture because craft is part of communities' local knowledge and expertise. As Robert Chambers (1983) notes, in development practice the perception of communities' own knowledge and expertise can be shaped by outside influences and experiences with development professionals/facilitators. This relates to embodied knowledge and our own power and the perception of having power over our capacity to create these changes.

As such 'power' is multifaceted, it neither occurs in isolation nor affects people in isolation to their context and cultures (Dowding 2006; Gaventa 2006; Pettit 2012). Keith Dowding[13] argues 'the intentional stance' differentiates between power as domination and power systems which people are implicated in, although 'we all ought to take some responsibility for those structures' yet he acknowledges 'subtle collective action problems are hard to solve' (2006:143). While Naila Kabeer[14] (1999:437) notes women's disempowerment results from being denied life choices such as the 'choice of livelihood, whether and who to marry, whether to have children' and 'empowerment entails a process of change'. These ideas helped me underpin this research's contexts of power. This chapter explores the different approaches

[13] Professor of Political Science, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University

[14] Professor of Gender and Development, Gender Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science

craft development projects have employed particularly in the south Asian region, and what I observed first hand in Pakistan as a result of similar approaches applied there.

The first section of this chapter outlines the socio-political structure in Sindh, the overarching social context and its relation to the development context of education. In the following section, I start with a relevant example from the rural region of Kutch, Gujarat in India that neighbours Sindh, Pakistan, which presents all three contexts of power and where craft development started nearly five decades earlier than in Sindh, to understand the lessons that could be learnt and applied to this context. Despite the regions of Sindh and Kutch sharing similarities of history, peoples and culture especially in heritage crafts with an unaffected-by-borders textile trade[15] and as part of greater India pre 1947 (Fisher 1993; Frater 1995; Hardy 2012), the embroideries are distinct and the regions have seen different forms, and indeed pace, of social inclusion and development in the years since the formation as separate countries. In fact, as Frater notes in Fisher (1993:106), 'eliciting personal histories of artisans revealed that different embroidery styles of Sind and Kutch historically did correspond to region'.

[15] See Gillow Appendix 7 on Sindhi textiles being sold via Gujarat to the Indian textile tourist trade

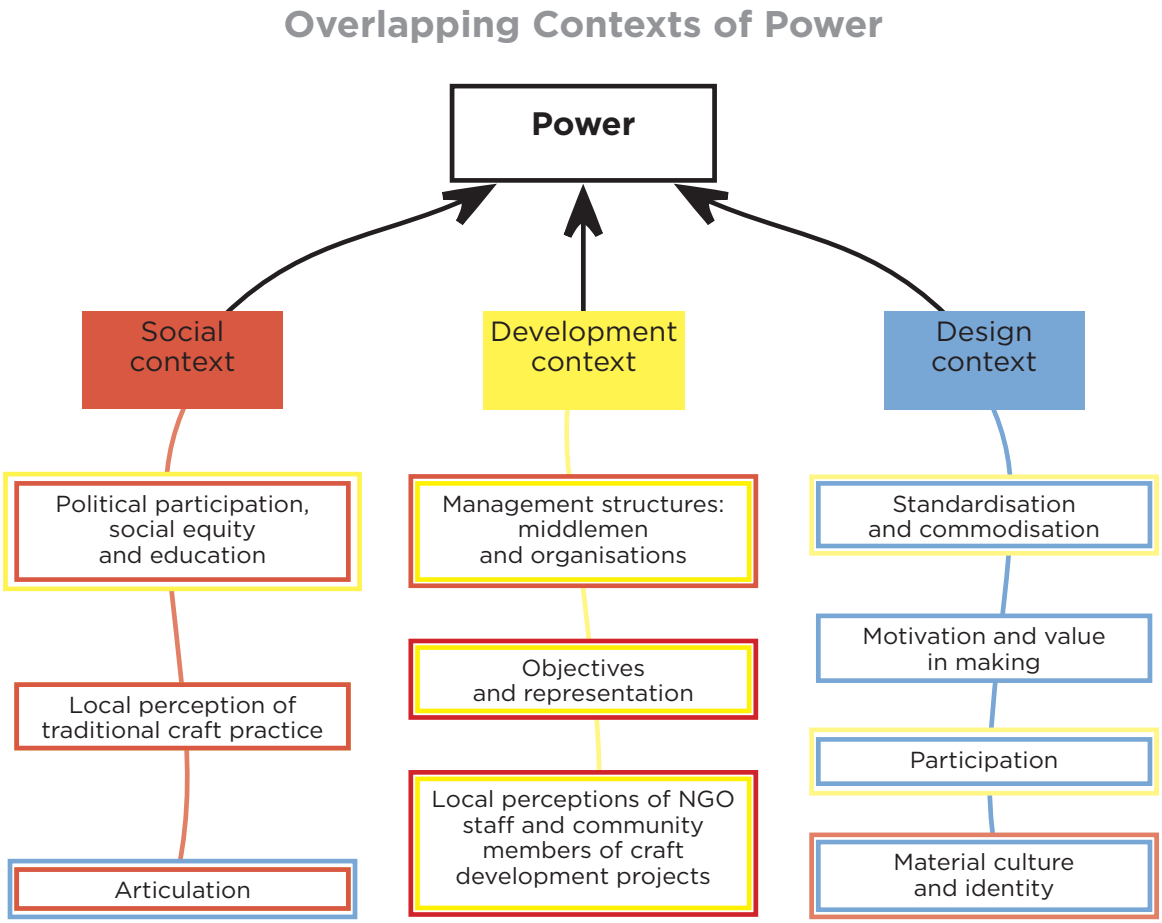

Figure 5 Overlapping Contexts of Power diagram

1.1 Political participation, social equity and education

I start with what I have defined as the social space of this study, the broader socio-political and the historical and structural anchoring context that forms the reality of the AGJ community in rural Sindh. In rural Pakistan (and often in urban centres as well) social structures are fraught with social and economic inequality; this includes (yet is not exclusive to) gender, class, ethnicity, family background, income and formal education. Feudal landlord hierarchies thrive. Weiss and Khattak note that Pakistan's greatest challenge is 'to enable all members of the society to contribute openly to the country's future and to reap the benefits of development equitably', that its 'people need to be able to access the state on their own merits, not solely through the systems of power and patronage in place today…' (2013:12). This affects the country at all levels, from agricultural to political strongholds. Leaders within political parties are chosen on the basis of family lineage and social control of rural areas rather than merit. The archaic social systems are entrenched with widespread corruption. This results in rural masses having no real autonomy. Rural women end up at the bottom of this social chain because of a patriarchal social structure. I made a conscious effort to work inconspicuously with the women with no direct interaction either with local landlords or the NGO after our association ended.[16] This was to avoid unnecessary confrontation but also any form of coercion on the women.

These disparities are greatest in villages in Sindh in terms of political participation (Ahmad-Benson 2013), education (Agha and Syed et al 2018; Lall 2011) and social equity, distribution of resources and power (Naqvi 2013; Rahman 2012). However, the ruling classes realise the disparity and make no effort to change the archaic systems in place. Taimur Rahman[17] (2012:119) notes, '…the landlords of contemporary Pakistan retain control not only over the village panchiat[18] but also over the instruments of the modern state. Hence, to gain access to the organs of the state for social services, law and order, or other concerns, villagers have to mostly go through the landlords.' Meanwhile, at least ten percent of schools in Sindh were reported as 'ghost schools', meaning schools exist on official documentation and often local teachers' salaries are drawn yet the schools remain deserted or are being used for other purposes (Johnston 2014). The Pakistani Government's investment in education declined over the years 'despite

16 Due in part to a new SRSO CEO and to our differing project objectives and vision

17 Assistant professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, The Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Pakistan

18 Panchiat is a local community based judiciary system consisting of five elders or well-respected members of the village. They decide civil matters that are brought to them.

numerous plans, policies, and internationally funded projects […] to 1.7% of GDP' (Lall 2011:204). Rural communities are directly affected as Bhaitan from AGJ states, 'here when you send a child to government schools the teachers don't turn up. We are then forced to try private schools. There should only be proper government run schools in Pakistan too so everyone has equal opportunity of education' (Field notes, January 2015). Existing regional schools teach outdated curriculum to students without any critical thinking and awareness. However, there are other problems apart from rote learning. The quality of education and learning might be considered questionable as one conversation with an artisan, enrolled in higher education, revealed, 'it was a very hard exam, they didn't even let us do [any] cheating!' When I asked her what she meant she said, 'normally [some] teachers let us use parchi [cheat notes] or even copy from the [text] book' (Field notes, September 2015). Marie Lall (2011:203) notes that, 'the private for profit provision for the poor is a dangerous alternative as there is no control on what children are taught'. Education is most widely discussed as a key transformative tool for social change, but lack of access, lack of responsibility of those involved and the quality of education hinders social progress, especially in rural areas. This 'intentional stance' (Dowding 2006) concurs with Foucaultian power as 'domination' creating significant disenfranchisement for rural communities to access quality education and other forms of learning and development. These are the outer rings of power relations.

This socio-political structure ensures that all types of power are reserved solely for the educated, feudal, urban and/or industrial classes. Disenfranchised communities in Sindh, especially women, become further and further marginalised not only in their options of liberating education but through the way they perceive their 'unchanging' position in the social structure in which they dwell. On the topic of their everyday lives, the inner rings of power relations, the AGJ women reported their 'clan' women generally observe strict laws when going 'outside' their homes (Field notes, January 2014; September 2015). RSPN-ComSec project colleagues reported no outside men, including the previous male project manager, were allowed to enter the community in 2006. Once permission was granted by some elders a male community member followed the van by motorcycle that transported the women to the SRSO facilities where the RSPN workshops took place.[19] Similarly, I noted one artisan's distress at an RSPN workshop where she said, *'I came without permission of my husband'* and reported being beaten the next day for it (Mirza, personal journal 2007). These 'power systems' (Dowding 2006) do not create an ideal

[19] To the women to take part in NGO projects

environment for social transformation in local communities and even less so in the women's lives.

The process of rote learning, copying, repeating without critical engagement or questioning can be endemic in craft development culture just as in literacy and education, it involves inner and outer rings of power relations. Critics of global development efforts suggest there is an increase in deprivation and inequality in the distribution of benefits, and approaches that target 'human development' in rural communities is 'lagging behind' (Kothari and Minogue 2002; Sachs 2008). As the 'intention' in development is change, I focus on the direct interactions within the inner rings of power relations in such encounters. My own field work in Pakistan and that of others in similar contexts (Clifford 2017; Hardy 2012; Kulick 2015; Rhodes 2014) suggest the practical reality of 'change' or developmental shifts in behaviour (Bronfenbrenner 1979) in the lives of artisans is complex while official documentation and/or websites of developmental and government organisations or individuals do not reflect this complexity.

1.2 Shrujan

Shrujan in Kutch, Gujarat (India) provides an example of a typical craft development project and enterprise that aims to empower women through income generation as well as sustain craft heritage (Dey 2019; Edwards 2011; Tripathi 2018). All three contexts of power are present in the Shrujan example, a widely publicised project with both internal and external observers providing descriptive accounts as well as its current and previous website versions. It highlights the tendency to focus on measurable outcomes and not reflect on power and its complexities, which remain essential for development and change. The extensive coverage of Shrujan provides the opportunity to compare and contrast the challenges and approaches of other projects in particular those that used similar approaches in Pakistan but where changes in the status quo have yet to materialise.

Shrujan started in a single village called Dhaneti and presently works with over 4000 artisans of different crafts. It was one of the first craft development initiatives in Kutch set up in 1969 in Bhuj by Chandaben Shroff. Shrujan (2017) defines its philosophy as:

> i) self-sufficiency, confidence and dignity are the rights of women all over the world ii) maximizing local, available resources, situations and skills is the best way of assisting rural communities iii) all forms of useful work are equal, iv) the unnatural divides of caste and communities can and must be overcome[…]Producing exquisite embroidery with the status of a high art form is the outcome of this philosophy. [20]

Several terms used to define the Shrujan philosophy until 2017, especially in relation to resources and skills, remain ambiguous such as 'the best way' and 'useful work' above, implying a model and an approach inspired by business. The Shrujan statement online (2017) of 'the stand that alleviation of poverty and hunger' coming 'before spiritual teaching can occur' suggests a contradiction of its philosophy of equity in overcoming 'unnatural divides of caste and communities'. [21] Some beliefs put spirituality before 'worldly' needs.

In 1997 Shrujan started a project called 'Pride and Enterprise' aimed to document historical embroideries of Kutch in more than 1000 panels that employed thousands of artisans; a travelling archive 'Design Centre on Wheels' provided inspiration for embroiderers village to village (Bavadam 2010; Edwards 2011:210). In 2010 Shrujan became two separate organisations: Shrujan Trust aims to revive and preserve heritage while Shrujan Creations creates and sells handmade products (Shrujan 2017b). In 2016 Shrujan founded the Living and Learning Design Centre (LLDC) as part of Shrujan Trust in Bhuj in a large building, considered India's largest craft museum (Shrujan 2017; Sinha 2016). The nature of work for the project differed slightly to that of products sold under the Shrujan label. The museum-style embroidery panels are showcased in the LLDC as envisioned by Shrujan Trust (Morrell 2011). The LLDC is dedicated to 'preserving and reviving the craft culture and tradition' of Kutch (Shrujan 2017; Sinha 2016). According to Shrujan's current chief executive, Ami Shroff, the LLDC has collected and carried out detailed documentation of traditional textile crafts and serves as a learning and resource centre for aspiring artisans and rural youth to learn from more seasoned artisans (Sinha 2016). These multiple aims of LLDC are ultimately to 'revive and revitalize' hand embroidery in Kutch (Shrujan 2017b).

Shrujan states it provides artisans with the materials (fabric and threads) for work free of charge and pays artisans once embroidery is completed (2017b). What has not been

[20] These have since been taken offline to make way for a new website [Accessed 1st August 2017 & 18th December 2017]

[21] Shrujan presently works with 12 different types of communities (2017b)

specified is whether the free materials provided are for trials and experimentation and/or for the women's own needs,[22] or come with the anticipation of work orders being returned that will be sold through Shrujan, which sells its products through two retail and several online outlets such as Jaypore.com. Their stance could be a comparison to methods of practice involving middlemen that buy completed products from artisans with all costs including supply of materials and any wastage being borne directly by the artisans. This is common practice between middlemen and remote artisans in Pakistan. As there is no indication otherwise it suggests Shrujan incurs wastage costs per order while providing materials for its orders.

Shrujan (2017) has created a system of delegating responsibility for production to some of these women, women with leadership skills are trained in organisational and business skills and these women are called 'entrepreneurs'. 'Entrepreneur' and 'activist' (in Pakistan) are two terms used commonly in craft development work to describe mobilised women who may or may not be artisans. An 'entrepreneur' may delegate work to a sub-entrepreneur as and when required. According to Shrujan this structure ensures that management is always evolving at the ground level, with training and responsibility being passed on to younger women (Shrujan 2017). Adversely, this could be seen as a pyramid system of power with only some women able to ascend – based on the decisions and criteria of outsiders.

Yet of the comprehensive coverage of Shrujan and the admirable work of Shroff none mention the direct link of the Shroff family to large-scale industry in the area (Bavadam 2010; Edwards 2011; Hardy 2012; Morell 2011). Shroff belongs to a family that owns the Shroff group of companies of which one is Agrocel Industries Pvt Ltd based in Bhuj. One of their local factory productions is fair trade and organic cotton (Agrocel industries pvt Ltd 2017; Shrujan 2017).[23] Some of the executives on the Shrujan board are those of Agrocel. This indicates Shrujan's direct links to large-scale industry and the Shroff family's implicit influence in the area, although the Shroff family may not exert this influence, it inevitably contributes to the subtle power narrative.

1.3 Standardisation and commoditisation

The relation between industry and craft can be especially detrimental when maintaining values of making. Craft is inherently associated with dedication, intensive labour,

[22] With the expectation that they are not to be recovered

[23] The relevance of this association is explained in the following sections and further in Chapter 2

uniqueness, identity, high skill etc. (Hardy 2000; Frater 2002; Sennett 2008) that differentiate it from terms synonymous with industry such as mass production and standardisation. Ruth Clifford,[24] (in conversation, 2017) provides an example from her field research in Bhuj: she notes Shrujan's main design method was to collect and document a number of traditional samples. A professional designer working with Shrujan would take the traditional designs, make them neater or adapt them, then draw a template onto fabric or transfer an outline and give the women the colours to be used to fill in the design. Clifford likened it to painting by numbers. This shows the power narrative in the design context by simply 'following'. In the past, two skilled women Parmaben and Rajiben, working with Shroff at Shrujan, would hand draw traditional designs[25] onto fabric for embroidery, however, this proved to be a burden for just two women and stencils were introduced to create uniformity in design for which Shrujan is now known (Morrell 2011; Clifford 2017). Shrujan has successfully tackled the longevity of its projects using uniformity and standardisation, the model of large-scale production to which it is linked.

Similar approaches to craft enterprise and development can be found in projects across Pakistan. Although most artisans in Pakistan have not yet begun to produce for retailers or international brands, there are government and NGO initiatives that encourage products for export and the focus tends to be on large-scale production of textile goods. The same design method of stencils with different coloured yarn pinned in for artisans to follow was being used by the Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP) enterprise manager on this side of the border in Mithi, Tharparkar, Sindh (Kazi, in conversation 2010). At the core of the need for uniformity is the issue of quality and reproduction. Writer and collector of indigenous textiles, John Gillow,[26] comments on his experience of placing an order with artisans 'often you see a beautiful piece and order maybe 50 of them. When you get them back the quality is not the same, as high as the original piece. So that's something that a collector or buyer has to be wary of' (in conversation, 2010).

By comparison Shrujan has been successful in addressing this issue but it has come at the expense of the artisans' involvement in design processes. Shrujan artisans mostly replicate existing and/or historical forms and patterns with little or no creative

[24] PhD candidate, Nottingham Trent University, exploring textile craft projects in India such as Shrujan

[25] Ethnic designs that were from the imagery and patterns found in artisans' particular community material culture such as on dresses or pillowcases

[9] Writer and collector of Indigenous world textiles

awareness or reflection. Craft is given relevance and value as a high art form by Shrujan but the women and men of the artisan communities are not developing it at the decision-making level. Although there is delegation in production for some women, delegation in design appears not present in the process of evolving for young artisans. The problem of design coming from outside communities, such as professional designers, especially when the scale of operations are expanded, largely remains unresolved. Scale is an important factor to consider when working with artisanal groups which Kate Fletcher (2008) calls for in sustainable fashion production. Freire (1973:34) notes, 'mass production as an organization of human labour is possibly one of the most potent instruments of man's massification'. According to Freire's ideas it is dehumanising in this context because it requires artisans to 'behave mechanically' separating their 'activity from the total project', and 'requiring no total critical attitude toward production'. John Thackara, in *In the Bubble: Designing for a Complex World* on sustainable futures and social innovation (2005:3), argues that the efficiency of standardisation is dehumanising because 'we have subordinated the interests of people to those of technology'. Lewis Hyde (2006) on the other hand states that commodisation of cultural objects dehumanises because of the severing of social bonds that are carried implicitly in making. Jaya Jaitly, a pioneer of the handicrafts movement in India and founder of Dastkar (1989:170), points out 'making turban cloth into shirts and anklets into ashtrays' is not design development and creative designing.

The problem identified here is cyclical: highly skilled women with a history of significant material culture are given non-critical repetitive tasks for commodity exchange that can de-skill and create dependency on outsiders (Freire 1973; Hyde 2006). The passive nature of the activity rather than praxis, ironically, curtails the artisans' own development and social transformation as individuals, as they are not the ones responsible for transforming their craft and their socio-economic status (Freire 1974). Here the link between design, social and development contexts of power is highlighted.

1.4 Motivation and value in making

In my experience with craft communities I noted – similar to AGJ – young women generally lacked the motivation to carry on their generational craft practices despite the possibility of monetary benefit. While Bardai (Appendix 6) noted women often do not 'have time to do [remunerative] handicraft', it is a culturally motivated activity. I also saw that reproducing prototype or sample designs in large quantities, even by the same

women, affected the quality negatively with less attention to detail. An example arose while visiting a local craft centre in northern Pakistan in 2007:

> *Here they made a range of pieces, such as cushions, table napkins, handbags, etc., based on local skills, for sale in the local market. A colleague really liked a pair of knitted slippers with ties and pompoms made by a local craftswoman. We asked how much they cost, surprised by how low the artisan valued the piece monetarily, my colleague asked how long it took to make and calculated a rough estimate of cost in relation to time worked. This was much higher than the artisan's original price. My colleague asked her to make four more pairs of slippers exactly like the one she had seen, in different colours and two in larger sizes. On our next field trip we picked up the order. Of the two larger sizes ordered, the proportions of the slippers were completely different to the sample, not as well-balanced and all four new pieces generally lacked the quality and attention to detail evident in the first sample piece* (Mirza, personal journal 2007).

This example poses the question of whether more money for a product provides enough incentive for the artisan to do her best in terms of skill and attention to detail. Subsequently, was there physical difficulty to replicate the slippers or simply a lack of attention or motivation? Which forms of motivation other than of monetary remuneration are engaging for makers in a marginalised community context even if monetary remuneration is expected at the end?

Repeating the same thing for financial gain might not provide the same degree of inspiration as Leslie Rabine (2002) noted in *The Global Circulation of African Fashion* of Kenyan dressmakers. While, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's[27] (1997) optimal flow model (Figure 6) provides analysis on the process of creativity. 'Flow' is described as the state where there is a balance between high challenge and high skill. This provides the ideal setting for optimal flow experience for a maker engaging their creativity, while a low challenge and high skill levels can lead to a shift in motivating factors as it has an impact on the maker's experience of engaging with their craft. Although, repetition in making can be advantageous for relaxation and even therapeutic recovery e.g. post-war shell shock victims (Hyman 2015), the rural artisan community context has a different set of concerns and needs where craft making has complex socio-cultural links (Frater 1995; 2002).

[27] Professor of Psychology and Management, Claremont Graduate University, USA, Csikszentmihalyi has done extensive research on positive psychology, including happiness and creativity

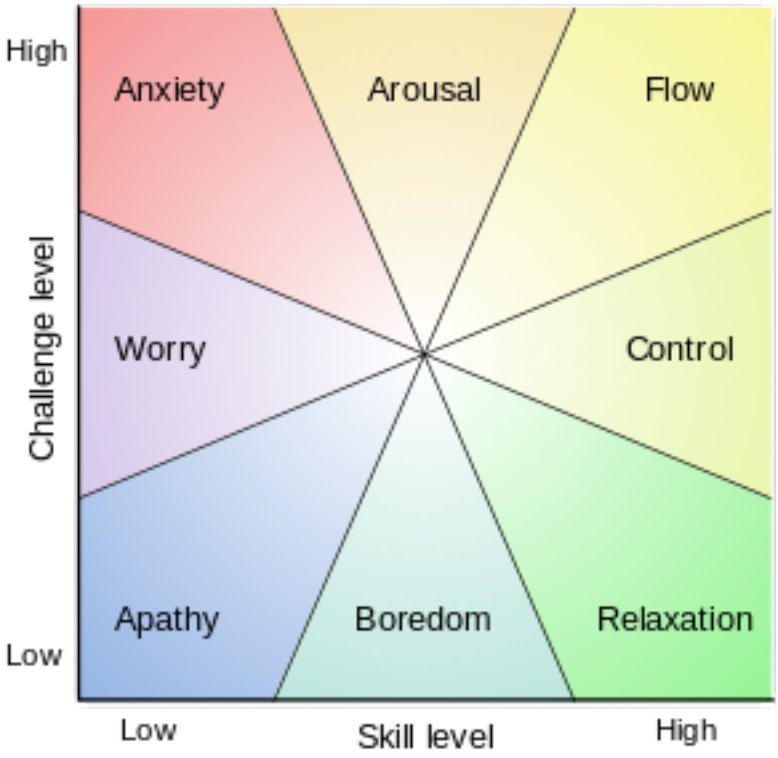

Figure 6 Csikszentmihalyi's Optimal Flow Model (1997)

Sennett describes a different motivational value in the rewarding aspect of working to build one's own skill:

> Craftsmen take pride most in skills that mature. This is why simple imitation is not a sustaining satisfaction; the skill has to evolve. The slowness of craft time serves as a source of satisfaction; practice beds in, making the skills one's own. Slow craft time also enables the work of reflection and imagination – which the push for quick results cannot (2008:295).

A crafted piece that holds intrigue of 'trying something new' and/or a critical craft inquiry can arouse more than just one of the maker's senses. This enhances the quality of the experience of making which can translate into the piece being made. I noted my craft practice is most exciting when there is an element of surprise, or an opportunity to create a thinking space while I practise weaving. *Each new warp brings possibilities, and there is a new challenge and new intrigue* (Mirza, journal entries/notes at loom 2011). Rabine (2002) noted African dressmakers recognised their need and desire for creativity but had to compromise for business survival. The lack of creativity in the process might be used to describe the young AGJ women's lack of interest at the beginning, with the involvement of high skill but not enough challenge. As Jamal Khatoon (JK) commented on

why they like to do the (S jo) jewellery work: *'because it is faster to make and we get bored of constantly embroidering our Gajj [tunic], doing the same thing over and over'* (Field notes, September 2015). By 'faster' JK is referring not just to the speed of the action but the intrinsic creative quality that changes progressively compared to traditional repetition of craft work. Similarly, Shamim noted young girls' interest had peaked since they started making different types of work (see Appendix 4). Creativity and spaces for expression of artisans might work to provide a different value and motivation despite the tension between creativity and business. More so if this relationship includes outside facilitators that aim for development and social well-being.

1.5 Management structures: Middlemen and organisations

The scale of a project can determine the quality of interaction between facilitators and craft makers as well as define the spaces available to artisans to engage with their craft in a progressional dialogue (Csikszentmihalyi 1997; Sennett 2008). Up close, personal encounters might develop meaningful relationships that nurture creativity and learning for outsiders and artisans (Fonow and Cook 1991). They also have the capacity to re-frame previously held conceptions.

Larger scale work requires multi-tiered management, extensive delegation and sub-contracting which can negatively affect the quality of interaction between artisans and facilitators, and limits the opportunities for two-way learning. The earlier mentioned 'entrepreneurs' or 'activists' become problematic because they develop into authority figures within their communities. This kind of organisational structure is used in projects over Pakistan like Baadbaan enterprise development forum in Haripur, KADO[28] with AKRSP in Gilgit Baltistan region and was noted by private sector institutes such as ECI (Empowerment through Creative Integration) that provided trainer training and enterprise development. The founder and former chief executive of ECI Shahnaz Kapadia (in conversation, 2008) explained this was the most commonly used organisational structure by grassroots organisations for enterprise development (see Figure 7). This multi-tiered value chain structure isolates rural makers as I have illustrated below. This indicates the social context of power within development frameworks.

[28] Karakorum Area Development Organisation

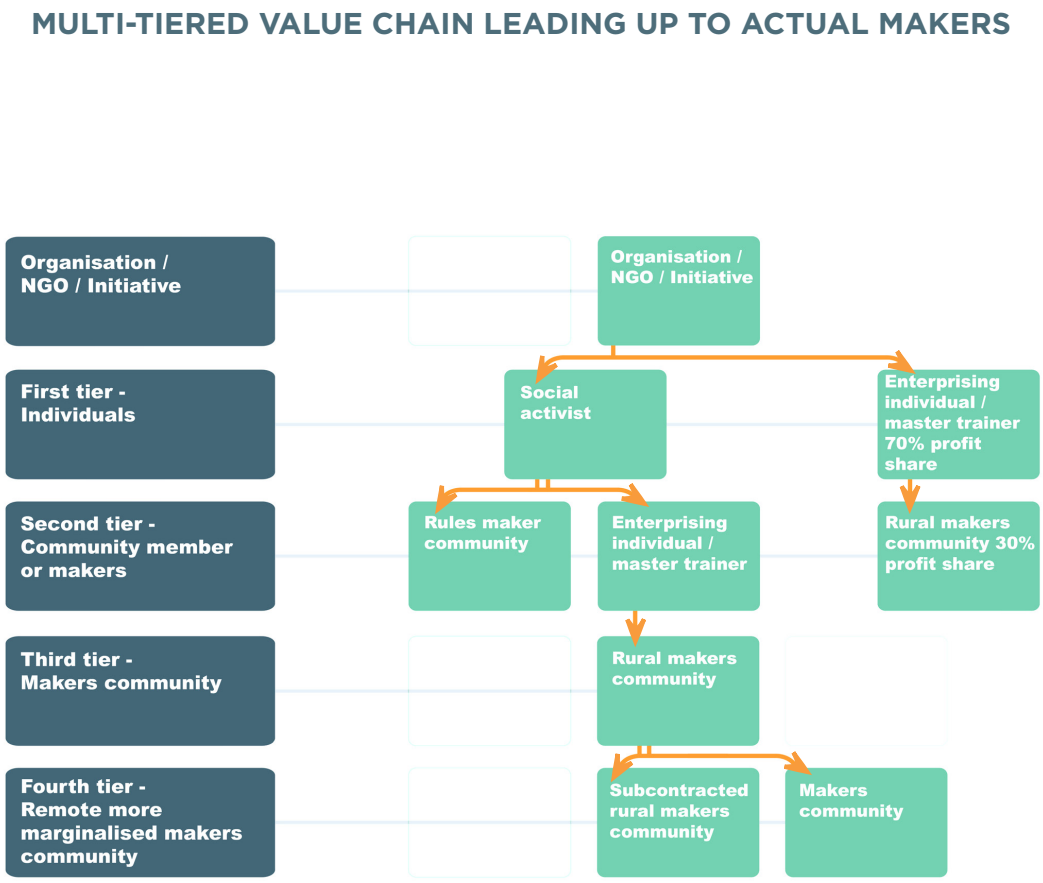

Figure 7 Multi-tiered value chains that lead up to makers

My observation of these projects in the field showed that although they have some merits, this model accumulates power with a different few – in financial terms and in social control similar to the model with middle agents that it replaces. In some projects such as Baadbaan (Haripur) the 'entrepreneurial' women earned 70% of all payments of a craft production order with only 30% going to the actual producers of the order (Kapadia, in conversation 2008). Similarly, in KADO some women often stopped making altogether and started to sub-contract the work retaining a majority of the order payments themselves (Mirza, personal journal 2007-2008). This made them more like middle agents. Middle agents, intermediaries or 'tehkaydaars' as referred to in the

Tharparkar region of Sindh can use an exploitative system of business for remote artisans dependent on exceptionally low wages, emergency 'money lending' and infinite repayment by means of craft production (Khangarani, in conversation 2007). Middle agents also ensure their power over artisans by keeping the artisans unaware of the markets where they sell and maintaining anonymity of the artisans. Numerous craft development projects such as the RSPN-ComSec project were initiated to create direct market links and access to employers to counter the role of the middle agent in the hope of achieving a sustainable income for artisans (Khangarani and Memon, in conversation 2009). In my initial visits to YIP village with SRSO (2011), I noted a loud and vocal artisan, who often spoke on behalf of her craft group rather than let other members speak. She was also slightly disruptive in workshops towards other women making something if she did not want to partake herself. The SRSO staff explained she was the activist of the craft group or the enterprise leader. Yet, her behaviour could have been modelled on the power dynamics she had observed in NGO staff and middle agents.

In Pakistan projects are managed mainly within larger developmental organisations (SRSO, AKRSP, RSPN, Devcon) and fewer examples of private work can be found (e.g. Polly & Me) in comparison. An example of extensive delegation targeting only quantitative outcomes is when international charity organisation, Save the Children, delegated a women's enterprise and empowerment project to a local NGO, Devcon.[29] I obtained insight into the management of the pilot project from former design consultant, Somayeh Bardai (Appendix 6, 2014). The project was funded by international corporate donor IKEA following public criticism of the retailer's Corporate Social Responsibility policy (CSR) in their supply chain (see Appendix 6 for details). Alongside the main education project (for working children), a women's empowerment project was initiated in the farming communities of Sanghar, Sindh that grows cotton for IKEA's products. Devcon[30] states under 'economic empowerment' on its website that it has, 'Improved vocational skills of 4019 adolescent girls and women and enhanced the quality of their saleable handicrafts [...]. Enterprise Development trainings imparted to 2,957 working children families to initiate and grow small businesses' (Devcon 2016). In Sindh, 150 villages were targeted simultaneously in a limited time frame, overseen by one design consultant. The consultant's remit included building a design strategy, design direction, design management, market research, product development training and implementation (Bardai 2014). The consultant was responsible for interacting with all

[29] This is common practice as international NGOs cannot be present at grassroots level

[30] http://devconpk.org/economics-empowerment [Accessed 20 March 2016]

the women's communities involved.

Alongside outside design direction the issues here are the availability of a vast organisational network and the consultant's design experience of the conventional urban market did not provide the support needed to build an understanding of the craft development context. The consultant did not have a local team that might help with local knowledge and to facilitate the unrealistic number of training sessions on her own. This meant that she was spread quite thinly between the villages and yet, 'all they [Devcon/Save the Children] wanted at the end of the day was beautiful products. How are you going to get beautiful products if you are [the only one] working with 3500 women!' (Bardai 2014) Bardai explained the model was to get a master trainer from each village: electing one woman to come and learn whatever product or craft training being given and that woman goes on to teach the 25 women in her village. However, she clarifies that they could not develop suitable saleable products in this time frame as there was no 'close supervision', a 'centre or set-up' and 'all the raw materials were getting destroyed' (Bardai 2014).

This project has similar trappings of power as the examples discussed above for the women who mediate between the 'outside' and the community. Regardless of the availability of a vast network as in this case, the building of understanding and relationships in any form of initiative comes down to the interaction between two individuals: an artisan and a facilitating outsider. This applies to craft development more so as more interaction (and time) is required which also helps to motivate artisans. Therefore, the lower the ratio of outsider to artisans and the more direct contact there is, the greater the degree of understanding that can be developed. Ironically, this also translates into the development of a greater range of saleable products in my own experience.

In Figure 8 I have illustrated multi-tiered management structures commonly used, which dilute information and communication to the artisans but also lose effectiveness and project vision due to the indirect links in between as discussed above. This leaves the artisans at the bottom of the power chain or pyramid once again.

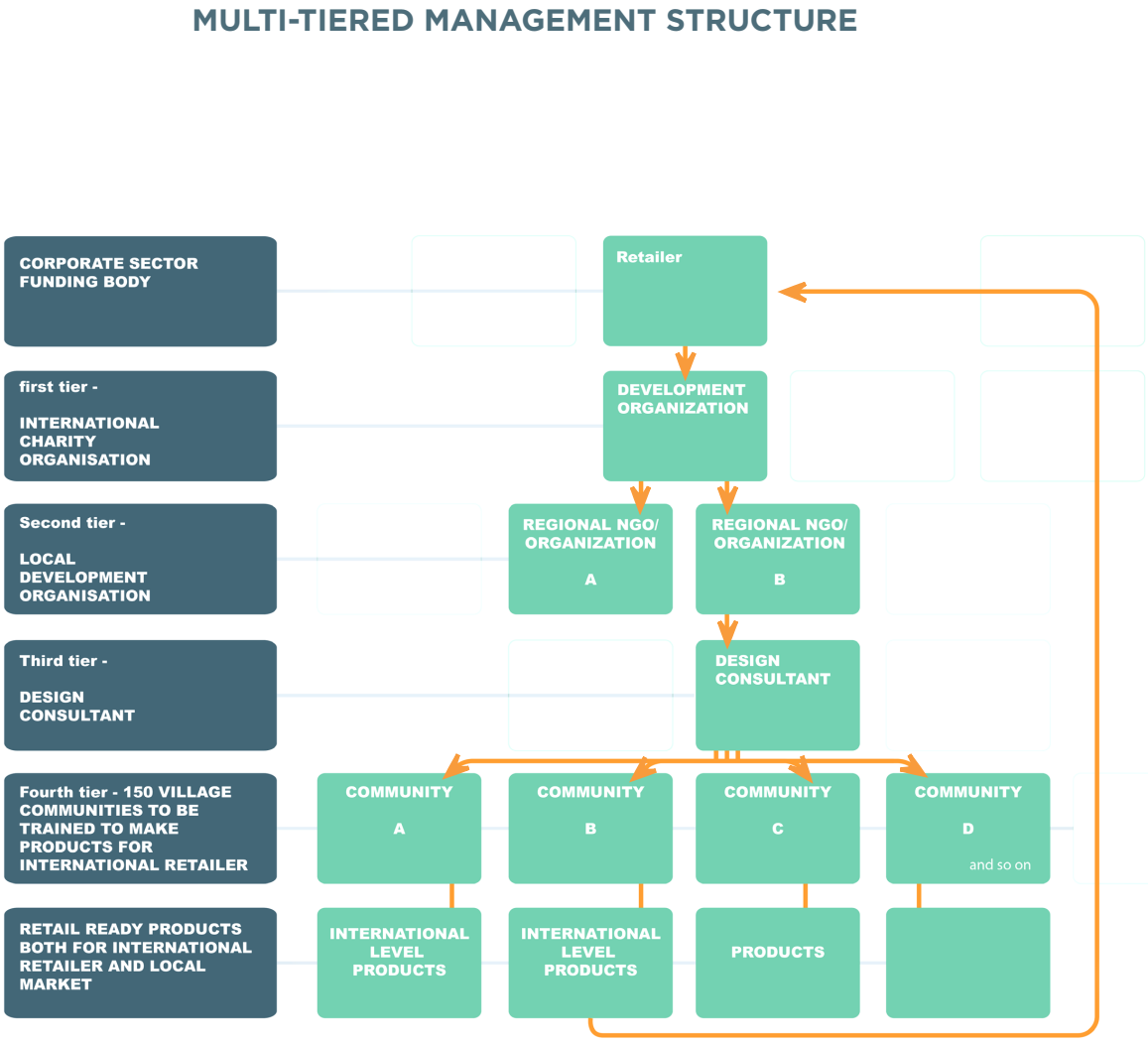

Figure 8 An example of multi-tiered management structures of development projects

A more positive example of empowerment in craft development in South Asia can be noted in Somaiya Kala Vidya in Bhuj founded in 2014 by Judy Frater, who also co-founded Kala Raksha Vidhyalaya on the same principles but who is no longer in charge. Somaiya Kala Vidya 'trains' artisans directly in design and marketing of their craft. Their curriculum ranges from exercises in colour with the use of colour quilts, colour stripe warps, gathering objects from their natural environment to goals of boosting confidence by training artisans to sell their work directly online or on site to visitors. Students who

have been successful in selling their work directly to clients, especially those further afield than local markets like Pabiben (Clifford 2017; Pabiben 2017), have developed signature 'Kitsch' handbags while others like Abdul Rauf Khatri have travelled internationally to exhibit and sell his work (Asia House Fair, London, March 2017; From Kutch to London, Nehru Centre, London, March 2017; Kala Raksha Vidhayala 2017). The positive aspect is this approach evolves traditional craft with decision-making at the local craft practitioners' level, without the need for an outsider intermediary. It does not, however, resolve the questions of local power as it only empowers individuals in a collective society. One artisan-designer (in conversation, 2017) explained that he sources some embroidery work from local women and also employs other block-printers. This work is sold under his label while other artisans remain anonymous. Therefore, the entrepreneurial artisan's role can have the same problem of power as a middle agent, craft contractor, NGO or designer brand.

1.6 Objectives and representation

Craft development has seen different forms of application by outsiders over the years yet many models exist alongside in South Asia (Hardy 2012, 2013). There are two primary motivations for outsiders engaging with rural craft communities through projects in Pakistan and in the region: income generation for poverty reduction and reviving craft heritage. Most often the focus is on saleable end products to achieve these goals.

In the Shrujan museum panels discussed earlier, the designers seemed to compose and decide what was to be included in the final embroideries highlighting the dominant position of Shrujan designers. There is nothing documented about the awareness of privilege and power in these Shrujan 'collaborations' between outside designers and artisans in Morrell's (2011) comprehensive coverage of the project nor online by Shrujan. Rural communities often expect western or urban outsiders to have more knowledge which leads to the communities not valuing their own knowledge and/or realising their potential for this knowledge. The attitudes of urban elites, designers or NGO staff can often perpetuate this distinction. As Chambers notes, 'outsiders' interventions are all too easily propelled by paternalism in directions which leave people worse off in their own eyes than they were before' (1983:146).

Ami Shroff states the LLDC's large building is located in Bhuj so it is accessible to rural artisans and their communities, craft patrons and urban designers so they can explore the potential of traditional crafts (Sinha 2016). Others who have visited Bhuj say the

building's monumental size feels out of place in a rural environment comprised of humble village dwellings. There are other aspects of power, first symbolically in the actual size of the building and then in the objectives of a large craft museum, that need questioning such as whose objectives are they and whom do they represent? Tereza Kuldova[31] notes, 'the thousands of years of culture and "heritage" are imagined as the source of India's current strength and potency. The heritage, an increasingly popular word in the elite circles, needs to be cherished, celebrated, flaunted, and the world around has to be continually reminded of it […]' (2013:53). Michele Hardy[32] writes that the Gujarat state government wanted to 'salvage the "folk" for its own devices' and 'Shrujan, among others, exploited the fineness and exoticism of Mutwa embroidery' (2012:7). This can be described as a typical paradox of power in symbolic forms of perception between marginalised rural societies and privileged urban outsiders, with similar tendencies to those that Said (2003) describes as the romanticising of the east in orientalism. In most of South Asia there is a visual and physically manifested distinction prevalent between the social classes. The culture of expression tends to be implicit rather than explicit and forms of visual and tacit expression can have a far greater impact on relations of power in such cultures (Frater 1995).

1.7 Participation

It is not only outsiders in projects that directly profess aims of empowerment but those that aim to effect positive change in communities through 'fair' trade, sustainable income and dignity also contribute to power and transformation narratives in artisans' lives.
In this section the value of different craft projects with designers/consultants to promote equality and/or fairness in business is discussed to explore the level of artisans' participation in design and decision-making processes with a considered design outcome. Jaitly writes that 'product development is often mistaken for design development', and designers and patrons of the crafts might mistakenly consider that subjectively identifying crafted objects for mass production and export is all that needs to be done for the development of handicrafts (1989:170). Jaitly, discussing the designers' role in development, criticises approaches that do not consider the values behind traditional products' uses based on 'culturally felt' needs noting, 'the designer's responsibility lies in understanding the milieu of the artisan-producer and relating it to something and someone he too can understand' (1989:170).

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31 Social anthropologist and curator, editor *Fashion India: Spectacular Capitalism* (2013)

32 Cultural anthropologist and curator, University of Calgary

This is not to say that artisans have a 'lesser' understanding in any way but that artisans should be made aware of the markets and consumers that a designer might be targeting and the designer needs to learn from the artisans. This issue is common in development projects in Pakistan and elsewhere, where designers work as commercial developers. They design products relevant to the international market with no visible co-design activity or participation by the actual makers (i.e. the artisans) in the (design) process. This can be seen in numerous 'artisan-made', western or local (designer) designed products using only hand labour skills including the RSPN project. Economic opportunities should not come at the expense of artisans' autonomy over their craft making practices.

Pachacuti[33] in Ecuador, for example aims for fair trade practice and sustainability – it makes panama hats building on local traditions yet designs are often western-inspired. A staple product is created continuously, in large standardised quantities including orders for specific retail clients generating a stable income. Lao Textiles,[34] started in Laos by American hand weaver Carol Cassidy, provides a project example that aims to revive and preserve high-quality craft heritage (of hand weave) in the region. Cassidy takes charge of design, creativity and adapting designs for modern applications (Globus and Connors 2004).

Although the focus of fair trade employment (often through co-operatives) has high merit, this approach does not always consider the impact on local skills and craft heritage, and involvement of artisans in the design process remains unresolved (Crill 2015). Consultants bring their own set of ideas, and product development is often limited to quality control and standardisation of pre-conceived designs by the consultant or designer that has no relevance for the artisan community. The artisans also remain anonymous as opposed to the designers, Rosemary Crill[35] explains in the case of India, 'for the majority of artisans it is uncertain whether employment in the crafts sector is as empowering as some of these associations imply' (2015:212).

Florie Salnot's project[36] Plastic Gold in the Sahara desert, Algeria, aims to empower women refuges economically and 'culturally' using recycled materials (plastic bottles) in a creative process to make jewellery. This design-led project creates unique and high-

[33] https://www.panamas.co.uk/about/
[34] http://www.laotextiles.com/
[35] Senior curator at the V&A and editor of *Fabric of India* (2015)
[36] http://www.floriesalnot.com/

quality craft outcomes using locally found materials even addressing some environmental issues by upcycling. However, it does not involve autonomy through creativity and design thinking for the women participants. Spinna brings 'traditional skills into mainstream business while empowering women in fashion and textiles globally', it involves the setting up of networks aiming to connect designers to artisan communities directly and providing training such as entrepreneurship to create direct avenues of business and 'empowered role models' for artisan communities (Spinna 2018, 2019; Inclusivetrade.com 2019). Spinna Circle also provides a London showroom and online marketplace (Inclusive Trade) for the high spec products made by participating designers and/or artisans. Yet the roles and distribution of power and primary decision-making in particular of design within collaborations with outside designers is unclear, as are the roles of power in relation to collective artisan communities in the case of individual artisans or entrepreneurial women who take over roles that might be previously held by middlemen or other middle agents.

In Pakistan I explored two cases. The first is the interrelated example (attached as Appendix 4) of Shubinak and Kado with design consultant Cath Braid and her social enterprises Karvana and later Polly&Me based in Chitral in North Pakistan. The other is a local designer N who started working with AGJ community in 2012 (attached as Appendix 5).[37]

At the outset the rationale for undertaking the Shubinak project was described as socio-economic empowerment and the revival of an indigenous craft (Shubinak 2013). This implies that implementation should include participatory approaches, yet there was no evidence of its practice (see Appendix 4 for details). The subsequent project goals and the project's implementation were both mainly economically based (Afzal 2005:2). The management and consultant controlled the design of products even though the artisans were shareholders in the company. The role of the designer-practitioner in Braid's case was as a western expert who provided market knowledge and designed new products for the material. The artisans were trained in the production of these for the project. On the other hand, due to a tiered management structure that provided the direction, she might have limited control.

Braid's later work for Polly&Me narrated the women's social stories through their drawings then embroidery, not based on traditions of local craft but on the exceptional

[37] Polly & Me has now become Polly & other stories with Braid's sister taking charge from the retail/business perspective and Braid is no longer directly involved

satin hand-stitch the women could do. The large pieces were collaged together by Braid for final composition. Selling the work for design practitioners like Braid who engages with communities was not without its challenges, as similar products for the same market were quickly produced. Erik Cohen[38] (1989) notes with 'substitutive commercialisation' that the relative profitability of this attracts more makers who are not all as highly skilled at creating these products; at the same time there is no promotion or marketing strategy, or scope for it, by agents and local crafts producers, and the market is usually saturated. Local businesses also try to emulate the success of newly found niche markets. In Braid's case, a local who noticed the business opportunity reproduced the designs without any creative input. Help and charity culture can often pave the way for this thinking (Kulick 2015).

The intervention of N with AGJ (see Appendix 5) provides insight into the above-mentioned prevalent 'help' culture and the local power hierarchies of Sindh. N's business describes its work as empowering women and as co-creative. N works from the residence of a local landlord, where one artisan keeps in contact with her and collects materials and payments. This accumulates power with the artisan in contact with N, while other artisans' concerns may go unheeded. In contrast to Braid, N did not engage with the AGJ community to design products but worked with designs and products made for other designers. I discuss N's example where relevant in later chapters.

Artisans are makers with social relations and other stimuli yet their autonomy or involvement over design processes is largely ignored as identified earlier. Creativity, exchange, pride in work and the joy of making can develop marginalised communities of craft beyond the scope of economic empowerment. Franceso Caruso, country director of Village Focus International, notes, 'They [craft projects] are not business-driven; when the donor withdraws they collapse. They keep creating a dependency on aid' (Caruso in Cumming-Bruce 2005). Paradoxically, western designers also replicate this dependency on themselves through the way they interact and disregard the subtle narratives of power in these encounters.

The traditional relationships with NGOs and facilitators have explored providing vocational training, equipment, and subsequently business models however now I want to argue for a focus on the phenomenological and psychological effects of design

[38] Sociologist and anthropologist, George S. Wise Professor Emeritus of Sociology, department of Sociology and Anthropology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

processes in how they aid raising awareness and lead to transformation in communities. Using Miller and Veneklasen's (2006) power relations terms in a design context this means the prevalent 'power over design', needs to be substituted with 'power with design', 'power within design' leading to 'power to design'.

1.8 Local Perceptions of NGO staff and community members of craft development projects

It is not only outsider projects that use terms such as 'empowering', 'empowerment' or 'to empower' for creating jobs and interchangeably with income generation, it seems to be a widely held perception by privileged outsiders. Titles of articles written by other outsiders not involved in projects but promoting these projects suggest this might be a more generally held belief such as, 'IKEA's New artisan collection is so gorgeous, you won't believe it's not one-of-a-kind. Plus, it empowers women by creating jobs' (Kraus 2018). Similarly, 'How Chandaben Shroff's mission, started in 1969, is today empowering 4,000 women artisans in Kutch' (Sinha 2016). Therefore, I understood the perceptions of those involved are an issue that need exploring.

The most important perceptions to consider are of those working closely with artisans and the impact they have on communities in turn generating awareness in the communities of these imbalances. Some of these are issues of gender stereotyping, belief in capabilities of those in rural environments, and differing project visions between those implementing projects and those conceptualising them. One example was noted in my previous (RSPN) project experience while visiting a local liaising NGO project partner in north Pakistan. The objective of the visit was to discuss implementation of women's empowerment by giving control to the women through co-operative principles with local staff. The senior male Enterprise staff member (North NGO) stated his concern and scepticism about participant women artisans' ability to be independent or their capability to be completely self-reliant in running their own enterprise highlighting the interrelated nature of gender and power. It could be that some development project formulations are 'too westernised' in their thinking. However, some practices of designers or actions of field staff (whether intentional or incidental) can add another layer of oppression rather than empower communities that they hope to help.

The SRSO organisational structure provides another example of embedded 'social distinctions' (Bourdieu 1984) and 'hegemony' (Gramsci 1971). There are permanent management staff at the top, such as the CEO and the CFO, operations staff, temporary

project staff and finally field staff. I noted senior management has a thorough understanding of complex developmental concepts such as empowerment yet this is not the case with all staff. Mainly local field staff members interact with communities. Although field staff have an understanding of local cultures they are also socially conditioned by the same local power structures and can have a somewhat limited understanding of complex constructs such as empowerment. The nature of multi-tiered management makes it difficult for clear information to reach senior management of the impact of fieldwork being carried out. In early 2013 a new CEO of the SRSO was appointed. He visited AGJ village during one of my workshops. On the agreed day, the EDU field staff accompanied me as usual in the morning. Around two hours into the workshop, field unit and other operational staff members arrived ahead of the CEO to ensure everything was 'ready' for the CEO to visit. The workshop was dismantled. All the artisans were moved from the *Charpois* (four-legged wooden bed frames with loosely woven ropes across it) where we were sitting and working, and were told to sit on the floors on local patchwork quilts to work instead. All the products made – both those that the women sold locally and those they made for this study – were to be displayed at one end. The women artisans' position was not just changed to another place but 'lowered' for the attendance of higher management by local staff. This problem arises from a perception of hierarchy that is culturally ingrained and comes from socially conditioned behaviours in response to this perceived authority such as those proposed by Bourdieu (1984; 1986), Gramsci (1971), Guerrero (2014) and Foucault (1994). It could be that the women were moved to the floor because it was easier for the CEO to see what they were doing or that the staff were simply used to this workshop format. However, this superficial presentation of the workshop and positioning of people is indicative of the thriving power dialogue between local staff and senior management within the organisation, and with the rural artisans. Not considering and perhaps not being aware of the phenomenological, physiological and psychological effects of our simple actions express a significant statement of power. This is why Freire's (1973) agenda of raising critical consciousness and transformation starting at the level of the oppressed is integral to this context.

Research practitioner Gwendolyn Kulick[39] (2015:4) provides the perception of artisan communities of NGO projects through her ongoing research of 'bottom of the pyramid' (BOP) craft producers in Pakistan. She states artisans see them as short lived and believe that 'one can get materials or tools like a sewing machine out of such projects', to try and

[39] PhD consortium, Wuppertal University, Wuppertal, Germany

get 'whatever one can out of them' in their short project period. Kulick notes that the idea of positive long-term impact has been jeopardised by 'an environment characterized by false promises, disappointments and subjection to charity'. Although these examples are negative they show the impact actions can have within an activity or task and the potential to incorporate this awareness in the actions of making textiles to make positive statements of power. Critical thinking and reflection can help in understanding these subtleties and create empowering spaces.

1.9 Local perceptions of traditional craft practice

This section discusses the different threads of relation to craft and making for rural communities like AGJ. In Sindh, the communities have been accustomed to subordination from the inescapable landowning class, development projects, organisations, local authorities, and individuals, leading to a diminished sense of self-worth and confidence. This creates an obstacle for individuals to believe that individuals in rural societies can 'do' something (Bandura 1995; Bardai 2014; Chambers 1983; Mirza, personal Journal 2010-2013). Knowledge flows one way towards the artisan communities from the 'experts' – top tiers of management, social superiors, outsiders and perhaps designers (Sachs 2008; Zimmerman 2000) leading to social conditioning of the marginalised in relation to the class structures in place (Bourdieu 1984) and their capacities.

In this instance the traditional artisan's value of handmade craft is attached to his or her person because it is something he or she (as part of a community of makers) can do and can relate to doing as part of the local material culture (Frater 1995). David Gauntlett (2011), Sennet (2008) and Tilley (2006) all note that our social and material capacities as humans are interrelated, particularly of craft makers. While, Gillow notes that 'the needle is the cheapest way to embellish or decorate something locally, due to lack of resources' (Gillow, in conversation 2010).

Local perceptions affect the value of local crafts. I came across an example of the local perception of craft when discussing the undertaking of a toy project for (2010) flood-affected displaced children with SRSO staff. I was told the children were not interested in toys made by hand, as they could get them easily. Local perceptions favoured factory-made toys, especially imported ones that were hard to attain, rather than handcrafted ones. This can be referred to the discussions about the influence of globalisation and industrialisation on people's perception of placing value as Wolfgang Sachs (2008) suggests that most countries 'strive to attain Western levels of material affluence by

industrializing their economies'. Cohen (1989:162) suggests when outside influences, particularly the penetration of industrial goods, negatively impacts on the need for local craft, it results in its makers no longer practising the craft or carrying on the tradition, and high-quality craft disappears. Yet Arjun Appadurai (1990) states it is equally disruptive for power relations and potentially perception to hang onto nation-states' 'own hegemonic strategies' that pose a greater threat than 'global commodisation (or capitalism, or other such external enemy)'. In his later work, Appadurai notes – a merging of Marcel Mauss and Karl Marx – in the South Asian context, 'things never lose some of the magic of their human makers, owners, or handlers, and […] both things and humans share the mystery of the commodity and the underlying metric of labor' (2006:17).

At the start of my study young women of AGJ seemed to emulate urban fashion in their clothing instead of wearing their traditional *Gajj*[40] styles of dress. There was limited use of traditional stitches and techniques in their own attire as compared to the older generation who predominately wore the *Gajj.* Over time I realised mainly married women wore the *Gajj* and the unmarried younger ones did not. However, seeing some of the younger women marry revealed that the new generation was still not wearing the *Gajj* as compared to the older generation nor making use of their skills or techniques in their clothing.

Alternatively, in my previous field trips for RSPN I found pieces that reflect personal relationships – trousseau pieces for young brides made by the mother and family, for example – often had a high quality of workmanship and detail. Such pieces are not intended for commercial purposes and no monetary gain is anticipated; yet makers lavish their attention on it and invest their efforts. The associative emotional value within these textiles seemingly gives it meaning both for the maker and for the receiver. Two values of craft in this context are those of the 'ritual' and 'gift economy'. Arnold Van Gennep (1960) notes rituals as having religious connotation defining them as rites of separation, transition and incorporation, while Mauss (1954:1) states through gift exchange 'all kinds of institutions find simultaneous expression: religious, legal, moral, and economic'. Hyde describes a community's 'gift economy', 'establishes a feeling-bond between two people' (1983:58). Yet it seems that there is another emotional value different to archaic community practices, the AGJ women's everyday Gajj for example is a ritual of identity. The young AGJ generation's expression of 'wanting to be different' is

[40] The *gajj* is a traditional tunic with heavily embroidered front which the AGJ women wear

also led by different values. Here the values of making need to be examined to see which values can apply when working with a designer facilitator. Is it a need, ritual, the sustaining of social bonds or all this and more?

In the South Asian context, Hardy (2000) notes the nature of a woman's embroidery, being labour-intensive, is equated to her being hardworking, a valued characteristic among the Mutwa community, whereas Frater (2002:158) describes embroidery as being a way to express one's 'community, subcommunity and status' in other communities. Csikszentmihalyi (1991:27) notes that people's responses to art objects and the design qualities in their environment, the meaning in material things comes from the owner's active symbolic relationship with them and people described objects as special because they conveyed memories that referred to friends and family. This interaction and memory was what made the objects valuable, rather than their intrinsic qualities alone. These values such as creative freedom, emotional connection, embodied experience and associated memory that generate meaning reinforced the importance of forming a meaningful, equitable and reciprocal relationship space between the women and myself for making together. This may prove more engaging for young women and the quality of relationship between an outsider and artisans might lend itself to the crafted object. This may also create value in the piece for the prospective end-user if they know this process behind the making giving rise to renewed inspiration and local craft perception.

1.10 Material culture and Identity

I have worked with the AGJ women before and there are inevitable implications of that association. I came to question how much of the women's responses to my research inquiry at the start were an overhanging effect or result of the previous project and its projected ideas. For instance, in the first informal conversation for my research enquiring about how the women felt about their work, one of the ways they described their work, their craft, was 'Humari pehchaan hai' or 'as their [representative] identity' (Appendix 3). However, I examined whether these values were a true reflection of their feelings, or a result of the influence of the previous and current NGO projects the women and I were involved in. As mentioned earlier, in 2007 I had consistently noted a lack of engagement of young women with their craft.

In my first research discussion with the AGJ women the SRSO staff present at the meeting was partly answering my questions to the women. I questioned whether we had instilled

outsiders' ideas and objectives about the nature of the craft work, how the women 'should' feel about it and carry the traditions on (See Appendix 3). However, the question of identity associated with craft was somewhat addressed when Marvi, Ghulam Zohra and Naz described their responses to others wanting to buy their traditional outfits on an exposure trip to India, 'they loved our Gajj so much they asked to buy them but we said we don't have any to sell, so they asked us, just give us the ones you are wearing, and we said no, we cannot. We had other [change of] clothes but we did not want to sell our Gajj' (Field notes 2013). The women's response can be interpreted as, the women did not see their Gajj as commodities for sale and/or that they felt attached to the Gajj they had made for themselves or it could be a 'gift'. All cases point towards the Gajj being associated to their identity, and more important than earning an income. I noted another example at the AGJ village while conducting workshops when the accompanying SRSO staff member asked artisan Shereen to show me the work[41] the women were completing for a well-known Pakistani Fashion designer through the homeworkers group, Sabah Pakistan: *Shereen hands me the sample and once I see it I remark, 'it is very nice and well done' to which she replies, 'kaam tau hai, humara kaam nahin hai' translated it means 'its work, it's not 'our' [traditional] work. The stitches were satin stitch and it appeared more contemporary but looked more like work from northern Pakistan. This strongly suggests to me that the women prefer to do their own traditional stitch* (Field notes, 2011).

In the RSPN project, designers provided foreign and unfamiliar design briefs that used only the technical skills of the makers. For example, the Cathedral patchwork piece (Figure 9) was specific in both construction and measurement, both of which were set out by the designer. It bore no resemblance to the women's own patchwork or applique quilts (Figures 10 & 11).

[41] For a purchase order

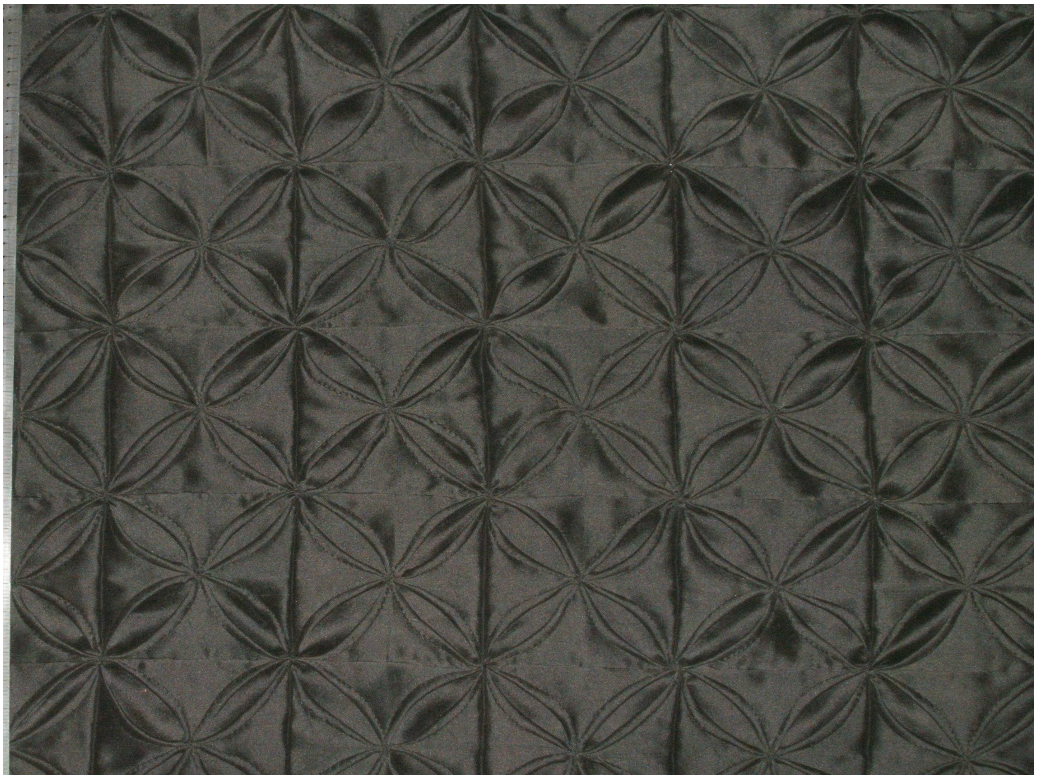

Figure 9 Cathedral patchwork produced in silk for Anthony Knight

Figure 10 Community elder working on a patchwork quilt used over wooden beds

Figure 11 Applique quilt for bride being worked on together

Cohen (1989:163) terms this 'encroaching commercialization', where a vital culture has sponsored intervention, operating from purely economic motives, to utilise and exploit abundant local skills for the 'hand-made' production of standardised products, which have little if anything to do with vital native material culture. In AGJ making quilts for the bridal trousseau is a community activity charged with meaning. Making everyday patchwork quilts provides a constructive activity for older members to be involved and still contribute to their community. Cohen illustrates 'enroaching commercialization' with an example of 1.5 million hats ordered from native craftsmen of Philippines in three different sizes, with the exact product specifications of models bought from the US. In this case the idea is alien to the craftspeople involved, and requires standardisation and mass-production from a hand-crafting culture. It also disregards the social tenets that keep these communities together.

1.11 Articulation

The AGJ women, although articulate about sharing techniques with others, were less aware of their own creative process and the development of their ideas. They show an intuitive understanding and unconscious aesthetic – knowledge that is tacit. It is not within the women's culture to reflect on their own creativity or work. The AGJ women's society does not give them the vocabulary to enable them to be articulate or to be expressive about their own aesthetic choices. This raised the question about the culture of critical reflection. The women were not accustomed to being critical but socially conditioned to accept their social and material culture as it is. Reflecting on creativity is a part of mainstream western visual education and as a western educated designer, this was part of my design education.

This meant that group conversations or attempts at interviews were simply not enough to get a real insight into the way the women worked or responded. Celia Ward, who founded East London Textile Arts, noted the same culture of expression and articulation with participants in UK from socially isolated communities such as migrant or ethnic minorities.

> What we find in our groups is that people are quite articulate about their feelings, what they say is…I feel so much better coming to sewing, they will share problems in their families…my husband is ill, my children are misbehaving… They are very good at that, but they are much less used to sharing their aesthetic decisions. I think we have the same issue of inarticulateness (Ward, in conversation, 2017).

Contrary to Ward's experience, the AGJ women did not openly express or critically reflect on their social practices until much later on in my study. Some young women joked about the mismatched ages of betrothed couples in 2013 while older women told them to stop. The whole group first openly discussed similar socially sensitive issues with me in September 2015 and January 2016.

Other than social conditioning discussed earlier, the lack of literacy and access to quality education is a contributing factor to the missing culture of articulation. Women were not sure or knew how to answer my explicit questions about their craft and what they aspire to, what they want to see from their craft practice, which aspects they learn from and so on.

The cultural nuance of implicit expression is another contributing factor. Rather than saying it outright in Pakistan there is a tendency to politely imply what we mean in

conversation. This is also true of other countries in Asia; India in particular is known for the 'yes' means 'no' culture especially for those dealing with business and outsourcing (Cohen, E 2014). This arises from the collective nature of society rather than individualistic. On the other hand there is 'pleasing behaviour' if respondents think facilitators can bring benefits (Chambers 1983). My first attempt in undertaking an unstructured interview in 2009 did not unpick any of the cultural layers, responses were direct and two-dimensional. Although it offered some information it hardly began to unravel the complexities of AGJ society.

Communicating this research and process to the reader or audience was an issue of the articulation of creative practice. Effective communication is a powerful medium and the ability to convey your message or be heard is a kind of power. Social inclusion is what drives modern democratic processes. The ability of an individual or group to be heard does not have to rely on linguistics alone, makers can express themselves or make themselves known through their craft practice. Textile writer and curator Nasreen Askari[42] notes the strong visual identity of textiles in Pakistan:

> I came across a women draped in a beautifully embroidered *Chadar* (shawl) at the hospital, awed by its intricate work, touching it I asked her where it was from. She slapped away my hand angrily and walked away. The next day I saw her and she told me, "this shawl tells you which clan I belong to, that my husband is a carpenter and my family ancestry. It represents my identity. Do not talk to me asking where it is from, everything you need to know is right here on my *Chadar!*"(in conversation, 2014)

Echoing Askari, Frater notes (1995:18), 'the style with which a folk embroiderer expresses herself is not chosen, but assumed'. The kind of power described here is visual, subtle and a syntactic language of textiles. This research inquiry questions these subtle undercurrents of power that are less explored, such as my own and the women's intuitive process, critical and creative reflection. It was not just a matter of recording what the women said in their interviews but about their 'voice' through their craft work. These changes might offer an opportunity of transformation in the women's material and social lives.

[42] Nasreen Askari is the curator/director of the Mohatta Palace Museum in Karachi, Pakistan, and has written extensively on Pakistani textiles, including co-author of *Colours of the Indus: textiles and costumes of Pakistan* (1997).

Chapter 2: Methodology

The contribution of this research is in its methodological innovation. Working with women artisans in the context of rural Sindh who are almost always at a power disadvantage requires constant critical reflection on the interveners' actions and how these actions are perceived. In the last chapter I found there were gaps in development approaches, in particular when traversing the disciplines of craft and design that have strong tacit and sensory elements. This chapter explores my synthesised approach to research and practice at the meta and applied levels in this complex context of social, development and design concerns of power.

The starting point for this methodology for practice-led research was informed by phenomenological thinking in the context of subjectivity, social transformation and empowerment (in particular settings and approaches that are empowering). This methodology includes power relations and the concepts of participatory design and interconnectedness in craft making. First, I analyse relevant theoretical contexts to create a self-checking criteria and framework for working with rural and marginalised craft communities of women. Second, I discuss my approaches which are formed of different layers and test the proposition that a designer/maker may have a different set of tools, unavailable to the social sciences, that may be explored in phenomenological spaces in particular.

2.1 Phenomenology

Julian Thomas (Thomas J. in Tilley et al 2006:44) helped me understand early phenomenological thought originating with nineteenth century philosophers Franz Brentano and Edmund Husserl, both of whom were interested in 'consciousness'. For Brentano 'intentionality' was a key idea, addressing the directionality of conscious activity: all mental events being connected to one another, with no isolated episodes of sense-perception. This in turn influenced Husserl, and for him consciousness was always directed towards something, the implication being that intentionality provides the basis for the relationship between people and their world, which is bodily as well as cognitive, although the objects to which we direct ourselves are objects-as-conceptualised (Thomas J. 2006:44). Thomas describes Husserl's phenomenology as the purity of moments of insight that it sought to capture, in which we cannot doubt that we have apprehended the real nature of things through our mental apparatus.

Initially it might seem that this research associates well with Husserl's concern with intuition. A pivotal part of this research project and practice has been direct interaction and exchange, both with others (the craftswomen) as well as with one's own craft. The various forms of interaction through shared moments of experience and the exchange of craft, together or individually, do benefit from a pure moment of insight for capturing a true sense of reality in this space. However, by asking questions in different ways that make it more than just capturing the pure moment, this research study centred on the prolonged trust and relationship created through sustained contact in various forms: visits, workshops, craft exchange, conversations, observations, reflections, reactions and interactions of both a personal and craft-based nature.

Husserl's student Martin Heidegger's phenomenology argues that worldly things are not just objects in consciousness: they are always embedded in a complex network of relations between people and things, and they are only comprehensible as such (Thomas J. 1993:53). I was motivated by these ideas, and they influence my thinking where I discuss the women's material identity, social and physio-geographical space and my own inspirations as a child, as a craft maker, as a Pakistani woman, and the connections I made as an individual where I established different connotations to textiles and the handmade. These connections and networks enabled this research study and helped me to think and perceive things in a particular way. Thomas J. explains Heidegger's ideas further:

> …the disclosure of things is not a matter of isolated objects being observed by a transcendental subject. Things show themselves only to a particular kind of being: a mortal human who always finds themselves embedded in cultural tradition, enmeshed in social relations with others, and engaged in pursuing projects for the future […] human beings have a form of existence which is inconceivable without its being located in multiple contexts and relationships: this is being-in-the-world (2006:46).

For this research's phenomenology I was most strongly drawn to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (1945) idea of the embodied experience and mind which relates to the relationality of our perception as humans, and to the work of contemporary advocates of the phenomenology of perception Tilley (2006; 2010) and Thomas J. (2006) from the field of anthropology. While, Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1995) ecology of human development, in the field of psychology, works on the premise of subjectivity and phenomenology of our life experiences.

Merleau-Ponty (1945) describes phenomenology in regards to the body's relationship to the world as the most important as it forms our perceptions based on an embodiment of experiences, in contrast to Husserl's concern with 'consciousness'. Thomas J. (2006) succinctly describes phenomenology as being concerned with the human encounter, experience and understanding of worldly things, and with how these happenings come to be possible. Limitations of philosophical phenomenology might be in its critique of 'subjectivism' and its view from the lenses of the European monocular 'self' that might present a challenge to equitable power (Kearney 1995). However, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology overcomes 'both extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism with its notion of consciousness as irrevocably 'incarnate' in the world' (Kearney 1995:75), in fact helping to 'become reflectively aware of our pre-reflective' personifications such as power relations. Tilley (2006; 2010) describes phenomenology as experience from our bodily perspective. He notes that we use our bodies as a medium for understanding particular places, people and things we encounter – particularly in the research practice context – which forms our perceptions. Tilley clarifies 'subjective' in the phenomenological context does not mean personal. Bronfenbrenner's model (1989; 1995) explains how interactions within social environments affect development and I used his ideas to develop my method of defining the spaces of critical inquiry and reflection in this study. These were the major influences in formulating the overarching phenomenological thought in my methodology.

This study worked on the premise that through our memory, experiences and reflection on it we form our perceptions and relationship to things and others. Our body's experiences have an effect on our mind and perception of things, so for a maker engaging with craft, the idea of sensing and feeling (seeing, smelling, hearing, touching, tasting, even reflecting), the experience of making and practice is a form of embodied experience. Further, that this experience, memory and reflection is carried forth in anything we make together, for instance, a handcrafted textile.

These ideas help to understand how our subjective experiences influence our decisions, interactions and relationships. The historically oppressive social structures and top-down nature of development work with the AGJ community would no doubt have influenced its perceptions of the community's own craft practice and abilities just as my influences and experiences of craft activity and its association have shaped mine. Much like relationships, threads built upon create something altogether more substantial – crafted pieces, whether woven, sewn, stitched or embroidered, are similar to the building of relationships. They all build up something of greater value from a singular piece and are a part of the connections

of that piece of textile. The thread for me is symbolic of this interaction with the maker and their craft: both weaving and stitch-craft use threads or a set of threads to lift in and out of what is being created – i.e., the fabric becomes the space. It is on this notion of interplay of different relationships that I, as a researcher, set about my enquiry, through my body, self-reflection, my own craft, that of others and by starting a dialogue between the two.

In this research practice, I placed my body and subjectivity – to create, nurture and read relationships – as the most crucial data collection instrument for this research process in moments that arise from relationships, informal conversations, spending time together and building a bond through making.

2.2 Human development in social systems

Through his model of ecology for human development Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes different ecological contexts where human development occurs in five separate settings or environments defined as macrosystems, microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems and chronosystems. Whereas, Appadurai (1990) notes a different set of global landscapes, which he terms 'suffixscapes', where information flows create new dialogues of power and interaction between 'imagined worlds'. He describes five dimensions of global cultural flow as ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes. Appadurai's suffixscapes describe relationships of power and cultural flow at a macro-level aiming for conversations at a global cultural anthropological scale, which focus on identifying disjunctions or asymmetrical effects of particular transnational influences on certain groups who have access to these global flows of information. While Bronfenbrenner's ecosystems focus on environments that directly influence individuals to develop and transform at a micro-level. In Sindh, the AGJ community can be described as a closed community with little exposure to some of the 'scapes' of global cultural flow Appadurai describes, therefore the focus on Bronfenbrenner's environments in searching for power strategies and for mediation appear more appropriate in helping to create mutually conducive environments. Although, relevant to the power debate,[43] suffixscapes are not personal enough nor geared for local uses for the methods of knowing in this research aimed at liberation of power dialogues.

Bronfenbrenner describes the balance of power shifts in favour of the developing person in his model of ecosystems if learning and development are facilitated by the participation

[43] Appadurai's Suffixscapes might be relevant to the AGJ community in the future, at the moment there is limited exposure to develop this here in the power relations context

of the developing person in progressively more complex patterns of reciprocal activity with someone with whom that person has developed a strong or enduring emotional attachment (1979:60). Similarly, Tillmann-Healy (2003:731) notes in friendship as method, researchers are an integral part of the process of triggering change as 'friends, interpersonal and political allies' seeking 'personal growth, meaningful relationships and social justice'. This contributed to my method of knowing more through our relationship spaces from a phenomenological perspective. Changes or alterations in these relationship systems will create conditions for social change and a shift in established power structures. Bronfenbrenner notes individuals have two-sided biopsychological characteristics they are 'the product of prior developmental processes and the partial producers of the person's future developmental course' (1995:599). These settings were used to define the social spaces and systems where thinking, experiences, reflection and human interactions occur in my study's context. This relates to the women, stitch-craft, weave and myself, and the social environment.

Macrosystems: The macrosystem can be described as 'a cultural "blueprint" that partially determines the social structures and activities' on the broader level, including political structures and institutions, material resources, opportunity structures (e.g. access to educational opportunities) and shared knowledge and cultural beliefs (Pinquart and Silbereisen 2004:290). Appadurai notes the use of 'cultural' as dimension as 'situated difference, that is, difference in relation to something local, embodied, and significant' (1996:12). He supports 'stressing the dimensionality of culture rather than its substantiality permits our thinking of culture less as a property of individuals and groups and more as a heuristic device that we can use to talk about difference' (1996:13).

Macrosystems are primarily outside individual control forming the wider socio-political system or context. In rural Sindh a vast majority of people are heavily oppressed with very few opportunity structures available to them. Cultural beliefs are conventional; however, shared knowledge might be expanded on through interaction with outsiders through personal, research or developmental projects or individuals.

As a researcher working in two main social environments, my macrosystem contains at least two frames of socio-political reference: access to wide-ranging opportunity structures, as well as material resources and flexible cultural beliefs. In the context of stitch-craft, this represents the traditional material culture. When two different people work together they bring their influences from their backgrounds and worlds into their craft practice, the engagement of their craft practices together also influences their social

behaviours and each learns from the other therefore contributing to their transformation.

Microsystems: Most human development is triggered through changes in microsystems because most of the societal level change 'is mediated through changes in the microsystem (e.g. school, vocational training, workplace) and the mesosystem', with the strongest effects of social change on 'those who belong to microsystems that change most' (Pinquart and Silbereisen 2004:295). Microsystems describe direct interactions like those that take place in school. In rural Sindh, the participatory workshops provided an important microsystem setting where the women and I could interact, engage, communicate, reflect, inquire and create.

I understood this from my own workshop space and relationship with hand weave. Other microsystems for the women would be their school or college and any other projects, training, or courses they participated in with an NGO, such as RSPN and SRSO.

There are more complex relationships as well, with one's own craft and the relationship between makers and between crafts.

Mesosystems: Despite the social divide, the women and I developed a personal relationship, which lay outside the local socio-political system. This became an important source of evaluation and critical thought and reflection into one's own context: 'Mesosystems, each of which contain the developing person (e.g., relations between the child's peer group and family), and at least one of which does not contain the developing person' (Pinquart and Silbereisen 2004:290).

Mesosystems includes the craft dimension to our relationship as different types of makers. The women and I had different ideas as to what craft meant and represented, and how we as makers, manipulators could use it. I was influenced by my own embodied experiences, as were the women. These included the women's cultural identity, female heritage and a source of income. For me it included my family, background, and design education.

Exosystems: 'Events from exosystems influence individual development indirectly, mediated by microsystems (e.g., parental work stress may influence parenting behaviour)' (2004:290-291), exosystems of our relationship and study paradigm are my academic research and my experiences of being a maker. My subjective predilection for textiles due to my positive childhood experiences with my grandmother is another example of external influences (explained in 2.10.i).

The women's social experiences with others when I am not present, such as with the SRSO

and designers, are further examples that will influence our mutual space.

Chronosystems: 'Chronosystems incorporate the time dimension of Bronfenbrenner's model, including the succession of ecological systems over the life course (e.g., kindergarten – school – workplace) and the impact of social change on the ecological systems' (2004:290-291). My relationship with the AGJ community began in August 2007, before the start of the research study in 2009, and continues on beyond the research study.

Bronfenbrenner notes the benefits of a positive relationship with a facilitator rather than one of mutual antagonism, which is especially disruptive of joint activity and interferes with observational learning: 'The developmental impact of both observational learning and joint activity will be enhanced if either takes place in the context of a primary dyad[44] characterized by mutuality of positive feeling (one learns more from a teacher with whom one has a close relationship)' (1979:60).

Therefore, relationships and the quality of the sustained encounter and interconnectedness becomes crucial to create an environment where we may learn more from one another and create impact in each of our own lives through our relationality (Fine 1994; Tillmann-Healy 2003). These are the spaces required to transform one's thoughts. A direct example can be found in the next chapter in my recorded reflections. My weaving decisions were impacted by my recurrent thoughts about what the women's perception and response to my hand woven pieces may be, such as my choice of colours and yarns.

Another example can be found in how my perspective of the agency of hand weave (my craft) was altered through exchange with stitch-craft and what the women required from the fabric. I also had to reassess my role as a designer, taking up socio-political concerns rather than just design concerns. Yet another example suggests a shift in social perceptions of the women who are of Sindhi ethnic origin through their direct interaction with me, whom they would term as being of Muhajir[45] ethnic origin. When the women felt

[44] A primary dyad is one that continues to exist phenomenologically for both participants even when they are not together. The two members appear in each others thoughts, are the objects of strong emotional feelings, and continue to influence one another's behaviour even when apart (Bronfenbrenner 1979)

[45] 'Muhajir' is the term used to describe or label people that migrated from pre-partitioned India and moved to live in Pakistan. My grandparents migrated from India in 1947. Although it happened at least two generations ago, people originally from the area that constitutes Pakistan (especially provinces bordering India, like Sindh) still use the term for later generations of these immigrant families due to ethnic polarisation.

they had to choose, they stood by me (for S jo) rather than with others[46] from Sindhi backgrounds, due to our reciprocal relationship. In an ethnically polarised country like Pakistan this indicated a shift in perspectives about others who are not from the same ethnic origin. Hence, only a small step in breaking social barriers but it implies a change in pre-conceived perceptions that form the basis of traditional thinking patterns. On the other hand, I required the women's support[47] to help me in authenticating the work process and products to others.[48] There are other subtle indicators of the women's perception of me as someone who they chose to let into their lives different to 'pleasing behaviour' for someone perceived to bring benefit. Two girls born in the time I have been visiting AGJ village were named Seher and Sehrish, quite uncommon names in this region. I use this example here because I did not note the same with other designers or NGO staff members' names (that are regionally uncommon), with whom the women also communicated.

Interactions within these social systems have the potential to have a profound impact on both the outsider and the community. Researchers, facilitators, development workers and social entrepreneurs can create interactions within these systems in an attempt to actively change patterns of traditional behaviour and thought that arise from traditional classifications of power.

2.3 Methodological approaches in subtle cultures

Bronfenbrenner's model enabled the exploration of how some social environments and the interrelations with others help humans to develop. Yet, it does not provide a comprehensive framework for further exploration of craft practice beyond the positioning of its relational space. Merleau-Ponty's (1945) phenomenology regards the body's consciousness – its relationship to the world – as the most important in forming our perceptions based on embodiment of experience(s). The idea of spaces created for this research also relies on Merleau-Ponty's ideas of approaching 'a new intentionality' that examines 'the symmetrical notion of a form of perception', which is 'the notion of space'. He describes 'space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the means whereby the position of things becomes possible' or 'the universal power' enabling

[46] Regional NGO staff (SRSO) and local designer NB (who speak Sindhi rather than my 'few words' of Sindhi)

[47] This refers to a letter of affirmation that the women signed (2014) that helped me validate the research through giving permission and affirming the design process and the nature of our earlier (verbal) commercial agreement.

[48] This refers to third parties whom I wrote to such as the British Council.

them to be connected. Sarah Pink's[49] sensory ethnographic methods echo phenomenological values and such approaches are useful to 'attend to the senses in different social, material, and historical contexts', bringing together 'the materials produced through such different methods to produce knowledge at the interface *between* them' (2013:264). The research spaces introduced earlier were formulated based on the ideas above to explore the dimensions of relationality or the connections between the women and myself through our crafts, interaction, activities and what contributions, if any, it could make to the questions of power. The list below demonstrates what the spaces represent and my diagram (Figure 12) shows that these spaces are the dimensions that connect the researcher, craft (hand weave and stitch-craft), the rural craftswomen and their community to one another including the over-arching social context. The relationship between these spaces is interlinked as each space indirectly or directly influences the other.

1. **The social space** – the broader socio-political context, including external factors that affected this study
2. **My (researcher/ practitioner's) space** – interaction with the weave/loom and my lived experiences
3. **Textile dialogue and inquiry space** – created on my weaves and other fabrics for the women to interact on and to reflect with their needlework
4. **The crafting space** – the village workshops, where I could learn more fully about the women by making sure we were interacting on a crafting level
5. **Our relationship space** – my relationship to the women in the village

[49] Social and visual anthropologist, Professor at the Design Research Institute, School of Media and Communications RMIT university, Australia

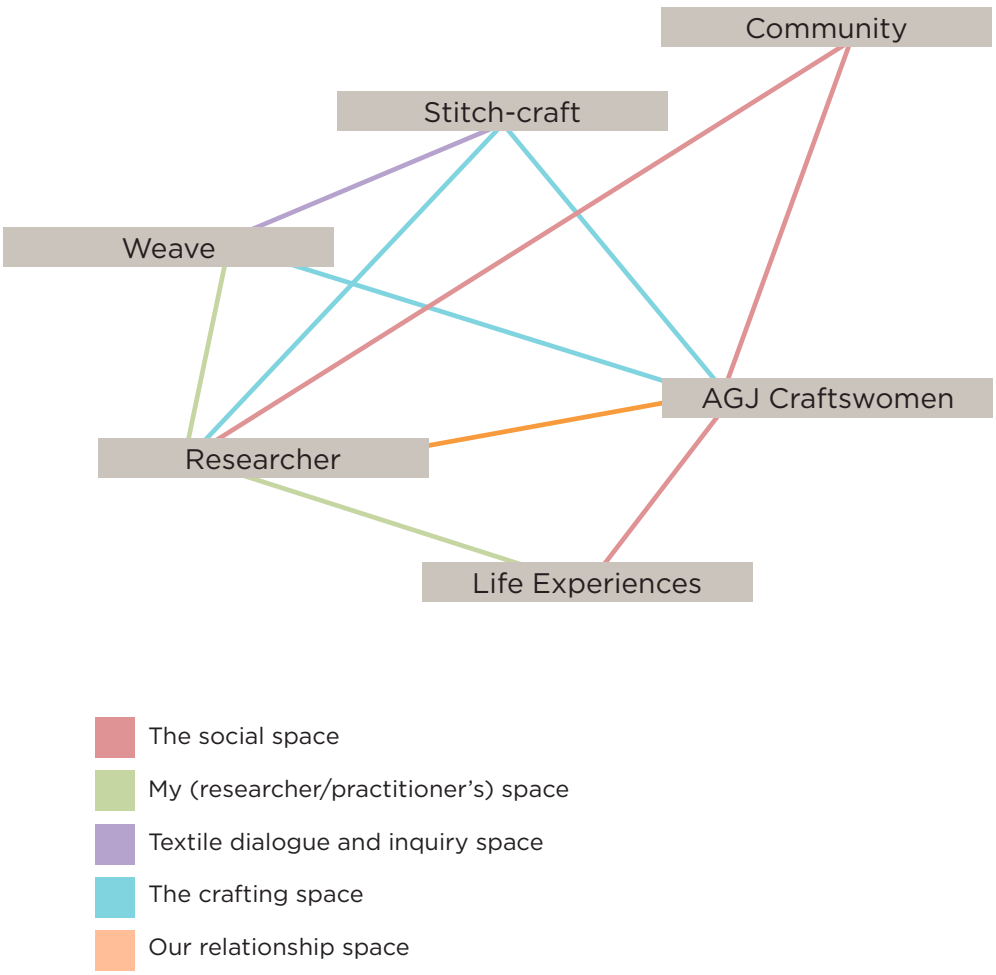

Figure 12 The connecting dimensions of research to study and mediate power

Through this method I mediated the perceptions of my power – although this is dependent on what I read from what the women reflect back in different modes of communication, some subtle while others direct and/or spoken. As a designer I had more spaces or dimensions of critical reflection available for interacting with rural communities that are craft makers. In these spaces: the social space relates to my understanding as a Pakistani

woman of the over arching socio-political, educational and gendered space in Sindh (who grew up in Pakistan, although further educated and living in London); the practitioner's/weave space relates to my phenomenological understanding or reflection of my own craft practice and that of others; the crafting space (village workshops) provides an environment of mutual learning and inquiry; the relationship space supports in reflecting on the development of our relationship with the help of the other spaces; and the 'textile dialogue' and inquiry space between crafts provides another unlearning of social conditioning and critical reflection and learning space.

2.4 Empowerment and agency

As discussed in the last chapter, empowerment is a widely used term in development work for projects. In theoretical terms empowerment is given different definitions regarding the 'what and how', yet most agree that 'it is a multidimensional and interdependent process involving social, political, economic and legal changes' through meaningful participation to quote Jethro Pettit (2012) from the Development Studies perspective. Community psychologist Marc Zimmerman[50] describes empowerment as a value orientation and observes how through its approach, empowerment can lead to social change. He describes empowerment approach to intervention design, implementation, and evaluation as one that redefines the professional's role to one as collaborator and facilitator rather than as expert and counselor, learning about participants through their cultures, their worldviews, and their life struggles (Zimmerman 2000). I understood some other definitions of empowerment through Zimmerman (1995; 2000) and the *Handbook of Community Psychology* (Rappaport and Seidman, 2000). These are empowerment as a construct linking individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviours to social policy and social change (Rappaport 1981; 1984) and empowerment as an intentional ongoing process focused on the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people that lack an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (Cornell Empowerment Group 1989).

Zimmerman suggests that language continues to promote dependence on professionals and experts, creating 'the view that people are clients in need of help' perpetuating the idea that there's a top-down, a unidirectionality (2000:44). Pettit suggests empowerment is rooted in the positive social change agenda yet when empowerment is pursued in 'more

[50] Professor, Health Behaviour and Education at the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan. He has undertaken extensive research on empowerment theory and community based research methods. http://www.sph.umich.edu/iscr/faculty/profile.cfm?uniqname=marcz

mechanical and technical ways', when approaches are 'cherry-picked' so that the status quo is not threatened, its emancipatory origins are diluted or lost. Others (Eyben, Kabeer et al. 2008) suggest that the word 'power' in itself is contentious and even threatening in development policy and practice – with it sometimes being excluded in organisations' definitions of empowerment. Chambers (1983:76) highlights an example of the importance of power relations in rural contexts where relationship hierarchies may form in favour of the outside-facilitator due to years of unidirectional knowledge transfer. He argues that modern scientific knowledge from urban centres is seen as the only knowledge of significance in rural societies and those who acquire formal education and training and live and work in rural areas derive part of their status from being possessors of this knowledge. This means that not only do uneducated rural people perceive them as superior, but it also places them in a position of authority in their own eyes. There is consensus that the crux of the issue of the wide gap between understanding and practice of participatory empowerment is the complexity of power relations (e.g. Eyben, Kabeer et al. 2008; Gaventa 2006; Pettit 2012). Power relations encompass not only individuals such as the facilitator and community through forms of agency but also the social and political structures that surround communities such as those of NGOs, local governments, schools and privileged elites. Some note it as 'formal' and 'informal' (Pettit 2012) forms of power while others as 'visible', 'hidden' and 'invisible' power (Gaventa 2006; VeneKlasen and Miller 2006). A direct physical projection of deep-rooted power relations was noted in the example of the CEO in Chapter 1. As Guerrero et al. note (2014:1176), 'people who employ power cues and act powerfully tend to be perceived as powerful'. Power relations frameworks are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Chambers and Pettit suggest that rural communities might not rely on their own initiatives to change their situation because of these conditions and social constructs. This in addition to the lack of control over resources and socio-political situations in Sindh is bound to create a disempowered perception of local communities' agency and potential. I noted a lack of self-worth in communities similar to the findings of other facilitators (Bardai 2014) working in Sindh. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's (1984; 1986) ideas of social power created through cultural and symbolic means can be applied to material culture in Sindh. Outsiders' actions in craft development projects although well-intentioned do not always consider the impact of tacit and implicit dialogue on power relations. This can send an unintentional detrimental tacit message that may socially condition marginalised communities who rely on their strong visual and material cultures for their sense of identity, creativity and social belonging (Bourdieu 1984; Mezirow 2000; Polanyi 1966; Sachs 2008; Tilley 2006).

Psychologist Albert Bandura[51] discusses psychosocial functioning through the mechanisms of personal agency, which he terms as personal and/or self-efficacy (1995, 1997). He describes how one might transform his/her opinions of self:

> Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs of personal efficacy. Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations. Efficacy beliefs influence how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act (1995:2).

These ideas on the perception of knowledge transfer, of self-perception and the mode of exchange provided an understanding of the environments and behaviours that might be required (including my own as a researcher) to facilitate the women's agency and address power relations in this context.

Zimmerman's fellow community psychologist, Kenneth Maton (2008) notes that a favourable setting or social environment that provides support and interaction may lead to participant empowerment and contributes to development. He (2008:5) notes that individuals and communities can bring about positive social change if this right kind of empowering environment or 'setting' is provided. This suggested to me that an emancipating experience for women artisans might be with choice: having their own say in working, with whom and through their own agency.

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995), Tilley (2006) and Merleau-Ponty (1945) have all advocated the subjectivity of the researcher as crucial for understanding and building new perspectives and social environments. Bandura notes, 'People are partly the product of their environment. Therefore, beliefs of personal efficacy can shape the courses people's lives take by influencing the types of activities and environments they choose to get into. People avoid activities and environments they believe exceed their coping capabilities. But they readily undertake challenging activities and select environments they judge themselves capable of managing' (1995:10). Also discussing human development Martin Pinquart and Rainer K. Silbereisen (2004:294) note on a community level this is more likely to occur if people are made aware of these choices in groups, so no individual feels isolated if for example they wish to exhibit their difference of opinion and can support one another and show support through tolerance. On an individual level, personal resources

[51] Professor Emeritus of Social Science in Psychology at Stanford University, California

such as self-efficacy, confidence, opportunity and other available options will be the catalyst for changing mindsets and old forms of behaviour.

Gender empowerment has a measure used in Human Development Indices listing economic participation and decision-making power, political participation and power over economic resources. The indices are used to obtain the ratio for men and women in similar activities as well as same gender. However, UNDP reported 'gender inequality remains a major barrier to human development' (2015: 10). While the availability of gender disaggregated data remains an issue and measurement indices are debated, women's progress in capacity has not created more equality in economic opportunities and outcomes (UNDP 2015). McGee and Pettit (2020:6) argue that 'analysts of civic and political power often downplay or disregard' dimensions of power that include multidimensional angles of agency and structure. Not understanding country specific contexts that create opportunities for women to change their disadvantages and/or work within the 'cultural' difference (Appadurai 1996) parameters with qualitative approaches might be an underlying issue. Whereas Sen (2015) suggests language not numbers might help to move closer to achieving development goals. I cannot draw a comparison to AGJ men's craft activity, as they engage mainly in agricultural activities, hold salaried jobs while some run a small grocery store. As this study is craft specific the field settings are women only (Reinharz 1992).

This led me to our reciprocal agency as craft makers and young women. There was a unique commonality between the women and myself as makers whose visual and practical skills seemed to be a more confident form of expression and perhaps further developed than our linguistic skills.[52] Stitch-craft is a known activity that the AGJ women as traditional artisans believe to be within their coping capabilities, an activity they are adept at, only they hold power over it. The women are not reliant on their men and/or others for it (see Appendix 3 about how the AGJ women and men see this as women's work). Belief in our abilities might be seen as a form of personal empowerment that may activate our own agency, as does making meaning in experiences. One cannot empower others, as it happens through critical reflection of one's own account and requires favourable settings. Maton (2008) indicates empowerment is a long-term voluntary and participatory process that requires sustained engagement and exchange, eventually raising awareness and

[52] Although I had not been diagnosed with dyslexia and dyspraxia when I started this research I was aware that my visual and practical creative skills allowed for a freer expression than my language skills. My methods relied on the strength of visual and practical skills for the women and myself.

facility in participants. His ideas helped me to outline the theoretical framework that is required for change to occur in this context building on Bronfenbrenner's ideas. The characteristics and psychological mediators described by Maton were used in my research to explore empowering settings in AGJ village (in Chapter 4).

2.5 Social change

Social change theory is deeply influenced by the writings of Paulo Freire (1970; 1973; 1974) and his approach to education as a method of liberation through critical thinking and consciousness, agency, justice, democracy, and identity. Social change theory is motivated by social justice and has two main perspectives: critical humanist and ecojustice. Transformation theory is an overarching theme of social change theory and driven by the humanist perspective. I have focused on humanist perspectives as it has more potential for power relations to develop whereas other theories might not provide as much potential in relation to design practice. Freire advocates social transformation to create positive social change. His work is a major source of inspiration for my research criteria and thinking along with theories of social transformation through learning, self-perception, relationship systems in local environments and empowering settings.

Freire describes a similar disparity in Brasil to that of my research field. His work which whilst written in the 1970s for Brasil has relevance to present-day Sindh because of the prevalent inequality between social classes, of embedded power issues and the way that Freire analyses these systems. He argued for more democratic forms of education, based on participants' own experiences rather than being taught or told how to do things, as this enables a truly democratic society in which participants reach 'critical consciousness' (1970). This can also be applied to developmental practices especially those in relation to craft projects. For example, some project targets and measurement indicators of empowerment (Kabeer 1999) such as a certain number of trainings given to a certain number of women, is not an approach that generates critical awareness in the participants of their situation or abilities. It results in repetitive, non-critical and mechanical patterns of thought and behaviour that mirror in craft in numerous repetitive designs that artisans keep making long after projects end and facilitators leave. The relationships between participants and craft facilitators tend to resemble those that Freire describes as 'dependence on high-sounding phrases, reliance on rote, and tendency toward abstractness' (1973:37). He suggested that education should be used as a cultural action

through which people can learn new attitudes and habits of participation, as opposed to passivity.

Material culture is a local form of knowledge in doing, thinking and exchange. Freire's approach focused on working on illiteracy (a necessity) and education for invention simultaneously. In this project I propose that making a traditional *gajj*[53] for example is seen as a necessity which can be equated to rote learning or literacy – a foundational requirement as part of the material identity of a culture, while education for invention can be equated to how craft can evolve through critical engagement and thinking by younger generations of the community. The latter requires spaces that allow for this form of inquiry with one's craft. This is not to say that changes have not been made in their craft by different communities' already, the Kailash tribe in north Pakistan has long substituted organic ornaments for plastic buttons and other manufactured ornaments in their traditional dress. Others in Sindh have replaced organic dyes with chemical dyes and silk with cheaper polyesters (Askari and Crill 1997; Gillow 2010). Yet, this form of change often comes from an economic need to compromise or compensate because of expense rather than real 'choice'. These changes usually do not represent a critical engagement space with craft.

The Theory of Change (2019) provides a methodology for planning, participation and evaluation to bring about social change including an outcomes framework. This research study maps out the 'embodied practice' (Pettit 2020) and space of making textiles with a focus on power relations; the monitoring and evaluation aspects require further development as a complete Theory of Change and are ongoing to accommodate different practices of craft and social contexts. As McGee and Pettit (2020:6) note, social change 'is a long-term incremental and strategic process for activists and movements, reaching beyond episodic protest and advocacy'.

This research focused on social justice as equitable justice, agency and power, in the context of creating positive change in the women's lives, that relied on critical questioning and reflection – reviewing and revising their perceptions of relational power with others. This refers to what the AGJ women consider their rights as women and as members of the local and larger community. While social justice and equity are at the heart of social change theory in all disciplines yet the more recent perspective of ecojustice includes ecological concerns alongside. Advocates of this view, professors in educational

53 Or another traditional product for income

leadership, environment and place-based education, Gail C. Furman[54] and David A. Gruenewald[55] argue that 'most discourses on social justice are incomplete because they are concerned exclusively with human beings and fail to acknowledge the interdependence of social and ecological systems' because this perspective 'runs the risk of reinforcing the very assumptions (e.g. individualism, competition, consumerism) that underlie and help to reproduce the current unjust political economy' (2004:59-60).

Yet even in a traditional collectively concerned society, attention to individualistic characteristics of participants' work can prove to be beneficial. Similarly, sociologist Jack Mezirow's (2000) work on transformative learning advocates for collective change yet focuses on individual learning and transformation (Hoggan 2016). His ideas are discussed in detail in Chapter 4 in this study's context. I argue that women artisans must first realise their potential as individual makers. The next step, or one that can also be simultaneously coordinated, is discussing how to work together (for socio-economic development), for example through collective organisation workshops. The RSPN project I worked with emphasised collective working[56] values through sensitisation workshops on cooperative principles but was lacking the creative empowerment of the makers first. This resulted in participants not knowing what to do with this new-found organisational and commercial awareness.

Due to archaic social class structures in place in Pakistan that lend heavily to create disadvantaged factions in society, even the most basic ideas of social change theory have not been implemented in practice let alone acknowledge arguments such as Ecojustice. To create an understanding and awareness of social justice and equity first, as Sen suggested, I have focused on perspectives relating to the humanist approach primarily social transformation theory in building my criteria for action research.

2.6 Transformative approaches in social transformation theory

There are two main approaches. The first targets the transformation of society by educating the oppressed, the victims of social marginalisation. Another targets the privileged solely or alongside the oppressed requiring that the privileged understand the systems of oppression that occur from prevalent social hierarchies.

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[54] Department of Educational Leadership and Counselling Psychology, Washington State University

[55] Associate Professor and Canada Research Chair, Lakehead University

[56] This does not refer to the local Eastern culture of collective concern and community but rather about building an awareness of collective business principles.

2.6.i Transformative change for the privileged

Ann Curry-Stevens[57] suggests that for the pedagogy of the oppressor it is important to 'acknowledge the need for the privileged learner to understand power structures and dynamics in societies and how the status quo is upheld by unexamined acceptance of power relations [...] to transition out of individualism and toward greater collective concerns and a sense of interdependence [...]. A companion part of the process is embrace of the civic virtues, including critical thinking, empathy, integrity, honesty, commitment to inclusion and the courage to act on these values' (2007:41). I represent social affluence: education and independence that can make the marginalised feel subordinate in terms of knowledge, for example. The local landlords on the other hand, hold the locus of social and political power in the setting and have historically subjugated groups of people to maintain their dominance. I started working with the women through an NGO and then directly. I do not have any direct relationship with the local landlords or their families neither do I have any family ties with landowners in Sindh or elsewhere. In the Shrujan example in Chapter 1, one pitfall of power is not acknowledging the obvious link of represented power in the local area due to the Shroff family's factories being located there. This begs the question of what choices are available and what choices would those not privileged make in these structures? This influence may be perceived to bring benefits such as employment in factories for community members as 'reward power' (French and Raven 1959) or adversely social isolation (Dowding 2006). These privileges are subjectively attached to individuals and the perception of rural communities is not free from this sense of societal 'belonging' or 'place'. Similarly, in AGJ's case, N, who works from a local landlord's house has a subtext of power due to this feudal association.

Curry-Stevens discusses how empathy can play a key role in the education of the privileged to be able to see the perspective of the oppressed. In Pakistan's patriarchal society, women face similar forms of oppression and vulnerabilities, regardless of their social background. These range from low social status, gender inequality and lack of decision-making in the household to verbal and sexual harassment, assault, violence and abuse. Young women especially can be victims of sexual harassment in public places and in the workplace.

I reflected on my own experiences of being a young woman in these spaces. My background in making by hand also allowed me to reflect on aspects of craft that I found empowering or disempowering such as using my craft making as a form of self-expression.

[57] Director of the Center for Community-Initiated Research to Advance Racial Equity (CCIRARE)

I focused on visual skills and practical learning that didn't put highly skilled women at a disadvantage due to illiteracy.

Curry-Stevens clarifies this is a voluntary process. It may not be welcomed by all and is applicable only to those who are willing to relinquish power after this understanding. For those that control power locally in Sindh, this voluntary action would be difficult to implement, therefore it is contextually relevant to focus on raising awareness in the oppressed. However, facilitators can critically reflect on the interdependent system of power relations in detail in their efforts of development.

2.6.ii Experiential learning and transformative learning

Freire suggests experiential learning as the kind of transformative approach required to create critical consciousness, liberation, and autonomy in rural populations. He proposes systems that provide critical awareness and thinking are required for social change to occur in historically hegemonic societies. He advocates liberating approaches in which culture is central. In this context this means craft inquiry and praxis. Freire suggests, 'Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other' (1970:53), echoing Miller and Veneklasen's positive forms of power (2006).

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning enabled me to understand how adult humans learn, reflect and make meaning. Our experiences as humans can define the choices we make.[58] Feminist and psychotherapist Roszika Parker author of *The Subversive Stitch* discusses similar transformative qualities in the agency of embroidery as craft practice. Her work traces back to the role of mediaeval British guilds that exercised the power to withhold and control embroiderers' agency, right up to creativity in modern day making. She suggests:

> The process of creativity – the finding of form for thought – have a transformative impact on the sense of self. The embroiderer holds in her hands a coherent object which exists both outside in the world and inside her head. Winnicott's theory of mirroring helps us understand how the experience of embroidering and the embroidery affirms the self as a being with agency, acceptability and potency [...]. The embroiderer sees a positive reflection of herself in her work and, importantly, in the reception of her work by others (2010:xx).

This transformative impact on the sense of self encouraged me to explore the complexities

[58] Using Mezirow's ideas I have described this research in more detail in Chapter 4

of power in the nature of craft making and development in this context. The AGJ women had a lack of opportunities for transformative learning and visibility as artisans but felt strongly that their craft reflected them, as their identity (AGJ group conversation, 2009). This suggested to me that the reflection of oneself in one's craftwork is not limited to any particular culture of making, different forms of relating exist. This study's approach was creating empowerment and enabling critical thinking processes in this form of agency through material culture and craft practices. It is suggested as an alternative to more conventional approaches.

I understood that for real critical pedagogy both the facilitator and rural participant must engage in dialogue and two-way communication. The flow of information and knowledge must also be bi-directional. I used this as a basis for knowledge and craft exchange with the women. I concentrated on the process: through deconstructing their skill set experientially, the women could recognise various applications of their own craft with some guidance from me. Experiential learning has the benefit of generating a realisation on the participant's own account after creating a craft inquiry or series of craft inquires. My role of creating encouragement or guidance is as a craft partner who reflects back the women's practices through a different lens. It is not necessarily in a verbal sense but by responding with different forms of craft inquiry spaces, such as the still-life textile series and my weaves. Different to creating a small manufacturing unit or commissioning products in batches, my approach was to try and use my experiences of developing creativity from a British design education to help the women find agency in their own work.

2.7 Power relations frameworks

For this research I searched for frameworks that would enable an environment of 'self-reflective' empowerment for the women where social transformation and learning could occur both with regard to themselves (as artisans and women) and those from the outside (such as myself). Environments that allow for development of critical reflection and thinking were needed to build understanding of the women's agency, to make informed decisions and be aware of their choices as previously discussed. Participatory development offers methods such as Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) that advocate collective concerns with 'self-critical epistemological awareness' (Chambers 1997) for facilitators at its core. Yet, Rosemary McGee argues that the view that communities are 'homogenous, harmonious units whose members share common interests and priorities contrasts sharply with reality, and leaves RRA/PRA ill-equipped to deal with power differences between participants or discern the weaker

voices among them' (2002:105-106). Kabeer's empowerment framework emphasises the three interrelated dimensions of power relations: resources described as the pre-conditions, agency as the process and achievements as the outcomes. She argues agency alone cannot be increased without consideration of the conditions under which choices are available to those marginalised, in the way that resources are or can be accessed (1999; 2005). John Gaventa provides a framework of analysis through the 'power cube', it describes 'power over' others as either 'visible' or explicit and 'hidden power' as concealed whereas 'invisible power' as internalised power through social beliefs and structures. He suggests transformative change happens in 'rare moments when social movements or social actors are able to work effectively across each of the dimensions […] to challenge visible, hidden and invisible power simultaneously' (2006:30). Similar to Gaventa, building on Steven Luke's (1974) three-dimensional power, Valerie Miller and Lisa Veneklasen's 'power matrix' works on the premise of 'visible, hidden and invisible' power that operates 'to exclude and privilege' some 'over' others while positive power that is transformative is: 'power with', 'power within' and 'power to'. Whereas, John French and Bertram Raven (1959:151) note five bases of relational power based on perception: 'reward power' of the dominant providing rewards, 'coercive power' of the dominant meting out punishment, 'legitimate power' of legitimate right to prescribe behaviour for others, 'referent power' of mutual identification and 'expert power' of the dominant having specific knowledge or expertise.

As noted Sindh has different layers of power based on these frameworks, however its manifestation has mainly negative connotation; yet, Miller and Veneklasen's (2006) definitions of 'power with', 'power within' and 'power to', and French and Raven's (1959) 'referent power' provide positive forms of power that can be explored in the craft making context, alongside Chamber's (1997) 'self-critical epistemological awareness' as a design facilitator. This research builds on these social sciences power relation frameworks for its own power relations framework exploring positive power through craft making in my Power Signifiers approach in Chapter 4.

2.8 Participatory design

Craft, in the way it is practised, perceived and experienced between artisans and an outsider as a mutual partner rather than as an expert, might be helpful in dealing with power relations. These ideas informed the mutually inclusive role of the designer as a research and development practitioner for this project's methodology. Participatory research approaches in the field of rural development describe methods in which rural

people and outsiders are partners (Chambers 1983). Chambers supported my understanding that, 'examples of this are respect for the poor and greater sensitivity to the dangers in traditional research of exploitative data-mining, taking the time of busy poor people and giving little or nothing back […] research approaches that are open to the unexpected and able to see into and out from the predicament of the rural people themselves are needed' (1983:73-74). Design thinking and participatory design offers insight into this perspective, according to the CEO of IDEO Tim Brown:[59]

> (1) that designers should be more involved in the big picture of socially innovative design, beyond the economic bottom line; (2) that design is a collaborative effort where the design process is spread among diverse participating stakeholders and competences; and (3) that ideas have to be envisioned, "prototyped," and explored in a hands-on way, tried out early in the design process in ways characterized by human-centeredness, empathy, and optimism (Brown, in Bjogvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren 2012:101).

Participatory design researches with stakeholders, it does not necessarily include designing with the facilitator. It entails multiple methods (e.g. mapping, drawing, making and workshops) that guide 'development processes and methodological strategies' (Foth and Axup 2006). Although, co-design and co-creation overlap with participatory design, they are used specifically to describe jointly creating something between designers and stakeholders (Ramaswamy 2011; Rhodes 2014; Sanders and Stappers 2008). The concept has been used on a variety of levels in design participation. Sanders and Stappers define co-design roles of the end-users or stakeholders as one that changes with the designer and 'plays a large role in knowledge development, idea generation and concept development' (2008:9). Ramaswamy suggests co-creation is, 'inclusive, creative, and meaningful engagement with stakeholders, to mutually expand value, based on human-centric experiences, through a strategic architecture of engagement platforms […], entailing transparency, access, dialogue, and reflexivity' (2011:39).

Although the contemporary design researcher's role and the agency of contemporary craft is characterised by participatory processes, human-centredness, empathy, optimism and design collaboration, these attributes lack in work with artisan communities. These approaches advocate for creativity of all individuals yet rural craft development rarely provides spaces or opportunities for artisans to express themselves. In a rural community disenfranchised at many levels of power, traditional makers' sense of self, confidence and

[59] IDEO is a positive impact global design company

self-perception might be restored through the nature of the makers' craft practice and interaction with outsiders.

2.9 Interconnectedness of craft and the social value of making

In a collaborative environment participants can learn visually and practically through the freedom of their practice through 'trying things out' and 'doing'. By allowing for mistakes and through the equitable approaches of outsiders/facilitators artisans can develop their skills and craft (Schon 1987). David Gauntlett[60] (2011) suggests that, 'making is connecting because through making things and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and connection with our social and physical environments (2011:2). Textile artist Gavin Fry points out the self-reflective process that occurs as a dialogue between a maker and their crafted object:

> Drawing on the insights afforded through the process of reflection, I place emphasis on the co-dependency of interworked materials and my lived experience. This becomes cemented through touch and making. By being in dialogue with my artifact, the interweaving of thinking through material accentuates the ways in which my embroideries become, a direct expression embodying experience (2012:16-17).

Despite Fry's non-utilitarian context of making, this idea underlines the power that creative agency can afford to a maker who has the space for (such) inquiry expressing the dynamic relation between lived experience and materials through craft practice. The reflective dialogue a contemporary maker has with their craft while making, engaging with and connecting to their craft is a privilege due to the opportunities they have. However, the material culture of traditional makers draws on capacities other than commodity production as do contemporary designer/makers or artists even when they make work to sell. Parker (2010) notes that makers may internalise the values that the outside world places on their work. Design curator and writer Glenn Adamson (2017) suggests that designers have a breadth of agency and that the field of design and craft portrays real people's lives, 'the everyday'. Hyde notes that community kinship is tied to material culture through gift exchange (2012). While, Sennett describes our capacities to form craft and human relationships as interrelated:

> The craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others. Both the difficulties and the possibilities of making things well apply to making human relationships. Material

[60] Professor of Creativity and Design at Westminster School of Media, Arts and Design, University of Westminster, UK

> challenges like working with resistance or managing ambiguity are instructive in understanding the resistances people harbor to one another or the uncertain boundaries between people [...]. I argue no more and no less than that the capacities our bodies have to shape physical things are the same capacities we draw on in social relations (2008:289-290).

These ideas on craft suggested to me that the processes of craft making offer another dimension to the relationship with others and our own perception, and, the development of self through our practice. Reinharz (1992: 28) discusses long-term relationship is at the heart of feminist research where women participants become 'friends of the researcher because they felt valued as individuals rather than "data providers" by 'being listened to and respected' leads 'to a kind of "bonding".' Similarly, in this research although economic commitment is made the women are engaged with beyond the capacity of 'commodity producers'. A useful approach is one that deals with social and material aspects of rural craft communities simultaneously rather than focusing on one or the other. The aspects of empowerment for a marginalised community of makers with rich material cultures differ from other marginalised communities in the developing world.

2.10 My critically reflective approach to social values for making in this research

The social values for making used in this research are derived from the experiences of those present within it. This is an ongoing cyclical process of inquiry based on the basic action research cycle shown in Figure 13.

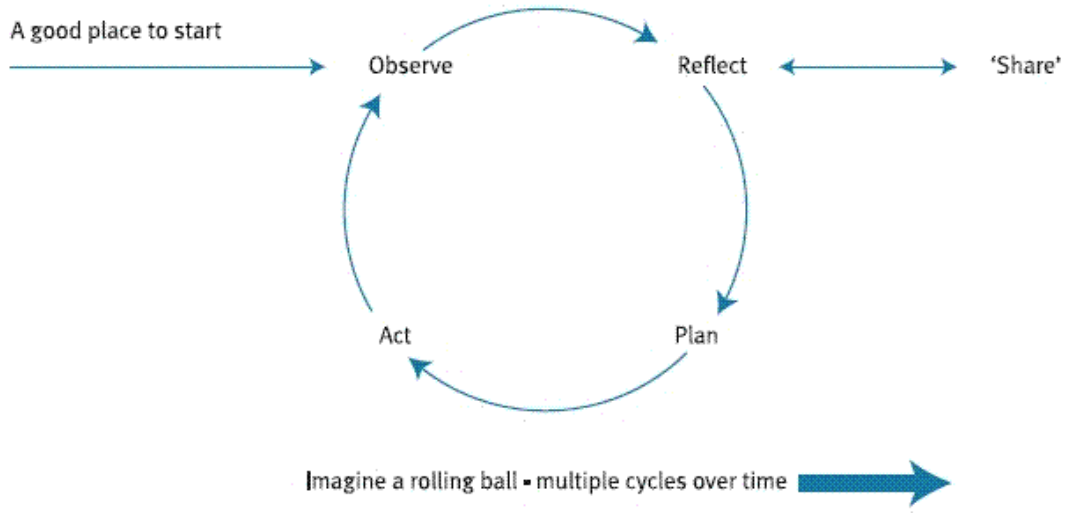

Figure 13 The basic Action Research cycle (Crane and O'Regan 2010)

I questioned how a bond between different makers could be achieved through their crafts and what makes a textile special and highly valued, not a piece of economic worth but more human and emotional? I started with observing and reflecting on my own embodied experiences of textiles craft and making to learn and develop my methods – exposing my position as researcher because the nature of human and material connections is subjective (Bronfenbrenner 1979, 1995; Merleau-Ponty 1945; Pink 2013; Tilley 2006). I then reflected on my past and current experiences of practice with the AGJ women and other craft communities of potentially negative and positive interactions to further develop my methods. This is detailed in the following sub-sections.

2.10.i Textiles as memory in my childhood

One of the drivers of my research relevant to the phenomenological epistemology is my relationship to textiles. The positive memory and relationship building that I found in the exchange of making together feeds into the work I undertake with the women and my methodology. My first conscious interaction with textiles, as distinct from clothing, was my first lesson with my grandmother about sewing, both hand and machine at ten years old. In the house we shared with her, textiles covered everything much more than in any of my friends' houses.[61]

In one of our projects together from the tiniest little compartment to the larger ones my grandmother and I sewed decorative cloths to cover the metal bottom of her *paan daan*[62] (betel leaf accompaniments box, particular to the Indian subcontinent). She changed these cloths regularly while a damp cloth was used to keep the betel leaves fresh. As I grew older, my grandmother gave her grandchildren her traditional clothing for special occasions, often embroidered and always with a sweet cardamom smell, which is synonymous for me with her. When I hold or wear a garment worn by my grandmother, it is always more special and cherished, perhaps enlivened by the smell or touch or sound that it makes, but most definitely for the memory it evokes of another place, another time.

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[61] The textile coverings included pillowcases, some of which she embroidered herself, tablecloths of all sizes embroidered by her, embroidered for her, bought by her for every table and sideboard, hand-crocheted glass coverings with beads to weigh them down.

[62] This is an ornate metal box, often made of silver, with special compartments to keep various things that go into the making of the betel leaf wraps that are usually eaten by older ladies and men.

As a child, I did not realise my senses were constantly being bombarded by the sight, smell and touch of textiles that occupied many spaces at home. There were all sorts of connections and relationships that textiles created around me, with me, with us as a family. My history with textiles and this very specific developmental aspect is embedded in my habitus (Bourdieu 1984) forming part of my syntax, language and lexicon.

Interactions and activities make people's relationships stronger, like that between my grandmother and me. Reflecting on the memories we had together and the things we shared, what stuck out the most to me, and was special to us, was the time we spent sewing and our conversations about textiles and sewing. It was our space, which we shared through textiles and our love of making. I wanted to explore this memory, the feeling of being together in that moment created through the experience of craft activity in the work with the women.

Inevitably my person and this research process are influenced by these lived experiences. My research methods explore my understanding of my own relationship with textiles as well as the work on agency and of understanding my own agency within textile practice.

2.10.ii Evolving craft and relationship perceptions

When I joined the RSPN project (2007) I reflected on my making-intensive design training as a recent graduate of textiles at Central Saint Martins (UAL) in London. While I was aware that different makers can adopt and identify with styles of craft making as their own, the value of creative dialogue arises from experimenting and critical engagement with craft.

During my work for the RSPN project, I developed close liaison with different rural groups of traditional makers, as well as experiences with local intermediaries, which brought forth a set of realisations and reflections on the RSPN project.[63] The positive aspects of the project approach were the collective organisational training, working in close proximity, undertaking relevant market research about the target market and patterns of consumption, and valuing the craftswomen's time. Through workshop discussions and exercises, the time it took to do certain stitches was recorded and catalogued, and a decent

[63] In 2007 – 2008, under the auspices of the RSPN project I travelled to different parts of Pakistan that were directly linked to the project: Hunza and Gilgit in northern Pakistan and Upper Sindh and Thar Desert in south-eastern Pakistan

living wage was calculated and paid. Rather than using the connoisseurship of art or the market price for utilitarian craft commodity this basis values the work on the human cost or human time.[64] I carried this basis forward in my project for research and product samples produced.

Figure 14 Collective work on cathedral patchwork piece, November 2007

The women reflected the relationship (or the desire for one) with the facilitator and project through the craftwork they undertook. After I started the research project on two occasions I received small gifts,[65] a keychain and a camera bag from the women, both crafted by them and in particular by one artisan. I felt this indicated their feelings and views to me more expressively than any words they may have used to describe our association or the desire to continue one. These gifts signified a welcoming feeling and symbolised positive connotation, cementing the idea that craft could be a form of expression with the women. Gift exchange is described by Hyde (1983:2012) as a felt bond

[64] This is based on the ideas of decent living wages and fair production practices advocated by organisations such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Women in Informal Employment Global Organisation (WIEGO) and those in fair and ethical trade for fashion camps such as Kate Fletcher (2008).

[65] The first was a key-chain in 2009 and the second was something the artisan had taken time to think about and make specifically for me: a small camera bag in 2010. The women made the key chains for SRSO. The key chain is a frequently seen product in NGO projects which leads to speculation about its symbolic meaning, it could be a symbol of wealth, or of privilege, or of control on certain assets or property or simply a product with economic value for the women.

and 'lively social feeling' in communities, creating the need for reciprocity. It might also be understood as Bronfenbrenner's (1979) 'context of a primary dyad' of appearing and being in one another's thoughts while the other is not present. This reciprocity exists in the space where I weave and place my cloth in the women's hands; they embroider it and place it back in my space. This exchange builds a language, a lexicon of craft. It is symbolic of reciprocal intentions and feelings, as well as a parallel form of inquiry, expression and dialogue. In a sense the time I spend with the women, my time, may be perceived as a gift as well, the women initially thought I was paid, working a job, to be there but once they learnt I was not, they allowed me privileges they did not others (e.g. longer times to make payments, preparing me lunch; see Appendix 8 for relationship details). Our exchange is of this syntax. Similarly, I learnt that my own actions needed to be symmetric towards all women individually in the group and not necessarily treating them as a collective body. Although I accepted one artisan's goodwill presents, I did not accept another's. Upon reflection I realised and noted, '*perhaps, this was an error because I judged the act with an economic mindset, very much what I was trying to avoid. Sughra was giving me the earrings as something of hers, which represented her emotion, and I rejected it. I felt regret. Why did I not accept them as I had the camera bag and keychain? I felt I had already accepted too many gifts and did not want to give out a materialistic message that gifts might please me and bring possible benefit'* (Mirza, reflective journal 2015). However mistakenly I had judged this gift exchange (Mauss 1954) based on its intrinsic values. Objects, especially hand crafted objects are not to be judged economically but with emotion as they symbolise and build meaning between people. In a hope to communicate its importance to me as a gesture, I later used a photograph of me wearing the earrings (taken at the village) amongst those of the women at the village in a jacquard piece (Figure 15). Through this I aimed to reciprocate the values behind the exchange of gifts.

Figure 15 Jacquard piece detail with photograph of researcher with artisan's earrings

Artisans Shereen and Ambreen provided insight on what the AGJ women might consider important values in work and relationships with facilitators. They differentiated between the spaces of making in this study and those they experienced with another designer – although they might not have articulated it directly, 'we are lucky to have found a designer like Seher, she is not strict like N' (Field notes 2014), referring to the strict quality control of commodity (to sell). While Ambreen (Field notes 2014) reported, 'She [designer, N] asked, '*Seher tumhay kya dehti hai*? (What does Seher give you [referring to money])? [Suggesting that she considered the only thing important to us was money] […] *yeh humari saath ki mehnat hai* (this is our hardwork together). She might come [for orders] once, twice, maybe more and give us this much money in our hands […] but yours and ours [relationship] together is long-term, it will keep going and never stop'. The quality of the relationship, expressive spaces and a social bond with a designer/facilitator were important values for the AGJ women, which is revisited in Chapter 3.

2.10.iii Making 'with the heart' (*Dil se banaya)*

I understood through the (Urdu[66]) term 'making with the heart' signified something close to making with emotion for artisans. I also felt this when I truly engaged with weave. It denoted the emotional connection felt with one's craft, perhaps through intrigue, excitement, immersion and/or embodied memory in the experience of making. However, what I learnt was that for rural communities — where this is not always a given due to their circumstances — there is value and distinction accorded to making with emotion rather than making otherwise.

I have included notes from my personal journals below, where I recorded artisans' responses and my own reflections on what I had observed.

> *Artisan Lal Buksh AMB village*
> *I shared about showing people[67] images of Lal Buksh weaving and of the village. Excited by this he first double-checked to affirm then upon acknowledgement he exclaimed, 'you made my heart happy (meaning you just made my day)!' He loved the appreciation of his work and accreditation to him. I told him I pointed out the pit-loom and his immaculate selvedge to people. Delighted, he said 'it looks like a selvedge from a machine right? But it's made by hand'. He repeatedly mentioned, 'I made it with my heart. And this time too I will give it my all and make it with the heart'* (January 2014).
> *Artisan Mukhtiar NKS village*
> *When I said I haven't yet made plans for the trip, and I just wanted to say hello over the phone, Muktiar said, 'that's the main thing, it's with the heart: its nice to just talk like that not only about work. Manners and interaction is the main thing, work is something that just happens but isn't the most important thing'* (January 2014).
> *Artisan Bhagul and Ambreen AGJ village*
> *'We made it but we didn't make it with the heart for them.[68] Have you seen the latest pieces (for S jo,) we really put our heart into it, do you like them?'* (December 2013)

In three consecutive conversations the term 'making with the heart' arose. Different artisans from three villages talked about making things with the heart. Not all things are made with the heart and it seems respect, placing value and appreciation, the identity of the made object, is also just as important for artisans as is economic return. In these cases making from the heart arose from the relationship created with the artisans. It does not seem to matter whether the relationship is in the early stages or a more developed one. The idea here is that artisans, makers, want respect for their craft no matter what their background. If we can

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66 Urdu is the national language of Pakistan

67 At UK fairs I displayed images of Lal Buksh weaving at this loom, explaining how the community weaves and dyes yarns, while selling his woven pieces to customers. The customers who loved his work also wanted me to pass on the message to him.

68 In reference to the products they produced for an SRSO sponsored event which they stated they felt compelled to produce at lower prices than they usually sell at.

provide respect through making, can we translate it into changing the way traditional artisans view their own craft? The artisans gain confidence, through confidence in their ability. This can be implemented through respect, giving your time or the act of practice. Understanding and spending time with artisans has the biggest reward of all in this case. The methods adopted aimed to make artisans feel empowered in the making sense. If nothing else it gives them a sense of pleasure and pride in the making again and, I believe, feeling joy and making with the heart define a connection to the craft when making. This connection is what I seek for long-term empowerment: it might not lie in financial return for the maker, it might lie in feeling joy for what you make but also getting a financial return on it. After all don't we all want to do what we love? A luxury that a craft-maker may enjoy, the act of making can be a labour of love, something with the heart (Mirza, reflective journal January 2014).

2.11 My synthesised methods of practice in our critically reflective spaces

This section looks at methods of practice realised from earlier observation, reflection and future learning potential for social and design practice. Although the context in which we carry out our craft and making is fundamentally different, with every visit, workshop and collaborative textile work between the women and I, we built a layer of trust, respect and friendship (see Appendix 8 selected field notes note our evolving relationship). This connection generated a different exposure to the women's lives than conventional contexts would have done. A vocabulary of spaces to engage in was provided to the women in my weaves, conceptual textiles and S jo products, each of which offered opportunities to think, interact, inquire and experience their craft practice in ways different to before.

2.11.i Phenomenological Approaches to mediate perception

Body language and the way one speaks and interacts such as physical proximity have far-reaching consequences than may be observed at first. In fact, I became aware of the significance of this from the women's reflection on my behaviour there. Artisan Naz recounted Ambreen's reply to designer N about how my physical interaction – sitting, talking and eating together – with the women without social distances was considered favourable by them rather than N's inquiry about financial incentives (Field notes, September 2013). Bracey (1998:17-18) notes the concept of social distance in early black sociological thought and segregation representing 'the mechanisms of accommodation' – one race becoming dominant while the other accommodating to an inferior position. While, Armstrong (1979:387) argues that phenomenology provided 'the epistemological foundation for black sociology'. This indicated the importance of the phenomenology of the spaces we occupied together where we could read different things from each other's body language and other unspoken, tacit messages. Of equal importance is the embodied

knowledge gained from the sequential reciprocation of exchanged textiles.

Using the rationale of phenomenological epistemology discussed in the introduction these messages also translate into what is being made by the women, into the crafted textile. This makes the approach go beyond the participatory observation of 'indigenous researcher' in indigenous community (Fahim 1977) and 'auto-ethnography' (Hayano 1979). While Hayano rightly questions '"objective" scientific research' and his use of 'auto-ethnography' in the 'native' researcher's role in the anthropological context is apt for this section, it only forms part of this research method i.e. only one layer of my approach (1979:99), which would not suffice for a textile practice-led study. Phenomenological epistemology enables the adding of another layer to participatory observation of social science. Pakistani attire in the cities is a different style to clothing in the villages. In the hope of making an unspoken statement of my effort to fit in, I dressed simply. I did not want to flaunt my social affluence. The women noticed my efforts, as later conversations with them revealed. I felt this was especially important when the women were starting to form their own perceptions of me as the outsider. In a conversation after seeing some of the craftswomen's wedding photographs, having discussions about attire and their perceptions of it, one craftswoman remarked, 'Seher, you should dress up when you come here, why don't you?' to which another artisan remarked, 'She comes here in simple clothing to fit in the rural and village surroundings, right Seher?' (Field notes, Feb 2014). Similarly, I made a conscious effort to not wear expensive or bright metallic jewellery yet, 'when my plastic watch broke, I wore an inexpensive stainless steel watch that was silver coloured. My reservations were not unfounded. It attracted immediate attention with Sughra's mother asking me how much it was and if she could order a similar one for her daughter's wedding trousseau' (Field notes, 2012).

Efforts towards not creating physical boundaries or establishing physical hierarchies is especially important in Sindh:[69] sitting close together, shaking hands, and hugging the women to greet them formed more equitable body language.[70] Prominent social hierarchies create a gap between classes and this social conditioning is manifested through physical touch. Anyone with such authority will not sit in the same space or at the same level as the craftspeople, with the exception of a handful of field staff. They will be given a physically higher level to sit on or an exalted space adorned with embellished

[69] Most consultants and staff will not sit together with the artisans and get hands-on in workshops. There are also some physical boundaries that pertain to social classes; people from higher social classes will not necessarily hug someone perceived to be from a lower social or working class in Pakistan.

[70] Hugging is not a formal greeting and usually reserved for close family, relatives and friends.

rallis.[71] In particular the local landlords do not sit on the same level as the local people so that local people are also physically made to look up to the landlords.

While it is not realistic to assume that the women will see me, the researcher, as one of their own, my efforts provided a tacit message of wanting to establish a relationship that did not keep to traditional social structures and had its own meaningful place. In South Asian culture, in particular Pakistan's, it is impolite to refer to people older than yourself or in a position of authority by their first name, out of respect. Due to the informal nature of our first meeting and relationship in my role as a design intern in the RSPN project, the women called me by my first name. I maintained this informal basis of relationship after becoming the project manager of the RSPN project and when I started this research study. This is in contrast to how the women usually address NGO staff, either using 'Madam' or adding it before the name. Although, sometimes I am referred to as 'baji' (sister) which is also a term of respect, the younger women always address me using my name. My age and appearance also helped this; being much younger than some of the women artisans they were able to accept this easily without feeling socially awkward. I noted the more informal the relationship, the more liberties I was allowed. I also had the advantage of practising a different craft to the women. This gave me, as the researcher, the understanding of making yet did not place me as an expert of embroidery or stitch. I could not impart any needlework expert training to the women in addition to what they already knew. This meant the women could keep control over their craft. In fact, in a workshop in January 2015, artisan Bhaitan sat next to me and asked me to learn how to make a small bracelet which she later assessed.

What most empowerment projects may overlook is that empowerment can be generated through the right settings, not just in the physical sense of space but a phenomenological one with multiple dialogues.

2.11.ii Workshops: our relationship and crafting space

Our craft space was in workshops at the village where we worked and interacted together. I recognised this idea of creating a crafting space to work, ponder and engage in, through my experience in front of a loom. I conducted two types of workshops simultaneously during the research: those that worked on the weave and stitch premise and those that worked for the market-facing aspect for S jo (see appendix 9). The workshops were a trial and error space where the women's skills developed further through practice, not all

[71] Traditional patchwork quilts used to cover wooden beds and the floor to sit on. The best ones are reserved for guests.

samples were made for sale (see Figure 16 for artisan Marvi's necklace examples, also Figures 20, 21, & 48.2 in Chapter 3).

Figure 16 Marvi's necklace design trials

Crafting during the field visits provided the study with its own psycho-geographic space where the women felt at ease. Coined by Guy Debord (1955) in the Situationalist, 'psychogeography' refers to the effects of geographical environment on the emotions and behaviours of individuals within them. While the women crafted, this setting produced a flow of conversation. During the workshops, I adopted a bricolage of sensory-ethnographic, phenomenological and participant observation methods: I was interactive and an active part of the workshops. I used two journals (Field notes and reflective) while also recording videos and taking photographs intermittently.[72] I wrote in English in my journals translating the conversations that happened in a mixture of Urdu and Sindhi. I used my videos to double check what I had written and add in other details. It was the immersion in this (workshop) space that allowed me to learn more as I developed a deeper understanding and relationship with the community. This engagement with members of the community brought glimpses of their life, feelings and views. The community's struggles and the artisans' motivations for doing things in the way they did were all topics of our conversations. This relationship-and craft-engaging space was

[72] A personal journal was also used but it was recorded mainly before the research while working with RSPN 2007 - 2008

unique to us, despite me being an outsider. It consisted – like any other subjective connection – of its own memories of making, laughing, joking, talking and sharing.

Supported by Pink's (2013) ideas of visual methodologies – photographs and videos were useful to reflect on my approaches, actions and demeanour while at AGJ village as well as reflect on the women's behaviour and body language in relation to my presence during the workshops. A series of photographs from the workshops is presented in the following chapter for the reader to get a visual sense of our space of interaction.

For the initial S jo product workshops, I explained the construction of components that made up the design guiding and encouraging the women to use traditional patterns differently. Every piece had a diverse physical crafting space, and required attention and 'thinking' to create it. This meant the women had to consciously engage with their craft using their own creative ideas, making decisions and problem solving as opposed to making something they were used to or asked to replicate (Chapter 3 provides examples chronologically). The women used their own creative sensibilities in choosing colour palettes and stitch compositions for the design of the pieces. My woven pieces provided a different space to the artisans to reflect on their needlework.

2.11.iii Weave: my craft as a space for creativity and a space for inquiry

Hand weave was my method of understanding the bond between craft maker and their craft, and it was also a means to create a different plane for gathering information. Craft making has unique qualities of thinking, mending and meditation (Igoe 2013; Hyman 2014; Matthews 2016) generating different emotions and meaning for different makers. I started this research practice within my comfort zone of weave, time I spend with my loom is time spent reflecting and learning more about myself too. Elaine Igoe (2013) refers to this process as 'textile thinking' in her research, deriving from Polanyi's concept of tacit knowledge and Schon's concept of the reflective practitioner (1987). Design thinking 'relies on our ability to be intuitive, to recognise patterns, to construct ideas that have emotional meaning as well as being functional…' (Brown and Wyatt 2010:33), while one of two participatory design values is 'the importance of making participants' *tacit knowledge* come into play' (Bjogvinsson, Ehn and Hillgren 2012). I made fabrics binding threads together creating a canvas for the traditional craftswomen to work on. In the initial dialogue (pieces from my first and second warp) the pieces were simple, with traditional colour palettes. Through the use of different textures, colours, patterns and stripes the

questions the weave asked became more diverse. The later questions were more personal, with woven images from the conducted workshops.

There were particular reasons for me to make woven pieces. First, the symbolic: putting trust and confidence in the women giving them something of my own which is precious; my hand-made weaves represent me, much like the traditional craft of the women represents them. The intended message is to trust them and place responsibility and confidence in their ability through placing my craft in their hands. Secondly, I aim to create and build up a craft exchange vocabulary between us as joint makers reflective of our relationship and journey together. Lastly, to invite a dialogue of a different kind, which can supplement and increase the knowledge we exchange. This conversation between the two crafts, stitch-craft and weave, gives our relationship another dimension. My weaves also aimed to make the women think about their needlework in different ways, experientially learning about their craft and their abilities in the process. I hoped the women would respond in different ways to the spaces, colours and textures created and offered.

The textile conversations became a tool, making a path for participatory design, creating a language that our journey and kinship built together. It facilitated the idea that no-one's knowledge is greater – just different, and to be exchanged. I used it to determine the differences in ability to experiment and the personal characteristics of the women. The responses to my fabric presented a practical indicator of each artisan's ability to take design risks or their craft sensibilities. I could also observe the confidence level of artisans through the nature of mark making. I found this indicated the women's perception of relationship with me and also reflected the innovative or traditional nature of their work. For example, Ambreen embroidered her name in relatively bold lettering into one of my weaves (Chapter 3), which indicated her high level of confidence and familiarity with me as a facilitator. This dialogue with craft opened another channel of communication and way of knowing. Some women were not verbally expressive or outwardly confident but their creative and experimental craft practice showed otherwise. This shows that there was another way for them to show their confidence.

I explored my kinship to weave as a maker by creating a woven canvas to record my perceptions. *For me, weave, and the act of weaving, provide a space of my own where I can explore my thoughts and reflect on things* (Mirza, reflective journal 2011). This maker's space or zone provided the ideal setting for reflection and of enquiry. I recorded voice memos, videos and used note writing as a method of inquiry while at the loom to explore

and define the spaces created and, for readers to 'feel' this act of submersion and emergence (examples in Chapter 3). This method was used to learn and explain what this space meant to me and how I interacted with it with the aim of using these reflections and realisations to inform the work with the women. *'With the loom and threads stretched out as the warp in front of me, I feel like I am in a different space, asking questions of my craft and answering some of them, making assumptions about the outcome by planning a warp, but the warp always turning out slightly different, as if with a mind of its own'* (Mirza, reflective Journal 2011).

My weave notes (in Chapter 3), give an idea of my craft space and what I used it for, shaping my thoughts or navigating my weaving to brainstorm certain ideas. In total I created six dobby warps with multiple samples and three Jacquard samples for my series of textiles dialogues.

2.11.iv Deconstructing traditional pattern: technical methods of craft exchange

The women used two types of technical craft practice at the start of the study: their own material culture like *Gajj* dresses made in traditional patterns, and design briefs set by others which were different to their patterns only requiring hand stitching or embroidery skills. The shapes and spaces where traditional embroidery has been carried out such as the camera bag gifted to me by Marvi (Figure 17) is an example of a border design that might be used on a cuff or along the edges of a scarf, or *dupatta*.

Figure 17 Camera bag gifted to me January 2010

Similarly, the women used basic string making techniques including hand binding to create ties on their traditional tunics and in their hair accessories, *Paranda.* In other words: a number of patterns have been used in the same way for generations, in a particular order or composition, shape and/or with specific stitches, such as on the neckline of traditional garments (Figures 18 and 19).

Figure 18 Example of *gajj,* traditional embroidered outfit with tassels

Once the women recognised these opportunities and abilities in their craft practice such as seeing the stitches as separate to their traditional order of arrangement (pattern), many variations were created. The design thinking space of 'ideation' encourages participants 'to come up with as many ideas as possible' (Brown and Wyatt 2010:34). I encouraged taking the embroidery into different three-dimensional shapes and introduced the use of cardboard cutouts, recycled rubber inserts and other jewellery findings to further trigger the process of ideation. This experiential way of learning more about the possibilities in their textile craft but also in themselves to create change, triggered a new sense of relationship and intrigue with an old traditional practice. It set off a chain of events leading to new design possibilities rooted in their own material culture that kept the traditional essence yet created something slightly different each time. The women started to believe in their own abilities as they gradually generated their own ideas and shared these ideas

with me.[73] For example, Marvi drew out her design on paper to see for herself but also to demonstrate her idea to me before making, something AGJ women had not done before. The hand-binding techniques that were recognised from tassel and string making for use in S jo necklaces and accessories visibly improved through this process of inquiry and practice (Figures 20 & 21).

Figure 19 Example of a traditional neckline pattern

[73] See chapter 4, section 4.3 (c) for details

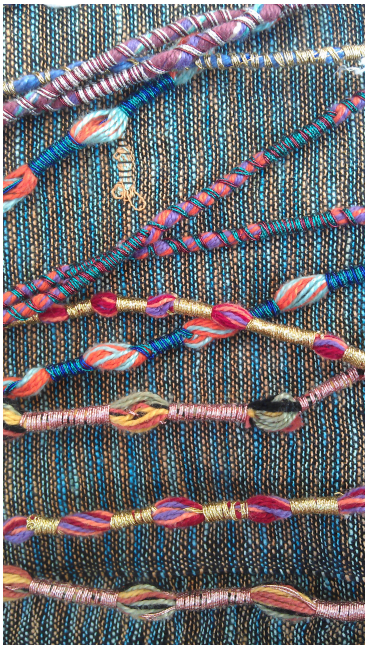


Figure 20

Figure 21

Figure 20 Strings for S jo necklaces created from tassel-making binding techniques Dec 2011
Figure 21 More elaborate and skillful strings for S jo necklaces Sept 2013

Two product ranges for S jo ensured the crafted products took into account the women's various levels of comfort with experimentation, expertise and craft-making as demonstrated below.

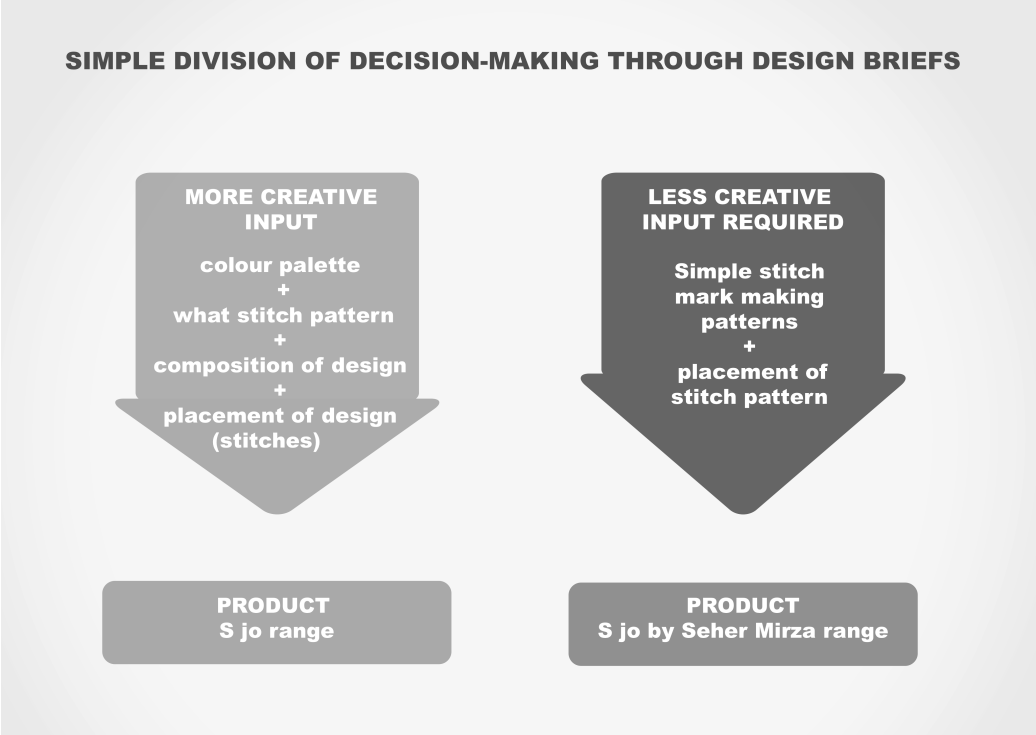


Figure 22 Diagram showing the different S jo briefs

My woven samples served as a space where the women could break up traditional patterns to accommodate and respond to the weave structure, colour, texture and patterns within. The women responded to my fabrics differently, creating diverse outcomes with weave and stitch (Chapter 3). I found that they separated the patterns and applied new variations by recognising them as separate from each other. The effects of what the women had learnt from the responses to my weave samples would often spill over into the artisans' responses to S jo product briefs as seen in Figures 23, 24a and 24b.

Figure 23 Researcher's weave sample with Shereen's embroidery interaction

Figure 24a and 24b

Figure 24a and 24b. S jo products (scarves) with variating tie-dye colours used to create different textile spaces for artisans' interpretations. Nusrat and Samina's take on brief for 'light' embroidery

Over time this boosted the women's confidence, and they tried complex, new ideas in their craft in both the embroidery spaces and tassel-making techniques, taking them further and improving them on their own account. Sughra's earrings discussed earlier provide a good example of an artisan taking the initiative to make something new without any specific product development training or workshop for it. She made it based on what she had learnt through the necklaces and deconstruction exercises we did and proudly wore the earrings to a meeting in Islamabad (Field notes June 2011).[74]

2.12 A framework for a synthesised approach to power relations through design

My methodology brings together the research concerns of empowerment and social change with those of craft practice between a contemporary design research practitioner as facilitator and traditional women artisans in this context. It relies on a cyclical process of contextually relevant inquiry as demonstrated in my methodology diagram (Figure 25).

[74] Sughra made and wore her earrings to the Annual Homeworkers Group meeting in Islamabad, she offered them to me after she came to the workshop wearing them

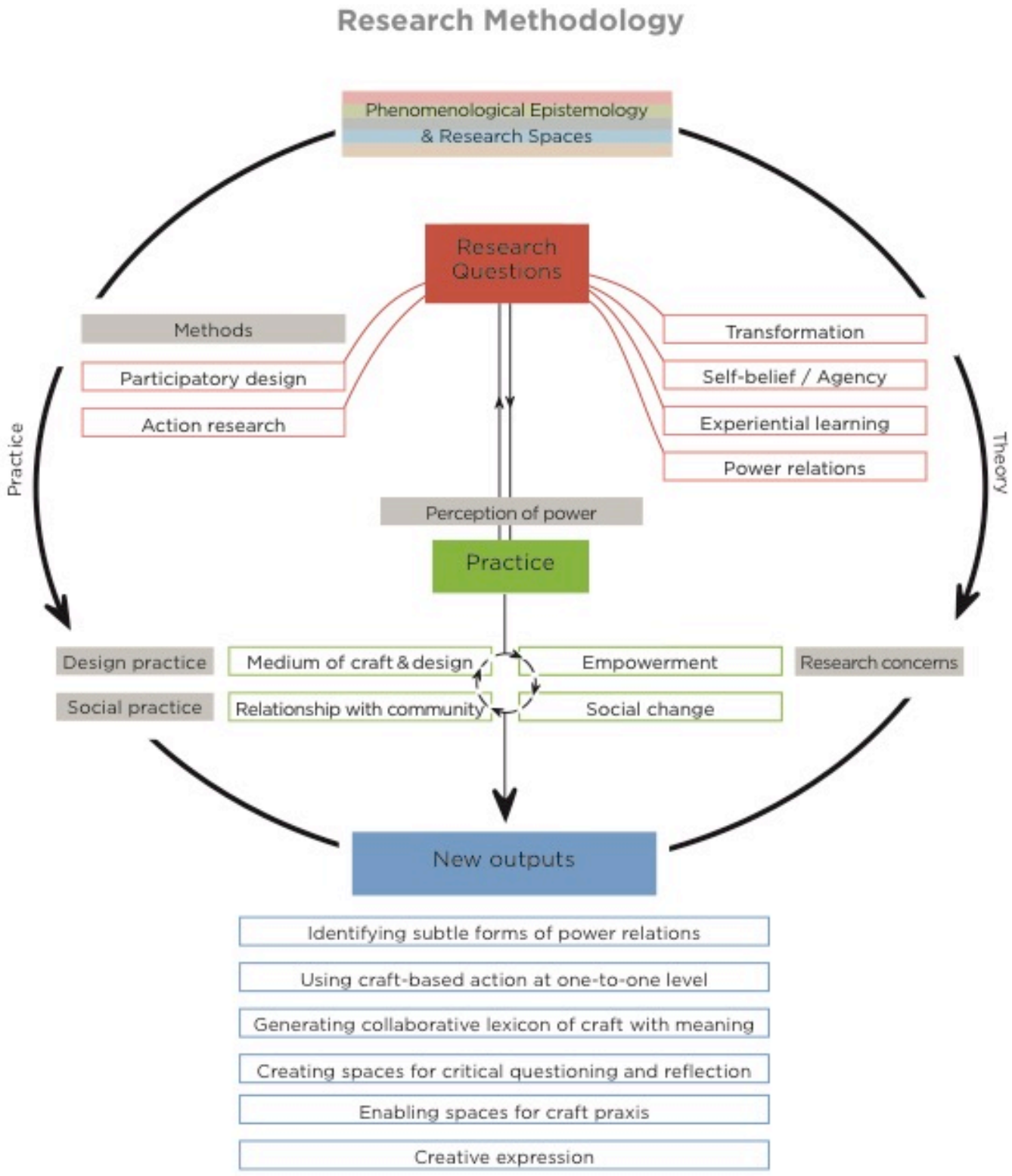


Figure 25 My Research Methodology

The discussion on methods in this chapter and the previous one might be summarised through contemplative and practical questions that can derive facilitators' overall project criteria and a contextual set of concerns. The outsider may critically reflect and analyse his/her place in the power context by reflecting on their embodied experiences of relevant activities and social bonding and what is important to their collaborating community that brings together the social, design and development concerns in that context. It includes the qualities of design and social practice alongside the values established through inquiry, re-inquiry and reflection as detailed in the latter parts of this chapter.

This will help to develop their unique approach and values through empathy and understanding. In this research, collective empowerment for women and triggering change to transform behaviour in marginalised craft communities are important values. I analysed useful concepts of 'how human beings learn', in learning and social transformation theory relevant for changing perceptions in developing my approach. In view of the power of the outsider, appropriate approaches to mediate its effects can identify positive social and material commonalities between the outsider and community to build a meaningful relationship and action. Positive mediums might include craft practice, the type of craft, collaborative space, personal relationship, craft and personal interaction and account for physical hierarchies and distinctions. Detailed concerns for practice were realised through this cyclical process: the quality of experience while making; the memory of craft practice; the attention to detail (workmanship); the creative identity and expression of craftsmanship, renewing itself with the contributions of the present generation practising it; exploring how craft practice could contribute in exchanging knowledge and understanding each other as individuals, helping to build a strong personal relationship and reciprocity.

These concerns and the unpicking of the relation between social practice, design practice and research concerns, including further detail on the new outputs (shown in Figure 25) is discussed in Chapter 4 whereas the next Chapter shows the spaces of practice.

Chapter 3: Creative Practice Dialogues – crafting and inquiry spaces of this research

As suggested in the last chapter, makers' emotions, questions and ideas are represented in their craft. The Anni Albers textile exhibition at Tate Modern (2018-2019) emphasises the notion of expression through craft, the use of materials as metaphor. Albers spoke of 'not dominating' the material and using it as a means of communication. While Guerrero et al. suggest 'the meaning in most interactions comes from nonverbal behaviour' which is 'particularly powerful' because numerous messages can be sent all at once (2014:107). Similarly, in this research this idea is explored between different makers from different worlds for deep rooted power relations and transformation, requiring a closer inspection of activities and craft praxis through which we as different craft makers each have a 'voice', learn about ourselves and others.

This chapter presents the creative practice methods that were based on the theory and framework analysed in earlier chapters. In this series of selected visual presentations of work, the women's 'voice' through stitch-craft, responses to weave and design briefs, is accessible tacitly on cloth, with thread and in participatory design interpretations for S jo (see Appendix 12 for a full list of images). A selection of my self-reflective dialogues, while immersed in (weave) practice, is also presented to expose my process (in my maker's zone) to the reader. The creative practice of this research has been divided into three categories: power relations, critical reflection and transformation in chronological order.

3.1 Power relations

This research uses making as the medium for a different reading of power dynamics between rural women makers in Sindh, Pakistan and an urban western educated Pakistani woman maker. Underlining the need for more embodied practice approaches such as storytelling, body-sculpting and role play for changing power, Pettit (2020:76) points out that at most university-level social science courses, learners 'are not asked to examine how power is enacted with their own bodies'. Building on his ideas (2020:77) of 'using embodied symbolism, metaphor and fantasy' for guiding participants 'that could otherwise be flattened by conceptual language', I used craft making and the surface of the fabric for an embodied dialogue of power.

Textiles series one 'representational samples' was bought cloth given to the women with the design brief of 'the best way of representing what you can do and of representing yourself' (see Appendix 12 for more detail). This followed from the women's description of their stitch-craft as their 'representative identity' and subtly showed that as an outsider I acknowledged their perception and wanted to explore *with* them. I requested the women to stitch their names into the pieces, so the makers behind the textile representations were not anonymous[75] but represented 'next' to their work. I hoped to communicate from the start that identity, recognition and the individual was integral to the whole, i.e. the group was important in this study. This series serves to show that the women created traditional patterns which were beautifully embroidered along with their names but stuck to convention despite an open-ended design brief of interpreting the (fabric) space however they wanted. The women's embroidery samples are mostly contained within borders and all bounded in symmetrical arrangements (Figure 26) showing the tracing and re-performing of 'habituated patterns of hierarchy and domination' (Pettit 2020:79).

[75] While not all makers are literate most can write their names.

Figure 26

Representational samples

Samina

Shereen

Ghulam Zohra

Ambreen

Bhagul

'Earlier generations used to do horumchi [or hormuch] stitch, but we don't do it much anymore as it's time-consuming and difficult' (Bhagul, 2009)

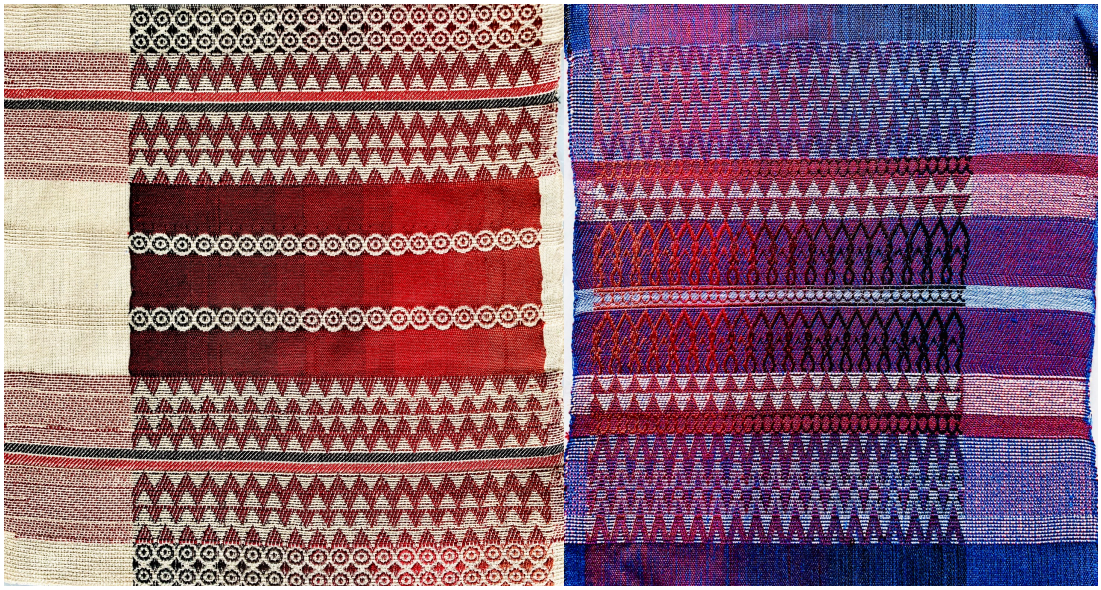
Figure 26a Bhagul and the interlacing stitch Hormuch (above)

The textile dialogue series that followed concentrated on establishing a different power dynamic between the researcher and the women. For this I wove samples by hand on the dobby loom specifically to start the 'dialogue'. However, upon reflection my early weave samples seemed too decorative. As the researcher/facilitator I had taken up all the space to pattern and embellish, 'to talk' on the fabric and there was not enough space for the women to interact with their embroidery. This made me question and rethink my approach as a researcher. I was dominating [the space] where I wanted to be equitable. These samples were not considered appropriate for 'dialogue' and therefore I did not give these to the women (see Figure 27).

Figure 27

Early weave samples

Seher



Seher

Self-reflection on my emotions, apprehensions and thoughts on my studio practice (warps, yarns, textiles) to be shared with the women helped inform and develop my research practice. I took a reflective and conscious approach to my weaving while recording my thoughts (see Figure 28).

Figure 28 Seher, the cloth and loom

Weave room 24th February 2010

Going back to weave after a gap of over 2 to 3 years, it feels slightly nerve-racking. I want to keep it simple, yet I know when I weave the threads take a life of their own and create their own path. That is the way the warp and the loom work: it is hard to predict how it will truly work until the making starts, and part of the excitement is the unpredictability of it all. We may order the threads to behave in a certain manner, but they never do. I gravitate towards a yarn which I am used to: 2/60s silk. I cannot help but think the women might feel like this at this stage too, to be comfortable, to go with what one knows and keep within that territory. Perhaps that is the key to generating new knowledge, by breaking and experimenting with the comfortable, the known.[76]

Weave, at the loom 14th March 2010

Choice of yarn is important as it sends a message to the women. What I choose to weave will have implications. I have chosen silk/hemp and silk for now and later will try other natural yarns. The women are used to natural fibres. I have also chosen to work with traditional colour palettes from the region, traditional embroideries and the ajrak,[77] *a hand block-printed fabric indigenous to the Sindh province, often serves as a provincial textile symbol.*

[76] I had a gap of two to three years where I did not get a chance to weave at all and this made me tentative at first to start again. Even though there is a familiarity with the loom and threads, once you start to submerge yourself it all comes rushing back

[77] The *ajrak* is a hand block-printed fabric with very deep roots with the region. Artefacts found from the Indus Valley civilization (2600 – 1900 BC) seem to suggest a very similar patterned fabric on a statue (the Priest King statue, National Museum, Karachi) found in the ancient city of Mohen jo daro, under two hours' drive from one of the villages where the research is based. It is considered the national symbol of the province, and synonymous with its identity.

Weave, at the loom 16th June 2010 5.20 pm

While weaving the first sample of the second warp, I constantly question where the weave or the textiles will take me. While I weave, I think about why I do this and where it will lead. Do I just weave to enable thinking more clearly? It does provide a sort of therapy, when I'm stressed. People tell me I get agitated and irritated far more easily if I feel I'm not weaving well or my warp is not doing what I want it to do. I wonder if there's any truth in that.

What will the women think and feel about this fabric that I weave now? This is what goes through my mind, will they feel that it is more inclusive with less patterning or at least not an imposing pattern all over the cloth. It is cotton so they can handle it well.

The questions just keep swelling in my mind. Can the fabrics facilitate the process of engagement? I think that I'm trying to find newer approaches to this kind of work, those that use the medium as a tool. It is not a development approach but that does not mean that it discounts social development as a goal.

I keep my notebook next to my loom and try to record my thoughts. What do I mean by collaborating with the artisans? Collaborate on which aspects?

I was asked by an MA 1st year [student] in the weave workshop today, 'what exactly am I trying to do?'

Good question, I think; I am using instinct and what 'I think' will work for traditional stitch-craft for the women to work on.

The fabrics I create have to be less intrusive and 'loud' as if they were interviewers – neutral. I try to make silent fabrics, which can invoke and invite conversation and interaction. They should have a sense of incompleteness: subtle and speaking very little, only at times when required by way of a small pattern or stripe or introduction of colour.

I am trying to create fabrics that symbolise my position as a researcher and facilitator: perhaps even a teacher, to an extent. The fabrics have to represent me, especially when I am not there. I want to explore engaging with the artisans on different levels and planes. And the

thought that comes to mind is 'could textiles symbolise exchange and represent one another without physical presence?'

Weave, at the loom 17th June 2010 5.30pm

I am trying very hard to make subtle and subdued weave samples. I find it difficult to not be very bright in colour use and let myself loose in free design rein. But I will keep at it and make my work quieter. I have always found it hard to do more repetitive patterns as I find them boring but I am trying and enforcing this rule upon myself.

17th June 2010 6.45pm

I can ask the women what they think of this (blue 2nd sample, 2nd warp) as compared to others, which they prefer and why. The question may be to do with design as an approach to understand the women's perspective and for development and social uplifting, what they really think is needed by them according to them, not according to an outside thought. Taking local knowledge into account.

Design approach to socio-economic development so its methodologies are aimed to start relationships and work coherently with them. The question of ethics comes up all the time, what's the least intrusive way to work together without imposing one's will or thoughts on others.

Seher, the cloth and loom

Figure 29 Ambreen and Seher

Ambreen embroidered beautiful medallions that mirrored my woven patterns and also embroidered her name onto the weave. This labeling surprised me and I realised the 'preciousness' I felt towards my weaves. This subtle action of labelling it as her own has profound meaning for power relations. It swaps the roles where artisans are anonymous but designers are always 'known', subverting the conventional power relation.

Figure 30 Ghulam Zohra and Seher

> Seher: How come you didn't go all the way till the edges? Why did you leave it like that?
> Ghulam Zohra: …because you said, do however [or whatever] you want, so I did [it like that].

The example with Ghulam Zohra shows the freedom of challenging the facilitator who normally would be in a position of power. It shows the shifting of the power dynamic between the [researcher as] facilitator and the artisan.

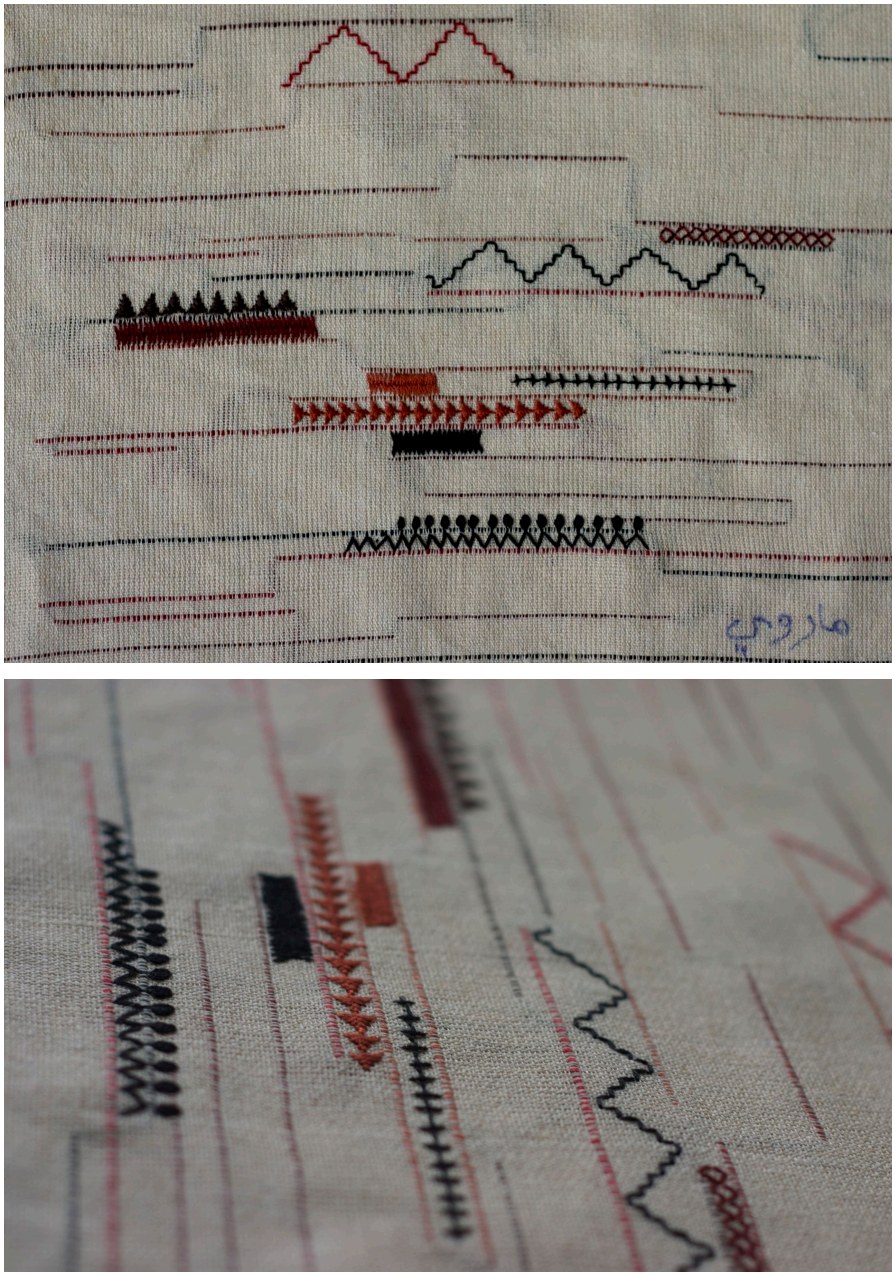


Figure 31 Marvi and Seher

Marvi was one of the most skeptical artisans at first, and other artisans noted her saying, 'nothing will happen [change]' (Field notes September 2015). However, she created beautiful responses to my series of linear raised 'marks' that were intermediately laid out as if pauses in a visual conversation (Figure 31) enabling me to learn of her interpretive, developed sense of skills and textile nuances. This opens questions not only for the research but also in Marvi's own mind of different possibilities by creating this process of inquiry. Marvi was noted as one of the most innovative makers with more S jo designs to her credit than any other artisan.

This grouping of samples is placed under the category of power relations because there was learning for the facilitator and learning for the women, the questioning of a conventional power dynamic and the establishing of a new one. It also highlights the potential of textiles as a medium that allows for the subtle reading of power.

3.2 Critical reflection

The next set of samples focuses on critical reflection of one's abilities in craft and of perceived limitations. My role was to provide this substrate of weave and a space. Bandura (1995) notes personal agency or self-efficacy as the ability to see the potential in oneself. This form of agency is instrumental to power, as Miller and VeneKlasen (2006) have noted in 'power within'.

The women made free-hand figures and surprisingly some chose to leave some patterns asymmetrical or 'broken' to form unconventional shapes rather than their usual 'completion' or banding of traditional motifs. This set of textiles encouraged thinking and engaging critically with the women's craft: its stitches, but not necessarily the patterns of their traditional textiles, suggesting a critical thinking approach towards achieving the design task.[78] These figurative patterns are a means, an experiment to reflect back a different perception of one's abilities, they are not products or finished outcomes in their own right.

Figure 32 Seher reflecting at the loom

22nd June 2010 – reflecting at the loom

Is practice a time of reflection? It is for me I think. But if it is, then is it a luxury for me or does every crafts producer, especially of textiles, have reflections over their life and work when they make. Is the joy of making, also a time for reflection?

19th November 2010 – conversations from the mind

It [method of weaving fabric for the women] aims to provide another dimension to the exchange of knowledge. Handcraft producers have another way of expressing themselves other than writing and speech: through making. It is a language that is well rehearsed – perhaps the most confident form of expression – where literacy is low and local dialects can be confusing.

[78] See appendix 8 for more details in corresponding workshop field notes

Figure 33 Sughra and Seher

Sughra: What should we make? Seher: Draw anything you like Sughra: …but I can't draw, the drawings before were done by one of our brothers he's not here now Seher: I am sure you can, just make it how you can, there's no right or wrong [way] Sughra used a drawing in a school textbook for reference

Despite being hesitant to start Sughra (Figure 33) made an intricately embroidered peacock that is skillfully made.

Figure 34 Shereen and Seher

In Shereen's interaction it can be seen that she is gaining confidence while conducting an inquiry, experimenting with traditional symmetrical patterns turning them into different forms.

Figure 35 Samina and Seher

Seher: Make anything from your everyday environment or things around you
Samina: Like what?
Seher: …whatever you like, a flower, bird, this courtyard or anything here, its up to you.
Samina: Can I make a mouse?
Seher: A mouse?
Samina: Yes we have mice here, we can see them going past the corners of the walls…

Samina's interaction (Figure 35) displays her playfulness and her desire to experiment.

Figure 36 Aalia

Aalia was not able to see over the other women gathering round the still-life objects; therefore she took the initiative to draw objects from the kitchen. She embroidered intricate edges along her everyday objects while also experimenting with scale.

Figure 37 Nail varnish bottle by Nusrat

Figure 38 Nail varnish bottle by Sughra

Figure 39 Nail varnish bottle by Marvi

Figure 40 Nail varnish bottle by Ambreen

In the still life textile samples above the women's individual styles of work, each interpreting the same bottle of nail varnish in different ways (Figures above), helps us to see the women's abilities growing towards greater self-belief or self-efficacy which comes from realising one's own capacity. It reflects back the breadth of possibility from symmetrical boxed lines to the figurative and freehand. It provided the opportunity and space for expressing individual ideas in a collective way by encouraging each one's interpretation as valid.

Figure 41 Marvi, Bhagul and Seher

In this sample (Figure 41) it is evident that Marvi and Bhagul are conducting a process of critical questioning and inquiry through experimenting with layering embroidery over embroidery, in undoing and unpicking their stitches and in unconventional figures that represent things they like, such as fish, sweetmeats, a cricket bail [denoting cricket] and ice cream.

Figure 42 Allah Warai and Seher

Similarly, the critical reflection on the women's embroidery with my weave also informed me. Although I thought the women might prefer to work on the plain weave part of the fabrics I made, their interactions showed otherwise. Allah Warai (Figure 42) confidently worked within my own patterns in weave and embellished them further, enhancing them with intricate detail.

This group of samples shows the space of initial hesitation, then inquiry and trial embroidery which provides the opportunity to critically reflect on one's own abilities and perceived limitations. The need for approval from the outsider begins to overlap with the need for approval from oneself as confidence in one's abilities grows. This is unchartered social territory for the AGJ women.

3.3 Transformation

The series of textiles exchanged between the women and myself, led me to plan a large Jacquard weave that encapsulated our relationship over the years in patchwork-like woven images of the AGJ women during the workshops. I left my mistakes in weave visible, exposing the error so it may lead to something else. Guerrero et al. note the nature of communication as 'dyadic' unfolding 'through a series of messages and countermessages' (2014:127). The women's response when they first saw this piece was to gather around it excitedly and try to recognise themselves in it. This piece spent years with the women at the village where they stitched into it at their leisure.

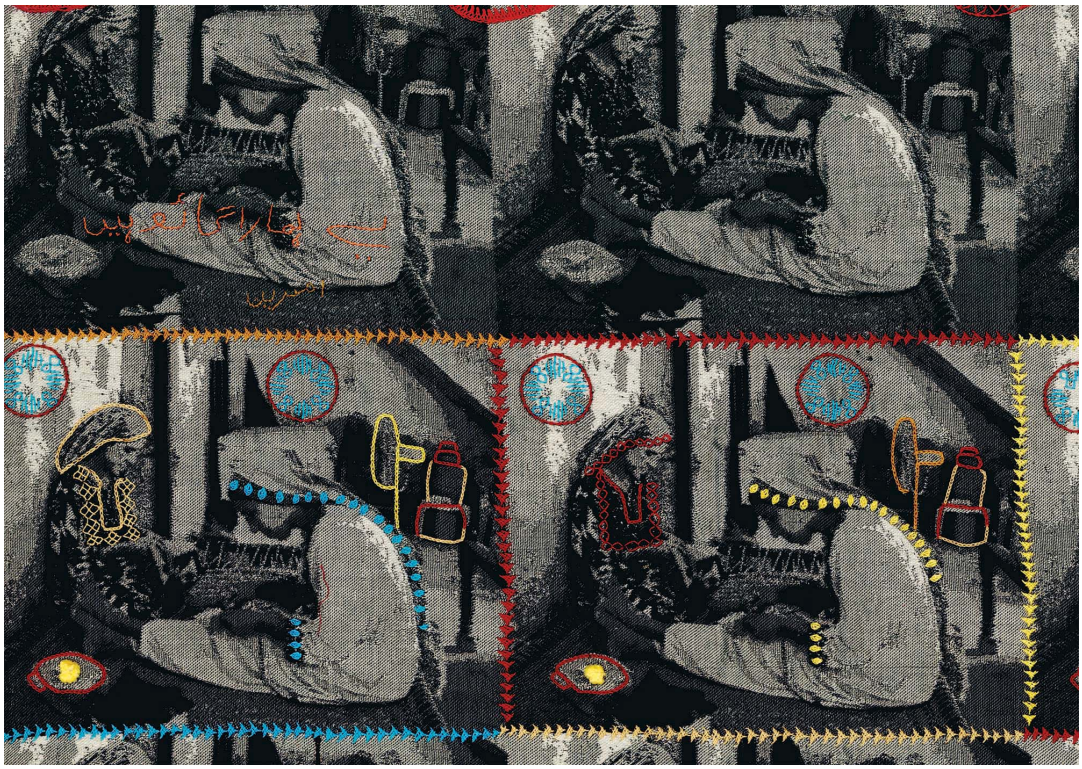


Figure 43 Jacquard detail

Pictured here, sisters Bhagul and Marvi.
Left corner written in Urdu:

Yeh humara gaon hai
This is our village.
Ambreen.

In the larger image below also written in Urdu is:

Humaray gaon ka naam AG Jatoi hai, khush amdeed Seher
Our village's name is AG Jatoi, happy to receive [or welcome] Seher.
Bhaitan.

Pyara Pakistan
[Our] lovely [or denoted with love] Pakistan

Naz.

Figure 44 Jacquard weave

The figurative embroideries and the expression in the jacquard piece demonstrate confidence, the familiarity and affirmation of one's skills in the freedom of mark-making on the researcher's cloth – in the playful creatures speaking to the woven images of the women (Figure 45). The approach is extremely different compared to the first samples (Figure 26). There is informality, of the stitches and of messages that the women wish to communicate. This 'informality' signifies a transformation of power of less distance, 'casual approach feeling' and looking more relaxed (Guerrero et al. 2014:134). This confidence was not limited to the research dialogue pieces but was seen in the way the AGJ women took ownership of the development of the S jo pieces: they started to decide and judge for themselves what was made better than other things they had made as well as the confidence to draw out designs to work them out. The transformation can also be seen in the women's social lives in how they see themselves as capable for change and acting for change.

Figure 45 Jacquard close up

3.4 S jo (parallel enterprise)

S jo was conceived as part of the project due to the commitment made to the women at the start and to sustain the project. S jo proposes using design principles while recognising the socio-economic and cultural context. The foremost premise is that income should not be at the expense of the women's confidence and development as women and makers. I argue that an approach that doesn't consider power and agency is akin to 'hardship sales' (Edwards 2011; Frater 1995; Hardy 2012) that are not based on real choice (Dowding 2006; Kabeer 1999). This approach allows for a space of ideation (Brown and Wyatt 2010) which when totally welded to commercial product systems – these spaces – does not exist for rural artisans. This is particularly when dealing with people at low economic agency where they cannot afford to make any pieces that are not saleable. However, this economic disempowerment is in itself a substantial creative constraint. If artisan communities keep on making the same thing again and again, it leads to surplus and saturation of markets which is ironically a crash-and-burn approach to economic empowerment. S jo promotes using the space of ideation and enabling that space of ideation noted in design thinking (Brown and Wyatt 2010), taking away the economic impediment that can in fact create scope for more economic empowerment. This is because the agency to change what one is making keeps the novelty element in it, which, in terms of a commercial output, is essential.

Based on my experience in the craft development sector I wanted to test the balancing of the commercial and non-commercial aspects especially as a woman maker as discussed in Chapter 1. I found that traditional textiles were mainly used and perceived as a marketable commodity by most outsiders rural craft communities were interacting with, which is a well-documented case (Hardy 2012; Rhodes 2014). The S jo initiative aims towards transformation, to develop the women's confidence in themselves through craft praxis, to develop individual styles of work, and encourage the germination of new ideas and concepts where the women are able to see themselves as agents of change of their own craft with shared practice with an outsider, not merely replicating the ideas of the outsider.

If everything is wedded to the commercial output then the onus is always on production for sale and everything is aimed at that. By bringing in a space where the focus is not on commercial output then more ideas can be generated which can be taken forward and the notions of critique and self-reflexivity can also take place. I am aware that these ideas come from a western-based education system and applying them elsewhere may be

problematic not least due to potential wastage. However, rural women often tend to reuse textile waste and yarn off-cuts as part of their material culture practice which is also used in S jo's approach where some pieces are reworked or use cuttings from others. NGO approaches reportedly also incur waste because of large-scale operations and not enough close engagement, materials are often ploughed into donor funded projects to produce the results required to exact specifications (see Appendix 6, Bardai interview 2014).

S jo works to a concept conceived and built through de-constructing techniques and creating a vocabulary of applications of traditional craft – particularly the three-dimensional use in the jewellery – through learning by doing. This approach creates a strand where the women produce for tomorrow and at the same time thinking beyond for the day after, meaning short term the women produce this range to allow for more ideation space while the trial and error space during ideation builds future capacity, working to a multilateral function.

Charms
Workshop September 2010 – present

The first enterprise task was a simple brief of embroidered charms or ornaments.

Figure 46 Embroidered charms September 2010

Necklaces
December 2010 - 2015

The first necklaces made (two examples below) had simple strings and did not have neat stitching. In subsequent workshops I created more advanced briefs, and the women responded by solving these design problems using their technical skills. The women also contributed to the vocabulary of necklaces and jewellery for S jo and many artisans had several design variations or styles to their credit.

The examples demonstrate blanket stitch technique, in Bhaitan's sample (pictured right), as an interpretation of the hand-binding technique that was later mastered by the women.

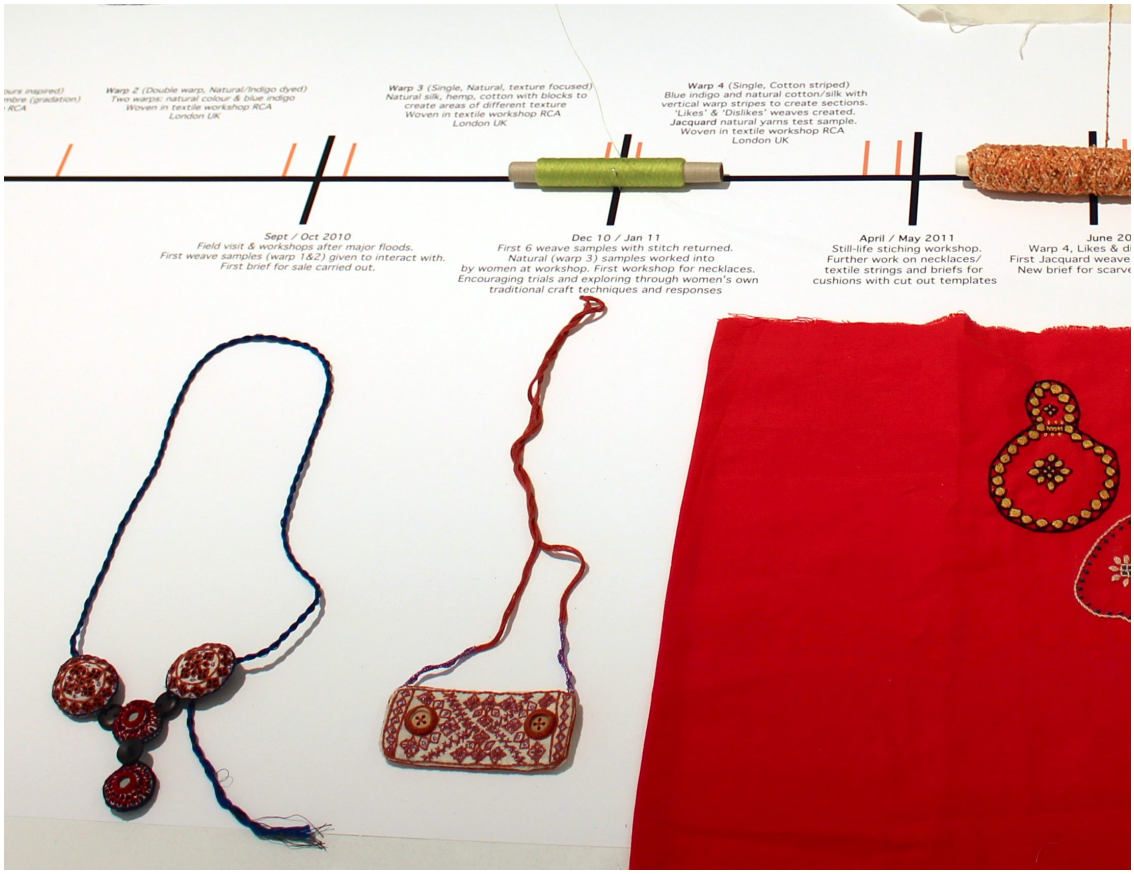


Figure 47 First necklaces in 3D timeline, *Threads of the Indus* exhibition 2015

Figure 48: Examples timeline of necklaces and accessories made from 2010 to 2015

48.1 Examples of necklace styles made 2010

48.2 Examples of necklace styles initiated by the women during the course of research 2011
Necklaces (L to R clockwise): Rhombus, Marvi, Baki, Salma Tassel

48.3 Statement necklaces made during the course of research 2012

48.4 Decorative scarf made during the course of research 2014

Figure 49 Necklace examples showcasing S jo jewellery vocabulary, *Threads of the Indus* exhibition 2015

Figure 50 Shoulder and neck accessory (2014), displayed at *Threads of the Indus* exhibition 2015

3.5 The workshop space: developing a relationship

As described in the previous chapter other than the dialogues with weave and between the two crafts (weave and stitch), there was another phenomenological dialogue between the women and myself while I was at the AGJ village. This 'conversation' that consisted of words, feelings, laughter, stories, body language, an exchange of tacit knowledge and making was a space unique to us that indicated the AGJ women's aspirations, motivations, development and transformation. Here the women reported changes in behaviour towards others while I noted personal changes in behaviour directly and indirectly from their comments. This space developed our relationship with subsequent encounters and it generated meaning for us all. Below are some images that visually represent this phenomenological space (see Appendix 8 for details of interaction). Selected Field notes that recorded the women's changing perception of me as an outsider follow the images.

Field visit

December 2009/January 2010

Figure 51 Afsana, Tasleem and Shamim, and Sughra, Dec–Jan 2009/10

Field visit

September/October 2010

Figure 52 Bhagul and Ghulam Zohra with daughter, Shumaila, Sept–Oct 2010

Field visit

December 2010/January 2011

Figure 53 Workshops Dec–Jan 2010/11

Field visit

April/May 2011

Figure 54 Still life workshops, Sughra and Zaibunnisa, Apr–May 2011

Figure 55 Still life workshops, Marvi and Bhagul, Apr–May 2011

Figure 56 Everyday and personal objects still life interpretive textile dialogue series 5 by Aalia

Field visit

June 2011

Figure 57 Marvi making one of the first necklace prototype's strings by binding threads, Apr–May 2011

Field visit

July/August 2012

Figure 58 Workshops, July–Aug 2012

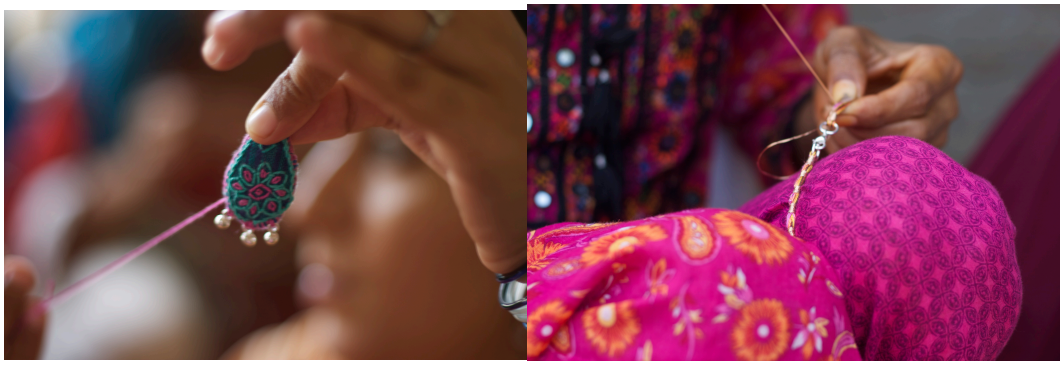


Figure 59 S jo pieces making detail, July–Aug 2012

Figure 60 Gul Beida, Hafiza and Leila measuring and marking out cloth, and checking embroidery colours (with yarn) against cloth background, July–Aug 2012

Figure 61 Shamim wearing a bracelet sample, July–Aug 2012

Field visit

February 2013

Figure 62 Sughra at workshop, working out a headpiece sample with Shereen and Marvi, Feb 2013

Field visit

September 2013

Figure 63 Naz adjusting a large prototype accessory on Ambreen, Sept 2013

Figure 64 Ambreen pretending she was being choked falls back laughing

Figure 65 Bhagul and Sughra posing in a sample they trialled, Sept 2013

Field visit

February/March 2014

Figure 66 Collaborative discussions on what to add to a large sample, Feb–Mar 2014

Field visit

January 2015

Figure 67 Jacquard textile dialogue with embroidery interaction, Jan 2015

Figure 68 Rifat joking around with research sample at workshop, Jan 2015

Figure 69 Group photograph 1, Jan 2015

Figure 70 Group photograph 2, Jan 2015

Field visit

September 2015

Figure 71 Shamim discussing the changes in their lives and Khadijah in background, Sept 2015

Field visit

January 2016

Figure 72 Naz and Seher (in traditional Gajj made by Zohra), Jan 2016

My relationship with the women taught me the importance of embodied perception and knowledge, and how it relates to power in this context. In the field workshops I

recorded a relationship dialogue that developed over the years.[79] Our relationship evolved from the first time I met the women in 2007 for the RSPN project when their first response was locating me in their sense of national identities and a perception of my social belonging. The AGJ women asked me, *'what is your caste?'*

Similarly, at the start while discussing our families' respective marriage customs the women defended their customs saying, '*it is our tradition'*. Through the course of these past years, after the women realised our work together was not out of my 'duty' or obligation, as some initially thought (2009), in comparison to others they stated, *'you are our friend'* and noted (2012-2013), '*She sits with us, works with us, and eats with us; she's like [one of] us'.*

Our craft helped us form our unique relationship of reciprocity as responses to my jacquards suggested (2011), *'Thank you so much! We work hard for you and you also work hard for us!'*

As an outsider, I was also welcomed and encouraged by male members of the community who had changed their views about their women's roles as noted in my Field notes (2014):

> *While I was waiting for the women to finish the task for the day, an elderly man of the village approached me. He asked the group if I understood Sindhi, and I replied that I understood a little. He walked closer and put his hand on my head (this is a sign of blessing from an older person in the subcontinent). He proceeded to say he was grateful and really appreciated that I came and worked with the women. He added, the fact that I valued their (the craftswomen's) work/time properly and paid a fair recompense for it enabled the whole community to survive in the hard times such as the flood when their crops were washed away. The women started chattering loudly discussing what he said. They then said together, "you know he is our old uncle, he was the one who used to run after us with a stick threatening to beat us when we first started to work [for outside projects]!"*

I learnt that the women had stood up for working with me against social pressure. Presently, the women have begun to critically reflect on the relationships around

[79] See Appendix 8 for more details of these interactions with the AGJ community

them. They share their aspirations and concerns including marriage customs. Shamim describes the emancipation they feel and how others notice it '*When we go to the local bazaar (market), shopkeepers say to us there are no young girls from the Jatoi [clan] as you, that go freely outside their community like this, shopping themselves. When people see us, their mouths open wide [in amazement] saying that, "you are stepping outside of your community and village!"*

This liberation seems to fill the women with pride about what they have achieved within a traditionally conservative and strict community especially concerning established gender roles.

Summary

The artisans' first reaction was to ask what they should do but instead the various briefs provided clues on the woven pieces and in experiential craft tasks. The S jo products provided individual women, in a group, the opportunity for design thinking (as it had not been made before) to apply their craft skills differently. They were able to do this as they had learnt experientially that there were other ways to apply and use their craft through the research textile series. The collaborative and equitable social approach boosted their confidence. Gradually the women started to take more risk in their work in ways suitable to each of them and develop ideas on their own.

The Jacquard weave was given coloured details with surreal animals and figures, completely unlike anything the women would have, conventionally, had the space to stitch or embroider. I could not help but feel that our relationship had come on in leaps and bounds from where we started, 'at caste', that reflected old ways of thinking. This piece was now able to reflect our new sense of social relationship with reciprocity in craft; a doorway to change that begins from transforming the ways one thinks and experiences their craft in relation to others.

This research found that there is power asymmetry to consider and further develop in the marginalisation of craft itself of its agency to generate knowledge (Collins 2000; Kanuha 2000) compared to dominant shaping of knowledge such as in the social sciences (Foucault 1994). The subtleties that textiles as a medium offer in close up encounters where inquiry and critical reflection can occur have the potential to make significant changes. This research brings together design and craft practices, and power relations. It also presents the textile dialogues as evidence of the changes discussed above.

Chapter 4: New structures for empowerment

This chapter discusses the definitions and articulation of power that arise from:

1) how human beings generate meaning in their experiences and form different understandings by evolving their thinking and perceptions.
2) the relativity of power structures with social relationships and nature of interactions.

4.1 'Power Signifiers'

Constructing on the social sciences discourse on power analysis and self-critical reflection methods analysed in Chapter 2, where rural artisans and outsiders interact on the basis of craft, I developed a new framework for a craft-based approach for facilitators who are designer/makers with a focus on power relations. This approach, which I have termed 'Power Signifiers', considers two types of phenomenological power dialogues: Silent and Active. These signifiers are subjective and will vary from individual to individual due to perception being phenomenological. Silent Signifiers are inevitable implicit and tacit means by which we perceive others outside our own local sphere based on social affiliations. Active Signifiers are the means or skills available to outsiders who wish to collaborate. This requires the understanding of the social context and the examination of our own signifiers of tacit power. For craft practitioners, an active method of reflection and dialogue is available in making and learning from our own practice of craft and that of others. This basis was used in my methodological approach for this project.

Silent Power Signifiers could be privileges such as family legacy, race, gender, social influence, social status and education. These past experiences or opportunities have an implicit bearing on the (new) meaning that outsiders hope to generate in their encounters or projects with others. Active Power Signifiers are modes of interaction and modes of conducting design work, level of craft collaboration between rural artisans and outsiders. These symbolise the aspects of power to be considered and mediated in any approach. Outsiders' past privileges or background cannot be changed, approaches must be adjusted according to the level of silent power an outsider is perceived to have both by him or herself but also by the community. This requires critical self-reflection on the outsiders' part. It also requires understanding the phenomenological settings or environment of any given context to gauge what kind of learning for transformation and re-adjusting of power balances is needed.

The Power Signifiers diagram proposes my initial ideas and I hope other researchers interested in design and power relations in a traditional artisanal context can add to it by considering their subjectivity.

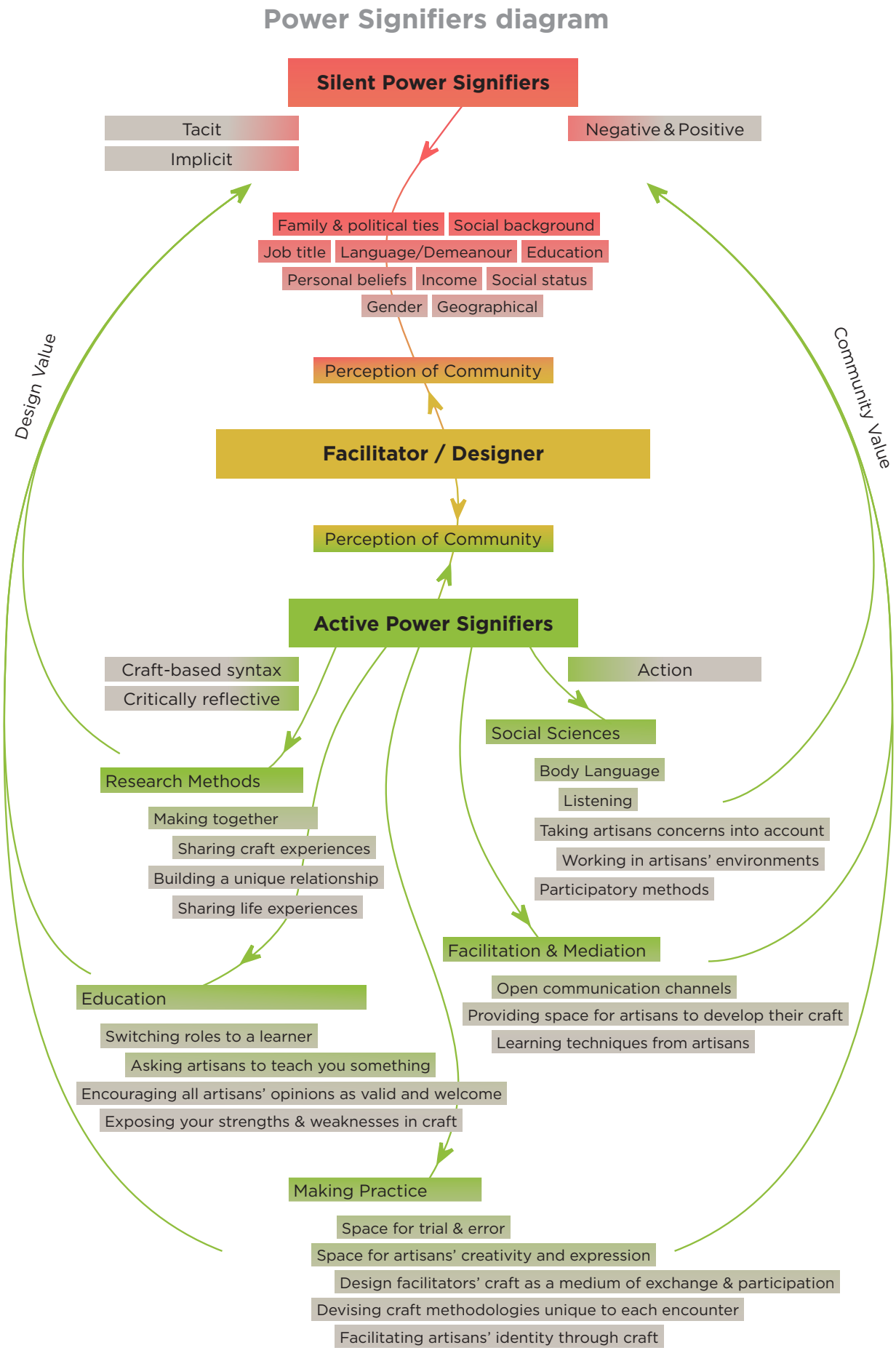

Power Signifiers diagram
Silent Power Signifiers
Tacit
Implicit
Negative & Positive
Family & political ties
Social background
Job title
Language/Demeanour
Education
Personal beliefs
Income
Social status
Gender
Geographical
Perception of Community
Facilitator / Designer
Perception of Community
Active Power Signifiers
Craft-based syntax
Critically reflective
Action
Social Sciences
Body Language
Listening
Taking artisans concerns into account
Working in artisans' environments
Participatory methods
Research Methods
Making together
Sharing craft experiences
Building a unique relationship
Sharing life experiences
Facilitation & Mediation
Open communication channels
Providing space for artisans to develop their craft
Learning techniques from artisans
Education
Switching roles to a learner
Asking artisans to teach you something
Encouraging all artisans' opinions as valid and welcome
Exposing your strengths & weaknesses in craft
Making Practice
Space for trial & error
Space for artisans' creativity and expression
Design facilitators' craft as a medium of exchange & participation
Devising craft methodologies unique to each encounter
Facilitating artisans' identity through craft
Design Value
Community Value

Figure 73

4.2 Learning and social transformation

The absence of inquiry and critical thought in marginalised and socially isolated communities results in conformity to the known, i.e. outdated social structures and tradition (Friere 1973). This can be seen in traditional societies such as in the AGJ village. 'That is why', Mezirow explains, 'it is so important that adult learning emphasize contextual understanding, critical reflection on assumptions, and validating meaning by assessing reasons. The justification for much of what we know and believe, our values and our feelings, depends on the context – biographical, historical, cultural – in which they are embedded' (2000:3). I tackled this by building a personal and craft relationship with the AGJ women providing a different context to our interactions than others the women had come in contact with.

Sennett (2008:29) argues, 'self and social relations develop through making physical things, enabling the "all-round development of the individual".' Humans make meaning – that can lead to transforming thinking patterns – through their experiences of diverse and constant forms of communication, inquiry and reflection with subject and object and, situations. To be empowering for artisans, the experiences with the subject (outsider) and object (craft) need flexibility to question and shift established power and authority. This requires positive new experiences for communities that generate meaning (Foucault 1994). Tasks and communication by individuals and projects must account for this. For example, the women and I were able to relate to one another, despite our differences. By discussing our views on several topics we were exposed to each other's different frames of reference. I concentrated on working collectively through the use of our unique textiles skill sets to create a new experience of joint craft practice. I found that the more varied our practice of craft was, the stronger and more meaningful our bond as women became. This suggested that making together deepens social relationships. Similarly, in an environment of making the women were able to learn and develop themselves socially as they used the influences of change in craft in their personal lives and also the changes in their social lives in their craft. If I conducted my workshops in a strict formal environment (monitoring) with no social relationship and craft exchange, the outcome would have been different. A comment made by SRSO staff to me in private revealed that the women found our work together to be a positive experience and valued it: 'They really look forward to your visit, they wait all year for you to come' (Field notes, September 2013).

In Chapter 1, I noted the younger generation did not engage or connect with their indigenous craft as much as the older one. This led to the question of how to create agency for these practices that not only is transformational but also perpetuates them. Martin (2016:1) co-founder of IDEO provides insight into western development ideology, 'we mistakenly assume that there's no way a person can or should possibly worry about self-esteem if they're hungry'.[80] IDEO is changing their approach looking at, '"unnecessary" values like identity and aspiration'. Although young artisans knew craft-making tradition could provide an avenue of income if needed, there was still a distinct lack of motivation to do so. One example is in the workshops where I brought different yarns and cloth, and would ask the women if we could try making things. There were a few times the women responded with saying tell us what you want us to do. I usually responded saying if we will not try new things we will not know the possibilities or that a single individual equates one brain with a limit to ideas, whereas if we all used our brains together we would have multiple ideas (Field notes 2009 – 2011). Learning about what barriers there are to agency of the practice, such as younger women not wanting to be seen as old fashioned, contribute to the overall context. The traditional passing on of knowledge is ruptured through these sociological contexts and this project cannot be isolated from these larger issues not pertaining to NGOs or industry or the government. As my research progressed there was growing interest from the younger AGJ women in making pieces for the project and themselves. During the course of research field trips I noted examples where young women incorporated traditional stitches in their own way in their dress (Figure 74 and 75). This showed that by using aspects of their embroideries the women were beginning to question and reflect on their craft skills. It also showed that they chose to represent themselves in their clothing somewhat differently to past generations signaling an aspiration and expression of their own identity.

[80] Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid in A Theory of Human Motivation (1943)

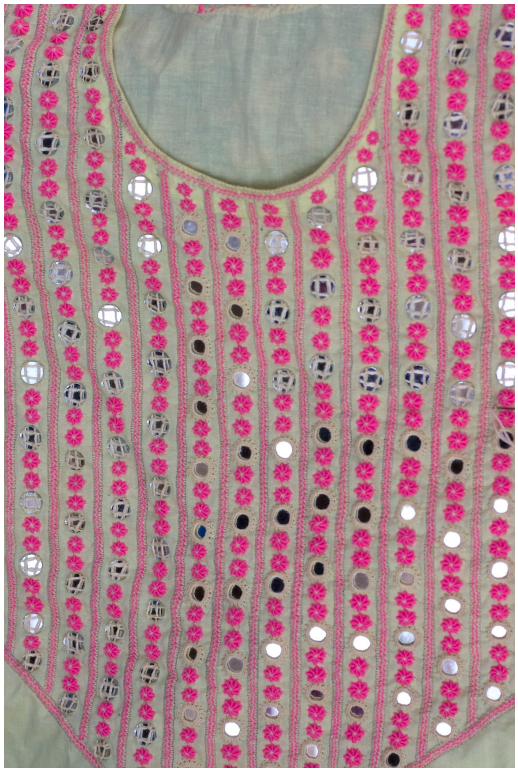


Figure 74 Ambreen Tunic (2012)

Figure 75 Khadijah with a shisha embroidered butterfly on the back of her tunic (2015)

This indicates that economic and monetary benefit can only play a limited role in the motivation to sustain craft practice, and in particular a critically reflective craft practice that allows artisans the freedom to express themselves whether it is in their clothing, association by name to crafted objects or the naming of the outcome itself.

I noted young girls of AGJ were eager to participate in our workshops and appeared to observe the work next to their older sisters or mothers (Figure 76). I have included field notes below that recorded my observations:

Young girls gather round the workshops, trying to sneak in a piece or two. They have started to bring their own fabric samples to the workshops, embroidering into them, as I told them they need to be a certain age before they can participate especially to make sale pieces. I remember Shumaila, when she was younger, had asked her mother, Zohra, to show me little sample pieces that she had done. Her mother said, 'she asked me to show these to you, she wanted you to see them' (Field notes, August 2012).

A confident young girl sat smiling while I awaited the arrival of some artisans to the workshop. She asked me if she could take part. I asked her name, how she was and her age. She said she was eleven. I told her in a few years, maybe. She smiled and proudly showed me a sample she had done and added with a beaming face, 'I really like you Api (big sister) and it's really nice when you come here' (Field notes, January 2012).

Figure 76 Zohra with her daughter Shumaila observing her work during a workshop in 2010

This indicated the level of interest being generated as a result of the project, and young women sat in on workshops, whether or not they made anything. It would be naïve to ignore the consideration that young girls were keen to be a part of this activity as it was novel for the community with an outsider. However, the change in the nature of the work, involving more creative input from the artisans, along with the camaraderie that the workshop space provided, can be suggested as the reason for this newly generated interest. Another dimension was curiosity, in the craft and in the social environment, with new relationships being formed.

The tacit way of making meaning in things and others underlines the importance material culture can have in mediating human interaction and critical inquiry in this context (Mezirow 2000; Schon 1987). There are alternative ways of knowing and learning, 'art, music and dance are alternative languages. Intuition, imagination, and dreams are other ways of making meaning. Inspiration, empathy, and transcendence are central to self-knowledge and to drawing attention to the affective quality and poetry of human experience' (Mezirow 2000:6). Making meaning through positive experiential activity is empowering. One example is my embodied experience of learning how to sew with my grandmother. Not only did the activity have meaning for me, it created a positive meaning or connection with making textiles later in life. Similarly, individuals from marginalised communities should see the activity as positive. Seeing themselves as capable of having ideas of value and change in craft activity can create positive meaning in their experience. This positive connection for the women with traditional craft may provide a motivation for them to continue with the activity long after project interventions end. This can be described as a form of power which arises from the dynamic dialogue with one's own craft – critical reflection, the creative process of shaping, changing and driving it – especially indigenous craft. This is a different context to economically validated forms of long-term empowerment.

From Mezirow, I understood forms of culture as a language or way of communicating, whereas creativity as how humans make meaning. Embodied experiences and feelings that provide us with an awareness and perception of self are the very things that make our lives meaningful. Csikszentmihalyi states that 'To improve life one must improve the quality of experience' (1990:44). His notion of flow in terms of creativity and optimal experience can explain the state of immersion one can feel when practising one's craft in a truly engaging way. Marvi remarked about producing more things than required, 'now that we have started, it's difficult to stop, we keep making, making' gesturing the act of stitching into cloth with her

hand (Field Notes, September 2013). My own experiences suggested, '*Creativity, imagination can be defined as freedom to express oneself. I use my craft as an expression of my self, a self-appraising, a self-reflection, thinking tool. Both creating varied spaces for me to dwell in but also to develop as craft maker and person'* (Mirza, reflective journal 31st Aug 2013). Csikszentmihalyi's approach stresses the meaning behind what is being made, the experience and the relationality one has to the object. This can also be described in terms of the connection or kinship one feels for one's craft for various reasons, such as memories it evokes.

In the S jo approach the women artisans are creating designs on their own and they are individually recognised for innovation or evolution in their craftwork. This is done in a simple way where every piece made by the women is signed with their name sometimes on paper with pen but mostly embroidered on cloth. Many non-literate women know just how to write their own name, if they do not, they ask another woman for assistance. New product designs initiated by the artisans themselves are named after them or the women choose what to call it.[81] The women realise that any and all work that they do will be associated with their person.

Mezirow and Csikszentmihalyi's concepts highlighted why the women's craft was deteriorating. Stagnant material culture practices reflect sedentary ways of thinking and being, perpetuating social oppression and archaic social systems. In other words, due to the lack of outside exposure and interactive social environments, the AGJ women and community followed the same habits of thinking and being without questioning their social situation. This also echoed in the women's craft because of a lack of creative space to explore their practice.

Neither the interventions of development projects nor well meaning individuals addressed the relational aspect of power and personal development of the communities. 'Transformation theory's focus is on how we learn to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others – to gain greater control over our lives as socially responsible, clear-thinking decision makers' (Mezirow 2000:8). Similarly, Thomas B (2011:445) focuses on the concept of power over others that reinforces the idea that to truly feel empowered one must be free to choose and not be oppressed either through circumstance or ideas (see also Kabeer 1999). In a design

[81] The women value this named association. It was indicated when Mahirah asked for one of the necklaces to be named after her that we were trying out in the September 2015 workshop together (see Appendix 8).

context, this could mean feeling empowered in one's own ability to undertake tasks, for example making, generating one's own ideas and creativity. In a social context, this could mean not feeling obligated to choose certain options, for example who to support politically.

For example in this project study, tasks such as group critique of everyone's work contributed to an environment of autonomy, where everyone's opinion is valid. My textile woven pieces were used as a space for trial and error with no right or wrong way to embroider into them. Similar to design school briefs which consist of themes and conceptual ideas, the textile collaborations were interpretive in that the artisans were free to interpret, conceptualise and embroider how and where they wanted to on the woven fabrics. These tasks helped to transform archaic perceptions of conformity in material and in social practice. I noted the women became critically reflective of their society's norms (Field notes, January and September 2015) and openly discussed their personal concerns (Field notes, September 2013) at least three years into the project after I had known them for over four years. They also made efforts to address what they considered 'unfair' in their community. Zohra described how the AGJ women made collective efforts to eradicate commonplace domestic violence, where men would often hit or beat women relatives. *She explains how they went about it, 'we explained calmly to the men (once their anger cooled down) that there should be no beating and that the women deserve to be treated with respect and have rights!'* More changes were reported, *'since doing this craft work we have become more confident and independent. We travel to the local markets by ourselves and even travelled back from Karachi unaccompanied when Marvi's son was at the hospital there. Ambreen and I said to my brother, 'we have pending work at the village and need to go back'. He said, "Okay, will you be able to do it yourselves? Will you know which train station to get off at?" She said I replied, 'yes, of course we can do it and nothing will happen'* (Field notes, September 2015). Although to the modern world this may not be revolutionary, this opportunity to experiment with their craft practice, to reflect on one's situation and to express their opinions to an outsider, and comment on their social lives, did not exist before for the AGJ women.

In this study I observed and recorded that the women's perception of themselves gradually shifted, due to critical inquiry and reflection in four main spaces of interaction: building a relationship with someone outside their socio-political system; exposure beyond their community space; altering the way the women connected with their own craft through textile dialogues; and discussions in the

crafting space i.e. village workshops. While the women report the changes in their behaviour towards others were a result of our workshops and interaction, it is important to recognise other factors at play such as their visits with SRSO where they travelled outside their community space and exposure to social media. It is not possible to distinguish precisely what may be factors affecting individuals or groups. However, as noted earlier neither NGO projects nor local education advocate critical inquiry and reflection which is essential for transformative change. This research noted changes in the behaviour of the women through the interactions on textiles and the personal interactions of the researcher in how the women perceived, interpreted and analysed information and knowledge. In particular there was a shift in behaviour in relation to power towards the researcher/facilitator. This was the foremost transformation this research aimed to trigger.

Although hard to evidence the relation between creativity unlocked in the craft unlocked change scientifically, the women's confidence in critical questioning and shifts in behaviour was not noted in other artisanal women communities (such as NKS and others I visited) despite having the same associations with the local NGOs, their development projects and similar opportunities of exposure visits as well as participation in urban exhibitions. The AGJ women claim to be the only women within their clan at their socio-economic level to travel 'freely' unaccompanied and enjoy this level of autonomy.

4.3 Empowering settings for member development

The concepts of transformative learning emphasise the idea that individuals learn by critically questioning and reflecting. Changes in biographical, historical and cultural context of individual's lives will affect their values and how they perceive themselves. This enables the understanding of how and why the AGJ women developed different views that contributed to their shifting roles in the community and the wider society (as described in Chapter 3). This section uses Maton's ideas as a theoretical underpinning of my ideas of power signifiers in craft-based contexts and how his ideas provide an empowering settings framework applicable to my research fieldwork. Lather's (1991) feminist perspectives on empowering methodologies intersect with Maton's ideas of empowering settings. She notes, 'In praxis-oriented inquiry, reciprocally educative process is more important than product as empowering methods contribute to consciousness-raising and transformative social action' (1991:72).

Group-based belief system

Maton describes a group-based belief system as referring to a setting's ideology, or values, is an integral part of a setting's culture. 'Belief systems help shape setting structures, norms and practices, providing opportunities for and contributing to member development and change' (2008:8). Labaree (2002:105) echoes these ideas as 'cultural cues' for the researcher that are 'facilitated by shared knowledge of normative rules, values and belief systems […]'.

There are many reasons why rural communities feel marginalised and alienated (Chambers 1983) – not just economic deprivation but for example that others with better access to or with formal education might be seen as 'better' than them.

Craft has a special place in the material culture of the community, it was the most relevant and powerful medium to engage and educate with. In regards to their craft the artisans feel subordinate to no one. It is a strength-based setting for them. According to Maton (2008:8), belief systems are strength-based 'each setting member has the capacity to achieve setting goals and represents a valuable setting resource'. These systems 'in empowering settings also encourage members to look beyond themselves, incorporating a shared vision and larger purpose shared by members of the setting'. This made me reflect on how I motivated the women and how the women motivated me, and to define our mutual goals to succeed.

One of our mutual goals was a better quality of life as women in Pakistan and the belief in our fundamental rights as women. Our workshop discussions included topics relating to education, local marriage customs, local gender expectations and inequalities. Through these insightful yet informal talks, I learnt that the women and men of AGJ village are betrothed[82] as young as babies. *'My fiancée is only this high!'* said one artisan, laughing and indicating a toddler with her hand (Video notes and field notes, 2013). In another example, while discussing the importance of education for women Shamim noted by pointing out[83] to me, *'you know this yourself'* (Field notes, 2015).

Another mutual goal was adopting self-help ideology as women to create change we aspired to. An example of this was standing up for our rights or in Zohra's case deciding to use craft as a social outlet and a source of income because her husband

[82] Often women and men have to wait for their respective prepubescent other halves till adolescence before the ceremony can take place.
[83] Making a reference to my academic research study

'*didn't do anything*' (Field notes, 2013). A craft-specific example is how the women and I discussed our craftwork and subjectivity in comparison to others in a global context. I discussed the example of the UK and European market, in which Pakistan's craft was less represented and little-known in comparison to other countries with a rich textile craft heritage. I motivated the artisans with the need to showcase the best work that speaks for itself and stands out from others. As Pakistanis, we wanted to express our craft identity as distinct from our neighbour, India, with whom our identities are, very often, merged.[84] As Frater notes (in Fisher 1993: 106), 'from the indigenous point of view, differences in these mirrored embroideries outweigh similarities'.

GZ proudly recounts her craft exposure visit with SRSO to Ahmedabad, India. 'Everyone there loved our work and told us how skillful and beautiful it was. We felt very proud and really felt and thought to ourselves it was better than a lot of work we had seen [there]' (Field notes, 2013). Pakistan's current image in the international world propelled us to use our craft as our voice to represent the other side of the country – significant and abundant in craft yet not widely known for it. Our mutual beliefs in craft, making, Pakistani craft culture and the need to showcase our country to a global audience through our craftwork formed our collaborative goals.

Core activities

Maton's characteristic of core activities portrays the extremely crucial premise of practice that craft making forms in this study. 'Core activities refer to the basic instrumental techniques used to accomplish the central mission of a setting. Productive involvement in core activities is a major contributor, over time, to member empowerment […] important features of core activities include their engaging nature, active learning process, and high quality' (2008:10).

Textile craft was used as the fundamental instrument to set in motion the long-term goal of social change as the community has an easy command over the activity. As Maton (2008:10) notes, 'Engaging activities are meaningful to the member in terms of their personal goals, and congruent with their cultural and personal background.'

[84] In particular Gujarat and Kutch, which although similar to Sindh have distinctly different embroideries and textiles. Edwards' (2011) ambiguity of the location of Mohenjo-daro – where remnants of ancient craft and crafted objects were found – in upper Sindh, Pakistan, in *Textiles and Dress of Gujarat,* is a good example of this tendency.

It became clear to me as an intervening outsider that providing just a job, or 'something to make', is an outdated mode of thinking when working with artisanal communities, and this approach is inadequate. Our collaborative work such as the jewellery created to sell, consisted of isolating elements from the women's own craft traditions as separate, and using them in new and innovative ways. This deconstructing method of modular work that was developed in the workshops helped the women physically and practically 'see' the possibilities of their own skills. This gave them the perception, ability and confidence to apply it in different ways to conventional methods of NGO product development. For example, in 2007 when presented[85] with the cathedral patchwork brief (Chapter 2), the women responded with, *'I don't know how to do that',* or *'I can't make that'* (Mirza, personal journal September 2007). I assisted the women to see and work out ways in which they could apply their superior craft skills.[86] This was learnt through doing rather than being told what to do. 'Active learning is a participatory process that includes ongoing opportunities for practice, feedback, and reflection' (Maton 2008:10), while being told what to do would have similar end results but none of the significant behavioural and psychological shifts in thinking, perception and reflection. These happen when the participant conducts critical inquiry. Shamim says, *'When you come here for a workshop, we all come together and we try new things, by the time you come again next time we have many new ideas in our mind about how we can apply our craft in different ways and variations*' (Field notes, September 2015).

The fact that the women's interests were aligned with the interest of this research by having a parallel creative outlet or enterprise – that marketed and sold products – maintained our goals of doing better and achieving a better life. Through the workshops, we were able to assess, trial and create various craft outcomes that gave us a wide vocabulary to work with. Discussing the potential of ideas, along with using the space to make mistakes and experiment, created the ideal environment to develop the craft practice and create innovative products for sale. For example: *Marvi says, 'it is important for us to evolve our designs and if we can save a bit of material to try something new than the craft can grow. Through making, physically trying out an idea we can see what works and is beneficial for us. It shouldn't be like just making the same thing over and over, we should think about how we can reinvent designs that get old, for example the key chains we do will get old for people [customers]'* (Field notes, September 2015).

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[85] This design brief was introduced by project interns on behalf of a designer the women had not met

[86] For example, with the use of measuring tapes and using templates

Figure 77 Part of conceptual 'still-life' pieces displayed at *Threads of the Indus* exhibition RCA May 2015

Figure 78 Part of conceptual *Textile dialogue series* displayed at *Threads of the Indus* exhibition RCA May 2015

The above mentioned processes made the artisans aware and competitive for praise, and created admiration for their work. The craftwork improved with the feedback provided, from my own judgment and that of potential and existing customers in the international public to whom the work was regularly exposed.

Maton (2008:10) notes the importance of the quality of core activities, 'encompasses both the content of the activity (e.g., state-of-the-art; innovative) and the instrumental and interpersonal capacity of those facilitating or supervising the activity.' This is where the quality of our relationship becomes crucial. Throughout this process I concentrated on building a good rapport with the women. This extended beyond conversations about just work; we discussed our lives, aspirations and problems together. The second aspect of this point is the mutual understanding of making by hand that gave our craft activity more emotion, meaning and, in technical terms, innovation.

I shared what I had learnt about thinking and disseminating design issues. The women shared their expertise. This collaboration offered two-fold personal encouragement as well as an opportunity to work together to find a new way to bring something different to an existing fine craft.

Relational environment

> A high quality relational environment provides the relationships and interpersonal resources necessary for substantially increasing control over one's life and environment. Across community domains, important features of the relational environment include an encompassing support system, caring relationships, and a sense of community (Maton 2008:11).

The women built their own support system through their own agency. *GZ recalls when her husband refused to let her work on the RSPN project her daughter Shumaila put pressure on her father in support of her mother. She said, "I will not go to school" her father asked her why? And she said, "because what's the point of learning anything [if I am unable to do anything]?"* (Field notes, February 2014)

Similarly, the women were able to win the support of their men:
'The neighbours used to gossip, comment and stir up controversy with our men saying your women are open to go out of the village, visit other countries, do you not have a problem with that? Our men said, "they go to learn something, it's their income they go

for that". If our men agreed with them and said yes they go outside and will do something wrong, then they would have a chance but our men supported us and didn't give them a chance to incite further so they stopped talking like that' (Field notes, September 2014).

The community as a whole expressed its welcome to me especially after I visited of my own account that showed the willingness to continue our relationship (Field notes, February 2014). This welcome was not limited to the women but included male members as well.

In more recent years the women and I have been in regular contact through smartphones and Whatsapp, among personal pictures and jokes, some women message commenting on the current issues in their lives.

The women want to learn more about my life too and share their opinions. Sughra asked me what benefits I have of living abroad. Rifat commented, *'Why don't you get married? I will say to your mother, Khala (Auntie)! You should get her married!'* (Field notes, January 2015)

Another artisan stated, *'Seher you are smart, you haven't yet married! It is such a hassle!'* (Field notes, September 2015)

As Maton (2008:11) points out, 'caring relationships include both peers and mentors in the setting; each appears to uniquely contribute to empowerment. A sense of community exists both within the confines of the physical setting, and often beyond the setting in ongoing relationships with other members in a daily life'. All relationships strengthen with the passage of time and joint experiences, and I am keen to build our relationship further. Geographical distance limits the frequency of my travel and has been limited to twice per year. However, a strong sense of mutual trust and belonging exists, as highlighted earlier. There is a sense of loyalty to each other as a team to make it through and achieve what we set out to achieve.

Maton (2008:11) adds:

> …the development of relational support, solidarity and sense of community were pivotal in the "cycle of liberation" in the women's liberation movement

> in Ireland, linking individual strengths that had developed at the personal level to the capacity to take action at the political level.

The artisans openly expressed social concerns including liberty in aspects of their lives. Change can be realised through questioning why things are a certain way and critically reflecting on behaviours. As Lather (1991:56) notes research as praxis 'enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations'. For example in the discussions in a workshop (Field notes, January 2015) I noted: *The women talk about issues around marriage and how arranging marriage when (people are) young 'is not a good idea as often people end up with those they do not like and/or get along with when they grow up'. A few women comment on 'the unfairness of men marrying twice or even three times, and getting away with it by saying they are allowed four marriages in Islam as per the Prophet Muhammed's Sunnah!'* [87] *Others pipe in saying, 'what about other Sunnah, like treating wives exactly the same and many other Sunnahs that are not followed (only those that work in theirs [men's favour]'. They add, 'Women never say I am leaving you (to her husband) and they don't get that choice then why should men marry again and again?*'

This indicates that relationships and the ability to gain strength, advice and growth comes from the sense of belonging and the camaraderie of those in the group, including facilitators or mentors.

Opportunity role structure

Maton notes, 'Opportunity role structure refers to the availability and configuration of roles within a setting' providing 'meaningful opportunities for participation, learning and development for a range of individuals who vary in background, interests, skills, and prior experience' (2008:12). The design briefs as referred to in the previous chapter started with simple tasks and then more complicated ones. This included both textile dialogue series and S jo products. With repeated practice, those women that attended all workshops became more experienced and expert at undertaking complex briefs. This developed an informal understanding between the women where they realised that complex new briefs were better handled by more experienced makers. Less experienced makers that are still learning were helped to develop their skills by proficient women.

[87] Sunnat or Sunnah (pl.) is examples or habits set by Prophet Muhammed during his lifetime, although not obligatory or mandatory, many Muslims aim to emulate these hoping to live by his example

Maton refers to role structures as evolving, requiring 'a large number of roles for members, at multiple levels' which 'are highly accessible because they require varying levels of skill, responsibility, and self-confidence and because members are encouraged to take on new roles and responsibilities as their skills and interest increase' (Maton 2008:12).

The facilitator's role has to be progressive – to constantly rethink and re-evaluate the level of complexity of tasks, how to motivate the women or increase responsibility through work. For example, a recent approach was to give back to the women, jewellery designs that were not practical or functional for the end user, i.e. the consumer, to re-use in another way. This was possible because the design concept is formed of components. 'A multifunctional role structure concurrently provides opportunities for skill development, skill utilization, and the exercise of responsibility, voice, and influence' (Maton 2008:12).

The collaborative, friendly nature of the workshops provided a space to voice opinions and add elements to suggested designs. Selecting and deciding their own colour palettes and patterns on given products raised the women's self-confidence and their decision-making skills. For the necklace idea I introduced in 2010, I did not use any reference images of product samples. I wanted to see what the women could do themselves with a little guidance from me. In subsequent workshops they continue to develop their own designs, whether earrings, bangles or new styles of necklaces (Figures 79 & 80). To encourage the women to try new things these new designs of jewellery are named after them. Extra materials are provided so women can try things out for themselves while I am not there and develop their practice.

Figure 79 Examples of earrings by artisans (Ambreen, Wafa and Shereen)

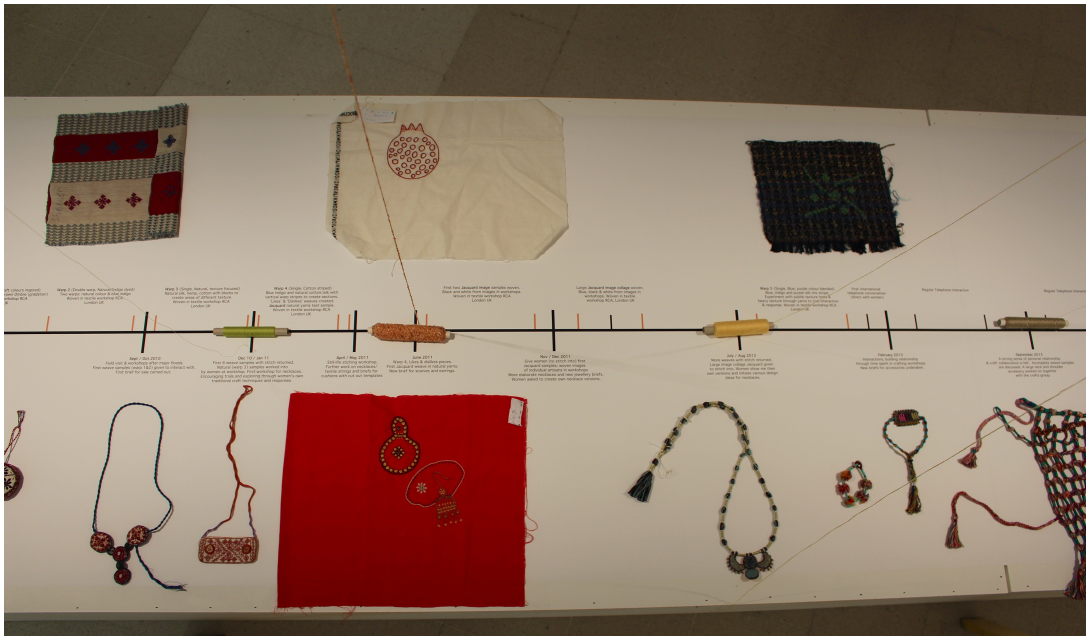

Figure 80 *Threads of the Indus* exhibition 3D timeline. RCA May 2015

In my January 2016 field trip, Bhagul and Marvi had hand-drawn designs on paper to reflect and work out their new designs, despite being non-literate, demonstrating a shift in their attitudes about previous reservations of their ability to draw and their development of skills as makers.

Figure 81 Marvi with her hand drawn necklace design proposing an idea using the beads I provided

Leadership

Although I did not consciously see myself as a leader in the project, my role for orchestrating the project and setting tasks, as Maton describes, put me in the position of one:

> Leadership refers to the qualities of the key individuals with formal and/or informal responsibility for a setting, and can contribute to empowerment through two different pathways. One is direct, empowering influence that key leaders can have on members. The second is the indirect effect through

> leaders' capacity to motivate and influence those (e.g., staff, small group leaders) who interact regularly with most setting members (Maton 2008:12).

This project involved central leadership (i.e. setting up the project, research, tasks), and there was also leadership within the community that existed before I started this study. Bhagul, who is a member of the homeworkers association Sabah Pakistan, along with other women, was considered a natural voice for the women's community and a community leader. The women's group delegated Shereen to oversee orders as she could read and write. During the course of the project – including the time with NGO staff support – Ghulam Zohra was chosen to manage material supplies and locally procure any materials required immediately to regulate supply through the petty cash she manages for S jo. Zohra's selection as materials supervisor was a group decision, with the women pushing her forward due to her good command over basic maths and calculation skills, despite being non-literate. Sughra was the leader responsible for distributing payments and helping the women write their names to label pieces, manage orders and also oversee quality. 'Leadership is shared and delegated, rather than resting solely with one person, and open to expansion as new leaders emerge' (Maton 2008:12).

Members of the AGJ women's group help each other accomplish tasks: Marvi, a talented, innovative and skilled artisan, always helps younger women accomplish and finish products to maintain a high quality. This corresponds with Maton's definition of inspiration: 'the leaders' ability to strongly motivate and inspire members, based in part on a strong vision and serving as a role model […] leaders are committed to the setting and to its members' (Maton 2008:12-13).

Ambreen and Shamim worked on a new design brief I had drawn up. I had introduced a new element of attaching drop crystal beads in the design and they both gave it a shot but once finished, Ambreen exclaimed, 'this doesn't look nice! This is not working'. Marvi who sat nearby said, 'Here, let me try'. She was able to successfully achieve what the design brief asked and showed the younger artisans how to do it (Field notes September 2015).

Figure 82 Ambreen (L) and Marvi (R) working on the crystal bead necklace, Sept 2015

Figure 83 Detail of task, Sept 2015

In a workshop, in 2012, Zohra stated: *'Maybe in a few generations our daughters can also go abroad to study, after all you are Pakistani and you did it'* (Field notes, 2012). This set me in a context of aspiration because of my subjective identity. Within the women's local socio-political hierarchal framework their position cannot ascend, I represented someone[88] who was free of these associations. The women also used me as a measure for the way they believed other designers should treat and interact with them. Zohra recalled and reported Rifat's comments to a designer about 'boring'

[88] As a young Pakistani woman from a family free of feudal ties

work. '*Rifat said, "we have fun; we talk, laugh and joke around in workshops with Seher but you just remain silent and don't really interact with us".'* (Recorded phone call, March 2015)

According to Maton, 'leaders are empowered – that is, they have autonomy and access to the necessary resources' (2008:13). This underlines the interdependent link between agency and empowerment (Bandura 1995; McGee and Pettit 2020; Zimmerman 2000). Although the women may not yet have access to all the necessary resources, critical questioning of one's life/actions and also of other's actions towards oneself especially those in dominant positions demonstrates the women's shift towards autonomy.

Setting Maintenance and Change

'Settings maintenance and change refers to the organizational mechanisms used to help the setting adapt both to internal and external challenges and changes (cf. Moos 2002)' (Maton 2008:13).

I maintained direct contact, not just with one or two people in the community but consistent open communication and interaction with all women. This way, members could (and did) directly express their concerns to me. 'Organisational learning focus encompasses being responsive and adaptive to environment changes' (Maton 2008:13).

For example, Naz reported (Field notes, September 2013) that some women were not getting enough material to produce and earn similar incomes to other women. Bhagul reported a similar (Personal journal, June 2013) incident where she was not given enough yarns. After checking the payment lists[89] which also verified this, we were able to resolve the issue. Sennett (2008:31) in *The Craftsman* gives an example of the Japanese workplace in the postwar years where Japanese corporations incorporated W. Edward Deming's "collective craftsmanship" solutions, which encouraged, 'managers to get their hands dirty on the shop floor and subordinates speak freely to their superiors'. He describes Deming's idea of "collective craftsmanship": 'the glue binding an institution is created by sharp mutual exchanges as much as by shared commitment. […] an adept manager could easily penetrate the codes of courtesy and deference in speech to get across the message that something

[89] These lists allocate payments per artisan according to what they make

was wrong or not good enough.'

Maton states, 'Bridging mechanisms are essential to successfully deal as an organization with internal conflict and with intergroup or interpersonal challenges […]' (2008:13). In the second year of contact with N, the group started talking about splitting into two, led by different leaders. Over several phone calls with the two leaders in disagreement I emphasised their strength in collectivity using examples and analogies, including that no outsider should split their community apart as it may benefit the outsider and not the community. Eventually the women resolved the issue and said it was a misunderstanding between themselves (Personal journal 2013/14; Phone calls 2014). Consequences of a sudden increase in income had to be mediated through support and guidance with the social goal in sight. Designer interventions that are commercially driven and empower on the basis of income provide an example of the problematic nature of unregulated enterprise working with rural communities. Even with perceived good intentions, not engaging fully with socio-cultural power issues in marginalised communities creates disempowering effects rather than desired collective empowerment through economic means. The outdated charitable, 'at least they are being provided with income' approach cannot change social power structures or empower, as social justice, equity, respect are not on the agenda. Maton (2008:13) suggests, 'External linkages refer to the connections that provide the resources and partners necessary for successful accomplishment of the setting mission.'

Setting maintenance and change are ongoing organisational mechanisms, along with evolving leadership; there will be more development and growth in the years to come for the continuing project. The analysis provided here considers the settings of this study in relation to those suggested by Maton (2008) from a community member empowerment perspective, and used as a guide to create empowering settings where, through the agency of the marginalised makers themselves, transformative change can occur.

4.4 One dilemma of a subjective approach in research

The subjective perspective that comes from socially investing and engaging with a community is greatly insightful and provides a deeper understanding of its day-to-day personal concerns and criticisms. Yet it also comes with the dilemma for the researcher of how if at all to expose all the deeply personal concerns of the women

as a trusted confidant. This is an even more grave concern when some of these criticisms involve those in positions of power and social dominance such as individuals with political and/or feudal backing or represent established regional NGOs. This may in fact hinder not only the research process or projects in question but jeopardise the women in their social sphere. However, in this case the craftswomen gained a position of power due to their high level craft skills where they exercised their right of making for someone only if they chose to (see Appendix 5). Kuldova (2013) noted a similar shift of power and dependence on artisans by designers in India. My approach was discreet, identifying situations but not always explicitly the other parties involved. Transformations in the perception of power, of one's agency and shifts in power relations can help in dealing with this complexity.

Summary

In this discussion of empowerment through social relationships, the quality of the affective relationships between the women and their creativity, and between the women and myself, also began to suggest methodological innovations for this type of research on which the Power Signifiers approach is based. New questions began to be formulated concerning the empowerment of creative making activity: Is it possible for the artisanal labour of pre-industrial handcraft to be experienced as 'creative'? To what extent is it inappropriate to bring the concepts of western art cultures to bear on the development work of women from another culture? Can empowerment, through craft, be conceived in terms other than those of remunerative employment? Can the working relationships become, in themselves, sources of empowerment and transformation, and to what extent is it idealistic to include affective relationships as elements that have agency for empowerment? How does the materiality of textile activate emotional meaning? This chapter demonstrated supportive, evolving, equitable, and critically reflective social relationships that engage in multiple (explicit, implicit and phenomenological) dialogues have the ability to generate meaning in craft and in experiences that are mutually empowering. This sense of empowerment results from physical, psychological and mutually interactive spaces. Similarly, building social and cultural capital (Bourdieau 1984; Gauntlett 2011) is equally empowering for marginalised makers with little or no previous interaction outside their own socio-political spheres. These questions also return in the following chapter, the conclusion, to inform the thoughts that emerged towards the end of my research. My analysis of the field notes suggest to me that it is possible that craft making can activate forms of

relationality that are distinctive and which remain to be fully understood as forms of empowerment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this chapter I return to my research questions.

In what ways can textile practice offer empowerment strategies for critically reflective spaces (that allow for transformation)?

This research showed that through textile making and sharing textile and personal spaces, reciprocal agency can be found through meaningful design and social interaction that leads to transformative changes in rural and marginalised communities where socio-educational opportunities for growth and/or shifts in power are scarce, or of limited quality because stagnating practices can limit critical thought within communities. Kabeer (1999) and others (e.g. Pettit 2012) noted empowerment requires transformation. Evolving thought, or innovation, comes from asking, 'what if?'.

There are some limitations to showing transformations through observable evidence in social situations other than those reported by the women and noted by me personally (as discussed earlier). These are subtle yet clear through the course of craft conversation, and emerge in mediums that are different to those used in development. These are clearly represented in the research practice through material qualities presented in the textile dialogues. The agency of craft in knowledge generation was tested in this research and led to a synthesised framework in the Power Signifiers which makes use of available social situations and material tendencies in making communities, using the theoretical backing of interrelated social and material capacities.

This research showed through the phenomenological perspective used in conjunction with action research, participatory design and critically reflective practice subjectivity is not personal opinion but that subjectivity can be used constructively in creating new knowledge through using and investigating the perspective that the positioning of a researcher and their context provides. An analogy is two people sitting at opposite sides of a room facing a window, each have a different angle to see outside and if noted from their position it is not 'non-objective' but provides insight from this epistemological viewpoint and the perspective they jointly see is of the power relations beyond the window which is the stitch-craft and weave they both work together on. The defined spaces in this research were these positionings that lead to opportunities for positive transformation in power relations.

5.1 In what ways is power relevant in this context of rural artisanal community practice?

This research found undoing the conditioning of the craftswomen that urban outsiders or designers would tell them what to do to solve all problems was a gradual process that needed encouraging environments. This behaviour results from years of subordination felt in comparison to others considered higher up in the socio-political hierarchy.

Maton (2008) and Bronfenbrenner (1995) stress the importance of social environments for human development that differentiate the empowering and potentially disempowering aspects of a situation. For example, despite good intentions, the associative social relation of N to the local power leadership can be an oppressive signifier of power for the AGJ women. Similarly, Shroff's high social standing is also a power signifier.[90] These settings imbue a sense of obligation on those less privileged or with less power in a social system, seemingly having choice but who would no doubt prefer to gain favour of those in power, leaving them with little real choice. For N, having only one point of regular contact and not interacting with the whole community of women creates another layer of top-down domination. N's approach kept the power status quo intact and enforced through her actions despite aims of empowerment and the work marketed as co-creative. Creating oppressive social pressure on the women by first threatening to speak to the men of their community and then actually asking the men to advocate on behalf of N to them, takes away the locus of control from the women. The men were supportive of the women and backed them in their decision, even standing up to N, who was using political backing as a bargaining point. This demonstrates Silent Power Signifiers that are negative affecting empowerment and transformation.

According to Mezirow's transformative learning theory one learns from a series of transformations about oneself as a learner over time, leading to a transformation in self-concept to see oneself as a smart, competent person (2000:21). This requires a shift in power relations. In the craft context if a woman artisan sees her value to craft heritage and her involvement and participation in a project as crucial as well as her value to others from a global context, she might change her habit of mind that she is helpless and

[90] In the Shrujan case discussed in Chapter 1, Shroff is the founder

in need of help, by changing her situation and things around her. The approaches of the outsider can mediate these positive changes as proposed in Active Power Signifiers.

Approaching my study with Bronfenbrenner's model (1979) I learnt that constant and consistent direct interaction had to be maintained with the community to enable cyclical learning and unlearning of power for the women and me, while Maton (2008) provides a framework for action and practice. I built on his characteristics of empowering settings to create group sentiment where the women and I shared our personal lives, views, and craft enabling a strong bond and belief structure to emerge and strengthen with consequent visits, workshops and interaction. However, the limitation of Maton's model is the absence of analysis of the types of power.[91]

Bandura notes self-belief in one's ability to be able to achieve change is the first step in doing something about it (1995, 1997). One example of this noted in Chapter 4 is when the women travelled from Karachi to the village on their own. The two women believed they could accomplish the task (of travelling) without being accompanied by men. Shereen, Ambreen and Rifat's responses to N (in Chapters 2 & 4) about the perceived value of work and later about the kind of environment they prefer to work in reveal not only the important aspects of work to them but also that the women felt confident about voicing their opinion, voiced it and stood up to authority. By questioning others the women seem to place value on their own selves in relation to their craft practice. The AGJ women's efforts towards eliminating domestic violence in their community demonstrates altered pattern of behaviour in the way they respond to sensitive social issues reasoning calmly with the men with emotional intelligence (Field notes, September 2015). This belief in themselves is also evident from the pride with which the women reported these changes in their lives and the difference in outlook felt by others they interacted with, such as local shopkeepers (Chapter 3; Appendix 5).

Questioning and reframing the way the women saw their position in their own society displays a shift in traditional patterns of thought by way of critical reflection. This is crucial, as the women felt empowered to express what they considered social injustice, but also had the confidence to act on some injustices they had identified in their socio-political culture. The women's interaction in some power relations has certainly altered.

[91] This is where Chambers (1983; 2005) Gaventa (2006), Kabeer(1999), Pettit (2012), Veneklaser and Miller (2006) fill the gaps on power relations analysis

Creative practice and expression for the women artisans allows them to grow, think differently, build confidence in themselves and encourages them to aim and achieve a better life for themselves, their families and future generations. These changes that positively affect the quality of the women's lives could be an important step in the direction towards critically questioning, reflecting, thinking autonomously and choosing to correct social injustices present in their socio-political systems indicating the processes that lead to empowerment.

5.2 Whether new meaning can be generated in traditional craft practices through emotional and interpersonal connections created as a result of the subjective encounter of shared textile practice between the women artisans and a contemporary female research practitioner?

This research drew on the relation between gender and power (Collins 2000; Fine 1994; Fonow and Cook 1991; Kabeer 2005; Lather 1991; Reinharz 1992) because craft making may sometimes be the only open and creative expression for the women, especially at the start of such an enterprise, where they are still searching for a voice both in their craft work and in their lives. I am aware that I contributed to this ongoing change in the indigenous material culture of a community where I am an insider-outsider by bringing in my own perceptions of craft and its uses. However, as this is inevitable in a collaboration, I focused on how I could build better social relationships with the community so I could at the very least understand and learn more about the power relations at work in such partnerships. Chapter 3 and 4 noted the positive changes in our relationship through social and design practice. Chapter 4 showed renewed interest of young AGJ girls in the way their craft was practised during this project, opening new roles for young makers in its exploration where they gained confidence through the space for craft inquiry and reflection. My role was for the women to see for themselves, through the tacit dimensions of making and reflecting, the possibilities that their craft could offer as individual makers and as a community of makers. Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's concept of a 'dyad', Maton's 'relational environment', Hyde's 'lively social feeling' and Fonow and Cook's 'concern with the ordinary' (1991:11) I acquired access to these domestic spaces showing how the interaction of this project and the relationship between the female researcher and the women simultaneously altered social environment systems and perception through microsystems, mesosystems and exosystems where the textile dialogues, workshops and relationship building took place.

5.3 What kind of dialogues can designers trigger to open up new conversations for expression and development that facilitates empowerment processes in this context?

This deviation from a conventional role as designer or design consultant in craft development that includes strict 'quality control' of commodity production or privileged authority over the women's craftsmanship and person to a softer image/communication of the outsider as an equal partner through a critically reflective relationship led us to a different series of conversations and dialogues. These dialogues, conducted in the materiality of the textiles generated new meaning.

Participatory design workshops have the potential to make small but significant changes to power relations. As mapped out in the Power Signifiers diagram designers have the tools to experientially bring forth the characteristics of each individual maker through participatory design thinking encouraging the women to reflect, identify, recognise and be aware of their craft qualities. Designers also have the tools to create mutual experiential learning environments that transform power through changing existing power relations by building unique relationship not assimilating from social and development project precedents. Textile designer/makers have yet another tool that uses 'the textile' as a site for metaphor, message, emotion and lexicon to create a dialogue and exchange that acts as phenomenological action and syntax for shifting power relations that may lead to empowerment.

5.4 What impact can conceptual and contemporary forms of creative practice have on traditional makers' agency in relation to questioning, exhibiting and articulating their power or lack thereof?

I found that activating the creative agency of craftswomen simultaneously activates intellectual activity, curiosity and a search for freedom and transformation, although this link is difficult to evidence. However, the contribution of this research to design practice is that there are forms of learning and critical reflection in the syntax of textiles making that has the potential to develop creative practice in traditional contexts.

5.4.i Dialogues of weave and stitch: deconstructing material practices

Deconstruction and component work was provided as a craft method that enabled women artisans to view their craft from a new perspective and think through design and

craft towards more autonomous roles for themselves and their community, envisioning traditional patterns not as a whole but as components of a larger composition. The women's view of themselves as worthy decision-makers sets a more favourable environment for change. However, this is a phenomenological approach and is not easy to 'read' requiring the basis of established relationship between artisans and outsider.

This lexicon of textiles can be described through the example of the 'word' in the English language: the women always use this word the same way not necessarily realising it consists of letters/alphabets, which are individual. When they learn that the letters can be used in different ways, they are able to create their own new words and sentences, by compiling and changing the alphabets and words around. So creativity might be read like literacy or education. This may perhaps be new only to them but it is done on their own initiative. That this was the case is easily observed in the progression of samples the women created. Below are Ambreen's interactions and ideas. The first sample still uses stitches in a set pattern, a smaller version but still contained in a traditional composition, later to interact with the weave she isolated smaller stitches and for the earrings she used a combination of 2D and 3D stitch-craft skills (Figure 84, 85 & 86). Her embroidered message on the jacquard piece indicates her feelings of identity and community among others and her desire to communicate this belonging to others in a global context through this exhibited piece.

Figure 84 Sample by Ambreen: first representational recording sample for project, Dec 2009

Figure 85 Researcher's second warp sample and embroidery interaction by Ambreen, June 2011

Figure 86 Ambreen's '*Jhumki* style' earrings April 2014

Figure 87 Ambreen's message on the large Jacquard piece, 'This is our village – Ambreen'

The subjective 'voice' or articulation of experience – feelings, intuition, aspirations and memories embodied in our crafted objects – give us the opportunity to express ourselves without the need for words. On the principle that material and social culture is inseparable (Gauntlett 2011; Sennett 2008; Tilley 2006), people in rural craft communities develop with things that form their materiality and society. This is different to other socially marginalised communities, as it is a form of privilege and power. Power, because craft praxis provides a critically reflective dialogue with the self and also with others who perceive and experience our craft exploring our relationship to others and to our self-perception derived from being a part of this world, through our craft. If we see a positive reflection of ourselves, it enables us and validates not only our work but also our person.

5.4.ii Reflections of the researcher/practitioner

My recorded experiences of weaving illustrate how one's craft can define, reflect and represent one who is engaged with the making of it in many different ways as well as spell out some self-reflective values and biases. This process also enabled me to reflect again on the experience of the women artisans as makers with tacit knowledge. This method can be used to identify positive subjective approaches for Active Power Signifiers between the designer and artisans. Other forms that support the non-verbal account can be developed for future work such as the use of video especially positioned as an observer, audio recordings of the differing sounds of the making of textiles, and perhaps looking into if our bodies exhibit subtle physiological indicators at varying times. Talking along the surface of the same fabric back and forth over a period of time might be another way to develop these forms of work. I found that the confidence that collaborative craft might bring to the social lives of the women, might further feed confidence in their craft and vice versa so the changes are not linear but seem interwoven. My research practice also had an unexpected finding to demonstrate that weaving is not a solipsistic craft activity that benefits only the weaver and her patrons (and small circle of admirers or critics) but that weaving can be a part of textile thinking practice which has enormous power of agency.

5.5 Limitations of this research approach

The Power Signifiers approach relies on the sincerity and willingness of the outsider or facilitator to change power relations for new strategies of empowerment in craft-based communities. It is an initial proposition for qualitative research and may need further development to incorporate quantitative analysis or outcomes. It is a critical reflection framework for praxis that makes use of subjectivity; it does not measure outcomes nor provide an outline for measureable outcomes as that is suggested as relative to research contexts.

5.6 Recommendations for future work

Returning to some of the questions raised in the previous chapter I found that it is possible for artisanal labour to be experienced as 'creative' yet this definition and understanding is different to a western one where a substantial body of work and theory have been developed over time for an entire industry. In this context the research is not discussing completely alien concepts to the west however, as

participatory design, co-creation and co-design all work on the premise of creativity of anyone who is a stakeholder in a situation. As discussed in Chapter 4 and above, introducing western or outside concepts has to be mediated with support and with awareness of options available, nonetheless facilitators cannot shield or act as preservers of 'innocence' of less literate societies or pre-capitalist craftsmanship, ultimately it is the women's choice as Kabeer (1999) and Sen (1999) have emphasised. This research demonstrated that empowerment can be conceived in terms other than remunerative empowerment while remuneration is not excluded. It accepts that it is difficult to measure such empowerment and perhaps a list of indicators might be a useful addition to the methodology. This research found affective relationships between participants and outsiders facilitate the process of transformation, because they act as a supportive and reflective medium for comparison and provide a different frame of social reference. Whether the materiality of textile can activate emotional meaning for the women might be read through the embroidered felt messages of belonging, welcome and of figurative playful creatures in the final textile jacquard piece. Although hard to articulate, these messages communicated sentiment. This nature of communication relies on subjective reading yet needs to be explored in further detail. There are questions going forward about the relationality of power relations and ethics in research practice that need further exploration. There are ongoing questions in the relativity of the link between material (craft) and social changes and one way of exploring it further might involve interdisciplinary study with psychologists and designers working together.

5.7 A summary of my research contributions to new knowledge is as follows:

- This research showed that power relations exist in the act of craft making for development between facilitators and artisans, and that the act of making provided agency for creating shifts in power dynamics between rural women artisans and an urban western educated woman facilitator.

- It uses the 'textile' both as language and a site for stimulating dialogue and exchange that has demonstrated the generation of new meaning and relationships of power, and other ways of knowing.

- Craft agency has value going forth in dialogues of knowledge generation.

- The women are moving from craft into design via intentional representations elicited through the researcher's interactions focusing on power relations.

- The 'textile dialogues' presented evidence of questioning convention and authority in the women's interactions indicating a critical reflection and transformation process. This also shows the potential of material inquiry in triggering social inquiry and critical reflection where strong material cultures exist.

- This study developed the unique methodology of combining a phenomenological mindset with action research and participatory design for critically reflective practice, that befits the complexity of the craft context in Sindh in addressing social, development and design practice issues relevant to transformation for empowerment.

- The Power Signifiers provide a new framework for design researchers and practitioners to map out their own synthesised approaches to power relations in rural craft contexts.

- There are contributions that have value for beneficiaries/audiences in policy and development studies: power in making terms for traditional artisans differs, in that it will also be read by the way that practice is planned, organised, conducted and by its outcomes. The Power Signifiers framework employs the social and material agency of making towards ongoing discussions of empowerment practice.

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'Tales of Diabetes and Stories of Teeth' by East London Textile Arts, The Art Workers Guild, London. 14 – 19 March 2016

'Threads of Feeling: The London Foundling Hospital's Textile Tokens, 1740-1770', The Foundling Museum, London. 14 October 2010 – 6 March 2011

Talks and Conferences

15 March 2014, 'Bridging the Divide: Developing and applying design methodologies for cross-cultural collaboration' Symposium, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London

8 November 2014 'Textiles, Communications and Politics', 32nd annual Textile Society Conference, Wellcome Centre, London

7 February 2015, 'Cultural Threads: Transnational Textiles Today', Symposium and book launch, Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London

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Women artisan groups in Pakistan;

- Sukkur and adjoining areas (Upper Sindh), stitch-craft (embroidery, patchwork and appliqué) and handweave
- Mithi and adjoining areas (Thar dessert, Sindh), stitch-craft (embroidery, patchwork and appliqué)
- Sukkur Flood refugee camps (Upper Sindh) for adjoining district Jacobabad (crochet and stitch-craft)

Appendix 1: AGJ women and village description

Figure 1.1 Map of Sindh, Government of Sindh

Household and Clan

The village community consists of seven to eight households. Each household consists of roughly 10 to 15 people, making in total about 100 to 120 people. The village associates itself with a clan, the Jatoi,[92] a Balochi tribe of Sindh, that refers to their ancestral roots in the adjoining province of Balochistan.

[92] The community refers to this clan association as their 'caste'. These caste references are prevalent in almost all of rural Sindh and also neighbouring Balouchistan province

Figure 1.2 Canal opposite the village

Location

The city of Sukkur is close by, about 45 minutes' drive away by car. The village is situated next to a canal (Figure 1.1) that is fed by the nearby river Indus, which provides vital irrigation to the date palm plantations along both sides of the canal. The village also grows dates in adjoining land as well as some seasonal vegetables. A dirt road off one of the main national highways leads to the village.

The location of the village gives the community and its women the potential of access to the local market of Sukkur and exposure to an urban environment. It also provides easy access to a marketplace to sell the crops that they grow. It is a patriarchal society. Traditionally, Jatoi women (and their children) only travel accompanied by a male member (Sukkur or otherwise) to visit the doctor or hospital even in an emergency.

Housing and local economy

The local houses are made mostly from mud and are flat roofed. Concrete has also been used more recently (2015) for building. The village's economy is primarily run on the crops it grows and it also has a small herd of buffaloes, some goats and chickens. The buffaloes form a staple for the village, providing milk and dung that in turn is used as fuel, as an insulator for the houses and as fertilizer, which can be used in the date plantations. If there is any excess buffalo milk it is sold in the market. The women of the village are responsible for majority of the daily chores of the village, which they undertake collectively as shown in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.3 Three women artisans cutting down feed for the buffaloes

Education

The artisans range in age from 15 to 60. There are more literate younger women compared to those aged 35 and above. The majority of school-going artisans have only attended primary school until about class six, enabling them to read and write. A handful of women have attended all ten classes of school, equivalent to secondary school GCSEs. One or two continue further to high school (sixth form) and one studies for an undergraduate degree. The men of the village also attend school and most continue till at least secondary education. A few of them have attended university in the nearby cities of Hyderabad or Sukkur.

Marriage

Most marriages are arranged between families while children are still young. Exchange marriages are not uncommon – where a young man is being wed into a family, his sister's prospective husband is most likely his bride's brother. Exchange marriages usually take place to ensure a balance of power; ill treatment of one's sister would mean the same treatment for your own sister (Brohi 2013). One of the reasons this balance of power may be questionable is because women suffer with no fault of their own and have no control over the system, second that, traditionally men can marry more than once in the community, and some have, meaning some women do not benefit from the concept of the exchange marriage.

Textile making culture

Older married AGJ women wear and embroider traditional three-piece dress which consists of a large scarf, baggy trousers and a loose tunic (*Gajj*) which is the most heavily decorated part of their attire. Younger women do not wear the *Gajj* and prefer to emulate urban Pakistani fashions. Hand bound textile accessories (*Paranda*) are used to braid the women's hair. Other household objects such as pillowcases are also embroidered. Patchwork and applique quilts are made to commemorate life events such as weddings. Women of different

ages participate to make pieces especially for the wedding trousseau for prospective brides, which is a collective activity.

Language and outside associations

The AGJ women speak Sindhi, a regional language, while some also speak the national language, Urdu. A small group of women were initially registered as a community organisation in 2006 by local NGO, Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO). SRSO is the main organisation that the women associate with and have contacted others through their outreach programmes. Some women are also registered with the homeworkers group 'Sabah Pakistan' starting in 2008. The women produce craft orders for others including Sabah Pakistan.

Appendix 2: RSPN-ComSec project: AGJ women's first craft project

RSPN-ComSec project (2006 – 2008) and Rural Support Programmes (RSPs)
Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) is a Pakistani umbrella organisation specialising in social mobilisation, based in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital city. It works through its local partner member organisations in different regions of Pakistan; these are usually referred to as Regional Support Programmes (RSPs). There are now over eleven different member organisations. The RSPN-ComSec women's empowerment project worked with three of these, the Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO) in Upper Sindh, the Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP) in eastern Sindh and the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) in the northern province of Khyberpakhtunkhwa. RSPN's major funding for its own structure came from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). While most of the project costs were borne by RSPN, the project was initiated within the Gender Affairs department at the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec), London: this both provided design and organisational consultants and helped to host the London exhibition for the project's first phase.

The aim of the project was to use the textile skills of marginalised women artisans as a means of economic empowerment by creating direct market access and product development. An exhibition showcasing products made as a result of the project 'Threads of Change' was held in London, at the Prince's School of Traditional Arts, in November 2008. It was through this project that I met twelve women from AGJ for the first time in 2007 at a four-day workshop in Sukkur at the SRSO (Sindh Rural Support Organisation) human resource development office.

Design and craft intervention with RSPN-ComSec project
There were three stages of product and design workshops carried out directly with artisans, mainly by female design interns from Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London (UK) in a rotational programme. I was involved in the later stages of the first set of initial skill development workshops and carried on working with the project till the exhibition in London. The workshops took place over eight to ten months, with a total of approximately twelve women from AGJ taking part.

I first met the women in August 2007, at a four-day workshop in Sukkur at the SRSO (Sindh Rural Support Organisation) human resource development office where the workshop was held. About twelve women from AGJ village – members of community organisations initiated by SRSO – were present at these series of workshops. This included Ghulam Zohra, Marvi, Bhagul, Shamim, Bhaitan, Tasleem, Afsana, Sughra, Shereen, Ambreen, Samina and Zaibunnisa.

The design interns were responsible for designing and conducting the workshops overseen by the project manager. The work was based on the UK consultants recommendations and reports. They also visited periodically to oversee the work being carried out.

In the first phase of the design and skill development workshops the women created samples that enabled them to respond to different high-end design briefs. This included the use of different materials – fabrics and yarns – and there were also drawing workshops. Unfamiliar design briefs were used to develop skills; tracing, pencils and graph paper to format the designs.

Figure 2.1 Sample created in the first stage of workshops prior to my joining the project

In the second phase of workshops, UK-based designers were invited to come to Pakistan and work with the women through 'master-classes', where they could work directly with the makers and develop their designs. Three-day 'master-class' workshops were held in Karachi.[93]

Some designers had sent design briefs prior to their visit while others worked on design briefs at the workshops. The skills were further developed in these workshops to respond to direct design briefs and instill the idea of accuracy, deadlines and re-working things to get a better result, as well as understanding the designers' expectations. The women were divided into two groups, one for patchwork and the other for embroidery. About eight to ten of the women from the village travelled to Karachi for the master-class workshops: not all the women could travel, due to household commitments and inability to obtain permission from their families or spouses.

[93] The southern craft group workshops were held in the city of Karachi as a convenient central location for all the craft communities participating in the project from different regions in the province of Sindh

For the next stage, once these briefs were set out, the role of the RSPN team was to monitor and control quality and set out further briefs, liaising with the designers and the regional partner organisation (RSP). The quality and production capacity-building workshops were aimed to continually assess the quality of products being created and to iron out any problems with the brief.

These workshops also trained the lead trainers for products, who could then train other women artisans. Craftswomen were chosen for their high quality of work and their interest in new briefs.

For the organisational development workshops there were two main stages. The first was the sensitisation workshops that discussed the benefits of cooperatives and their values and principles with the women. The SRSO staff had a 'training of trainers' (TOT) with the organisational consultant. Second, the strategic planning workshops were held to organise the women ideally as a formal group and to register legally.

Follow-up visits were made by both the regional organization, SRSO, and RSPN staff. The consultants made around two trips to Pakistan a year if the political[94] climate allowed. These workshops helped the women recognise the benefits of collective work, such as collective bargaining. They found that while working together they were able to compare their work with each other, which improved the quality of their work.

To produce the cathedral patchwork piece illustrated in below, six women collaborated in intensive workshops led by a colleague[95] and myself. Although the women used patchwork and appliqué in their craft traditions, this was unlike any of those. These workshops were held at the Human Resource Development Centre at SRSO premises. Four women were from AGJ and three from an adjoining village. The women who attended the workshops here were Ghulam Zohra, Marvi, Salma and Bhagul.

The tasks were divided among the group so each could perform the task they were best at to produce a better result, i.e. specialisation. Cooperating with each other produced a better product overall and was completed in a shorter time. These workshops were rigorous and focused on making a specific piece. The women were taught basic measuring skills – for example the use of rulers – for precise measurement of the template to accord with exact design specifications i.e., the centimetres of fabric needed to be cut every time to achieve the desired result.

[94] Due to the political instability and security situation in Pakistan at the time, the decision to travel was left independently with the consultants. The organisational consultant made more field trips than the design consultant.

[95] Another design intern from UAL

Figure 2.2 Collective work on cathedral patchwork piece, November 2007

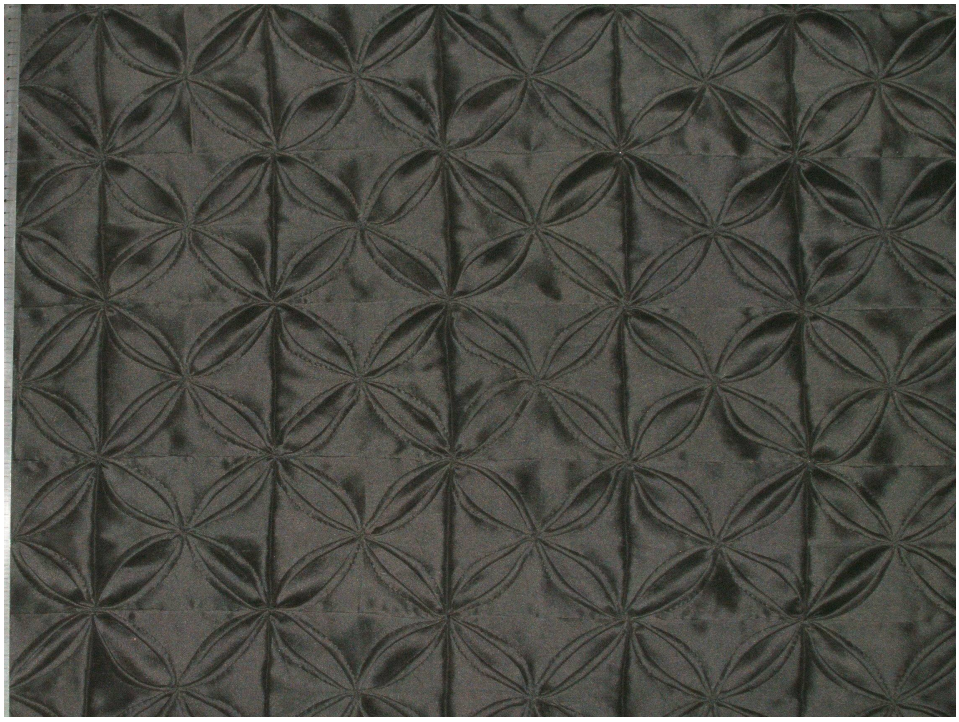


Figure 2.3 Cathedral patchwork produced in silk for Anthony Knight

Pros and Cons of the RSPN project – AGJ women's first craft development project

For the AGJ women the three-year RSPN-ComSec project was the first time they had used their craft skills to make anything to sell. As mentioned earlier, the aim of the project was to

use the textile skills of marginalised women artisans as a means of economic empowerment by creating direct market access and product development.

The project consisted of two main aspects. The first was product development: developing and improving the craft textiles skills that the women possessed, so that their products were more suitable for export to the international market. The second aspect was organisational development: creating structured enterprise groups so that the women could benefit from working collectively and be able to respond to income opportunities involving their craft skills.

The product development was for UK and local designers who had each set out design briefs for the craft groups they had chosen based on their specific craft skills. Along with design work, there was training in the principles of co-operative working. This was designed to establish direct market links for producer groups to avoid intermediaries or agents cutting into the profit and to keep supply chains as short as possible. The RSPN-ComSec project was one of the first to propose the co-operative model of enterprise within Pakistan. A co-operative can be described as a registered business that looks after the needs of a collective group rather than any one individual. It helps to organise the group as equal members who work together to benefit the group as a whole, with an equal sharing of profits and rotation of elected presidents, keeping power structures in check for the whole group. This collective organisational concern echoes the principles of social justice and equity described by transformative social change theory (Freire 1970, 1973; Furman and Gruenewald 2004). However, registering new co-operatives has been banned in Pakistan since 1997 due to embezzlement of members' funds in a large co-operative housing group (Coop housing International 2018) which raises the question of the efficiency of co-operative groups as democratic in areas with contextual constraints and varying agendas (Holmen 1990; Mustafa and Gill 1998). The RSPN project's own objectives for 'socio-economic' empowerment, the focus on generating income and lack of attention to the nature of collaboration in craft (Rhodes 2014), by being 'given' design briefs, inevitably placed the women at the bottom of the power pyramid. These design briefs some of which were far removed from the women's traditional making asserted a top-down flow of knowledge, decisions and therefore privilege.

Appendix 3: AGJ group conversation 2009

Group conversation and discussion AGJ Village*
December 2009

The following paragraphs are extracts from the discussions during an informal and unstructured group interview at AGJ village in December 2009, about current and past craft practices. This was the first time I visited for this research project. There were times when the SRSO staff member prompts an artisan to answer and sometimes staff members answer for them. Sometimes artisans ask the staff to explain in more detail what I mean.

SM: *So…when you started the practice of your craft, when someone perhaps taught you…what did you feel, how do you feel about practising it, what does it mean to you?*

GZ: *When I was young, about 12, 13 years old, my (ammi) mother and bhabi (sister-in-law) used to do this [stitch-craft] work, I also had an interest ('Shauq'). I used to go to school and mosque, after [I came home] I would also pick up a needle and thread and start. My mother used to say why do you have so much interest in it. My mother and sister-in-law taught me, complete [stitch-craft]. The work I did [turned out] better than my mother and sister-in-law's, when elders [and others] saw it they said it was very good. Neighbours asked me to make things for them.*

From the start, mother, sister-in-law, grandmothers did it. Now that we are [female] elders [in a sense of senior makers], our [female] young ones [juniors] also do it, and say 'why shouldn't we also send work?' That's why we all know the same work.

Since we were young…[we make] it's a wedding, so it's important we wear this dress, [it's] our identity that's what we wear. Other women add in,*'Humari Pehchaan hai (it's our representative identity)'* and nod in unison. GZ places her palm on her chest while she says this. *[We make for] Eid and weddings.*

We say 'Kyun fariq baithey?' (Why sit free?) If not our own we make for someone else.

SM: *…so you started because of your interest, is that true for how everyone started? By watching elder generations?*

SR: *At home, mother, bhabi and Dadi (paternal grandmother) practise it [stitch-craft]. Mother also says you try it too, now that you are grown [up], it will help you later in life. Then we all try it.*

SM: *Do you mean [learn it] as a 'hunar' (talent/skill) as something that you should know. That will be useful?*

SR: *One who has skill; they are not dependent on any other, that's what our grandmother says.*

SM: *What other reasons might you have to start stitch-craft, is it considered women's work, what about men, have any men ever done it?*

GZ: *Sometimes, we ask our brothers to pick up a needle and do this [craft] work so we can see [if they are any good at it]. They say, 'no, no this is your work, you do it. I have many other works to do like harvesting and sowing.'*

SR: *The (mard) man says for us there is work outside not inside the house. Men always [have work to] do outside right?*

SM: *…when you do this, one you said was out of interest because you enjoy it, another was to bide the time, any other reasons you work [together]?*

SG: *…because we benefit [financially] from making work, too.*

GZ: *Yes, if we make for others so, obviously, we benefit. For ourselves we make between cooking meals and taking care of household chores, once a month we make for ourselves (a gajj) we also make at domestic level, for the house…*

Shereen was prompted to tell me about her one-month training programme in India at SEWA in July 2009 which she attended with the SRSO consultant and the changes SRSO has helped bring to their work.

SR: *I went to India with Madam for a one-month training programme, to Ahmedabad. There is benefit for us to work together, [craft work] gets done faster. We can bring change to our work. SRSO intervention helped us bring change to our work. We prefer to use anchor thread.*

The work gets done faster when working together, benefiting us by taking less time. We are able to bring change to our work by being able to compare to each other's work. We sometimes look at magazine cuttings for inspiration and make our own additions to the designs we see there…it's enjoyable to work together.

Different women note that at the moment they practise the craft for a number of reasons: *'for monetary gain, out of interest, and because the traditional craft is their identity'*. They practise it because *'they enjoy the activity, and because they watched their mothers and grandmothers practise it'*.

BHG: *Earlier generations used to do horumchi [or hormuch] stitch, but we don't do it much anymore as its time-consuming and difficult, we changed to Balouchi stitch* (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2 below)*, because of the way it sits on top of the fabric; it is also more prominent, and much heavier.*

I brought along one of my woven samples, in SPMV (metallic yarn warp) and viscose/rayon floss which was part of my final BA project. I asked any one of the women to embroider into it. Ambreen volunteered and after embroidering a small section she said, *'this is too slippery, the needle keeps slipping out [through the floss], it's difficult to embroider on.'* Other women went over to look closely and discussed amongst themselves.

I asked the women what they would like to see from the set of fabrics I planned to weave for the project and they said, 'the fabric should grip the needle, so the embroidery can sit properly [on the fabric].'

Separately from the group discussion, I had a conversation with one of the artisans who attended secondary school. Shamim joined the workshop a bit later because she had school exams. She is 15 years old and is in class 9. She said, *'recently there has been a surge in the women's interest in the craft, mainly because of the different design work and briefs we have had recently, which helped to motivate us. We didn't value their work as much before, we would make it and wear it ourselves. However, the work has become more interesting now as we make a range of different things. Previously, we made the same things all the time [and found this monotonous].'*

SM: *What do you think of the project and me doing it? Why do you think I am doing it?*

'Maybe you have to as it's your job and duty for SRSO.'

'Maybe because of your interest.'

'Perhaps you want to promote Pakistan and Sindh and our identity.'

'Nobody does it without any benefit and you will benefit as well as us from it.'

Figure 3.1 and 3.2 Examples of traditional Balouchi embroidery, heavy satin-like stitch and *shisha* (mirror) work

Figure 3.3 Initial Study workshops in winter making 'representational and expressing identity' samples (L to R: ZB, SR and GZ)

* The conversation was conducted, as always, in a mixture of Urdu and Sindhi. I have translated them into English.

Appendix 4: Shubinak, Karavana and Polly & me example

Case study: Shubinak, Karavana and Polly&me
Examples of craft development approaches in development projects in Northern Pakistan

The examples discussed in this section provide some insight into the design practitioner's role in the context of craft development in Pakistan, working with women artisans and in relation to different models. Cath Braid's practical approaches in this field proved useful, and have influenced this study.

Braid received a degree in fashion design from Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. Originally from Australia, Braid came to Pakistan in 2000. She started working with women embroiderers in Chitral, northern Pakistan, initially as an NGO consultant and later as a private business partnership, placing orders through a local collective, and finally as a social enterprise, not just sourcing work but also engaging with the women on a collaborative level.

An enterprise initiative project called Shubinak, run by a local NGO, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) employed Braid to help with development of products. *Shubinak* was set up in 1999 to sustain the production of good-quality local woollen weaving (traditional *shu*) and to provide income to families and communities who practised spinning and weaving local wool that supplemented and/or provided income in the winter months. It was assisted by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

The pre-intervention study (for Shubinak) included examining all aspects of the local supply chain and identifying issues. The local women's spinning was considered to be the backbone of the enterprise, to create both the quality and quantity of the *shu.* The primary purpose was to enable the production of a better quality product and to pay women a higher salary than the market rate for the local wool handspun into yarn.

International design consultants[96] were brought in as experts to provide market knowledge and help create new products from this material for the project so that products could be sold through the outlet in the local town, Chitral, and other stock wholesaled to retailers in various Pakistani cities (Afzal 2005:3).

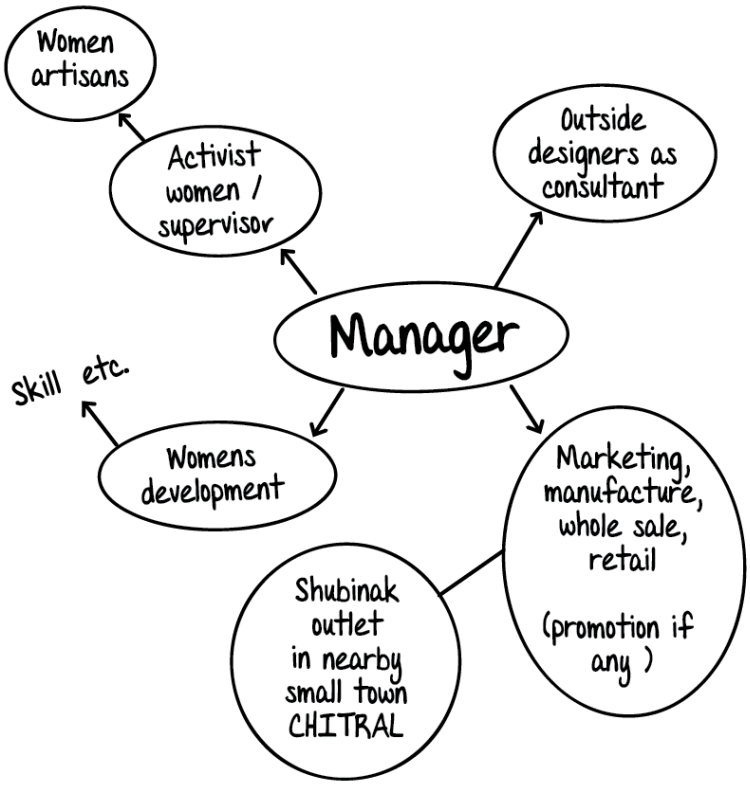
Similarly, at the outset the rationale for undertaking the Shubinak project was described as socio-economic empowerment and the revival of an indigenous craft. This implies that implementation should include participatory approaches, yet there was no evidence of practice of this. The subsequent project goals and the project's implementation were both mainly economically based (Afzal 2005:2).

However, the design consultant might have limited control over what is actually being made,

[96] Consultants from Australia

with the direction and design management carried out by the manager of the project initiative, due to its management structure. Therefore the flow of knowledge seems uni-directional, despite the goals of empowerment and autonomy.

The Shubinak initiative is worth examining, even if briefly, especially due to its subsequent re-structuring and evolution into what was considered a better model.



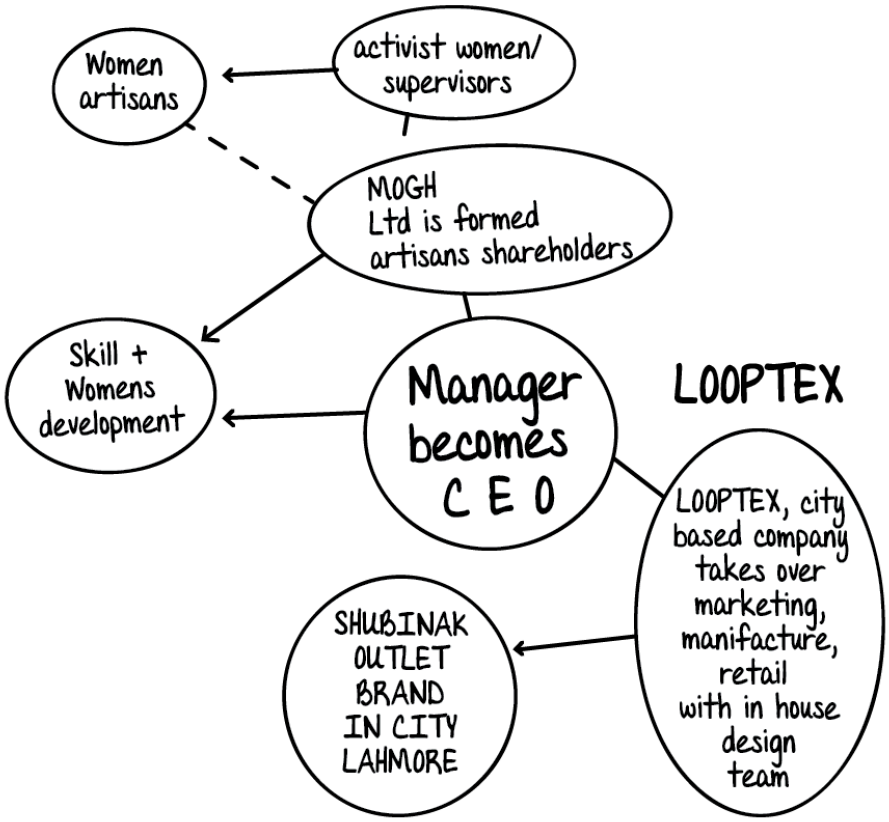
Pros:

- Full supply chain reviewed, accessed and engaged
- Responded to local conditions, such as seasonal winter making in absence of outdoor summer chores
- Revival of traditional materials and techniques for high quality was the aim
- Paid women a higher wage than market

Cons:

- End design not foremost concern
- Unsustainable due to lack of demand from market
- Women have no part in decision-making, as all decisions made by manager
- Manager has central control over what is made and where it goes
- Women artisans/producers are second tier, meaning that there is no transparency as to what is going on and low profits compared to supervising women

Figure 4.1 Shubinak model 1999 diagram



Pros:

- Women are shareholders
- Continues to factor in local conditions
- Marketing, design and promotion tasks are specialised and do not have one locus of control any more
- Full supply chain is engaged
- Finishing of products is not localised, taking a market-oriented approach for enhanced sustainability

Cons:

- End products are far removed from tradition
- Products are not co-designed: women are mere workers – skilled hands – with their creativity or craftsmanship not fully accessed
- Women not part of the design process (except in the case of 'Polly&me' products)
- The women get employment but no direct social change
- The manager still holds control over who the women make for and what products they make

Figure 4.2 Shubinak refigured and re-modelled 2007/09 diagram

In the example of Shubinak, whose management structures are illustrated above, the most notable aspect of the first model of 1999 (Figure 4.1) is that it directly addressed the full

supply chain. It also took into account local culture and conditions, having stemmed from local concern. However, the products that were designed initially did not have much market scope. Because the retail outlet was in an almost rural environment, this meant it had limited custom.

In 2003 Shubinak House was closed (Afzal 2005:15, Shubinak[97]). The remodeled Shubinak brand has joint management by private companies LoopTex and Mogh Ltd[98], and takes a market-oriented approach for enhanced sustainability. The design direction and product development comes from the Lahore city-based LoopTex, who also manage the brand direction. The products created in 2011 serve current market trends, but the spirit of traditional quality has been lost in the latest online collections, which appear more commercial by the late 2012 collections[99] (Shubinak 2014).

Figure 4.3 Shubinak's traditionally-inspired and made products, including the S/S 2011 womenswear collection.

[97] Shubinak project history (undated) http://www.shubinak.com/shop2/content/17-history-of-shubinak

[98] Mogh Ltd is one of the collective companies under the supervision of KADO

[99] Product collections available online http://www.shubinak.com/shop2/6-women

Figure 4.4a, 4.4b, 4.4c Shubinak's commercial products with the traditional craft element lacking somewhat, including S/S 2012 womenswear collection.

Shubinak's remodelled structure demonstrates a focus on the market and commercialisation, yet loses the traditional essence of craft and the maker's mark. There is no visible connection to the makers in the work that has been produced. The first product collections tried to incorporate embroidery and some traditional patterns (Figure 4.3) into contemporary clothing. However, most of the products do not offer this balance, even minimally. The earlier principle of 'must find a way to use this craft and market it' has been substituted for 'must try to fit in craft somehow into contemporary products'.

This motivation does not create the right balance between design and practice, with empowerment for the artisans being an integral aim. Product descriptions also offer no clues as to who made each piece or which women's collective or workplace it was made in. In some products the only influence of craft or traditional pattern in evidence is visual. The Shubinak brand recently launched a collection of clothing and accessories called 'Kalash', stating that the product line is inspired by the indigenous craft culture of the Kalash tribe.

> Shubinak's philosophy is to create and manage a sustainable supply chain revolving around the skills of artisans from the valleys of Chitral. After setting up a successful and self-reliant model by merging the age-old skills of embroidery and weaving, we intend to repeat a standard collaboration in other regions of Pakistan. We strictly adhere to our purpose of empowering these artisans and developing excellent standards of aesthetically pleasing, quality designs relevant to contemporary lifestyles so that consumers are compelled to purchase or promote the product based on its value (Shubinak 2014).

Below are examples of Kalash tribeswomen's headdresses from northern Pakistan's Chitral valley. The inspiration for the product, is limited to a vague interpretation of the visual

pattern, far removed from the traditional craft itself (beading, embroidery); it is made using screen-printing techniques (not a Kalash tradition). The product in itself is saleable and desirable, but its claims are not, as it does not support the Kalash women's tradition of craft making.

Figure 4.5 Kalash women's headdresses

Figure 4.6 Shubinak scarves inspired from 'Kalash' women's headdress and clothing

Another main issue with both models is the locus of control that lies with the management – the CEO of Mogh Ltd and the LoopTex management. This is reminiscent of the role of intermediary agents in rural craft communities who gain most of the profit and keep artisans invisible in the background. Although the artisans are paid higher wages and gain profits, which is most noteworthy, they hardly control their situation.

Braid first worked with the Shubinak craft development initiative as a design and marketing consultant,[100] and by 2003 she had partnered with Shubinak and set up a business and brand, Karavana, with a partner in Australia. The brand produced clothing and handbags targeted at the high-end Australian and European market. While Braid spent most of her time in Pakistan, focused on production and design management, her business partner travelled for marketing and promotion. Karavana worked through Shubinak's infrastructure, i.e. in centres near clusters of women artisans. The products incorporated beadwork, leather, embroidery and crochet. Braid provided materials and payment to the women through Shubinak. The brand made womenswear, fashion and home accessories. The work was shown at Australian Fashion Week and brought in a stream of orders. The work of Karavana overlapped with Shubinak's structural transformation,[101] (Figure 4.2) making the women artisans shareholders and the manager of Shubinak the CEO of the company. One of the challenges Braid describes for the management of local economies when working with rural craft communities was the women's wages: these were higher than market rates for similar work. She solved this problem by paying local rates and a monetary bonus on top to separate the two (Braid, in conversation 2008).

In the summer of 2007, Karavana also closed, due to differences between the partners, and a new brand, Polly&me, concentrating solely on making handbags, was launched. Polly&me is a social enterprise started by Cath Braid and marketed by her sister, Angela Braid.

[100] Often the roles of consultants are more overlapping than they appear, so a consultant may be overseeing design, marketing, business all in one or whatever the project requires at the time

[101] It is unclear exactly when the structural reformation took place over the course of 2007 - 2009

Figure 4.7 Images from the Polly&me website, 2014. Handbag from 2011 collection, with design collaboration by an illustrator from outside Pakistan

For Polly&me, Braid still worked with the women artisans at Mogh Ltd to create the new products. However, the products were finished in the urban centre of Karachi in south Pakistan. Braid said this was because the tailors and makers found there were used to providing high-end briefs and finishes for the export market. According to her, this design management was essential, as otherwise beautiful embroidery or craftwork would have been unsuccessful due to the poor finish of the product (Braid, in conversation 2008).

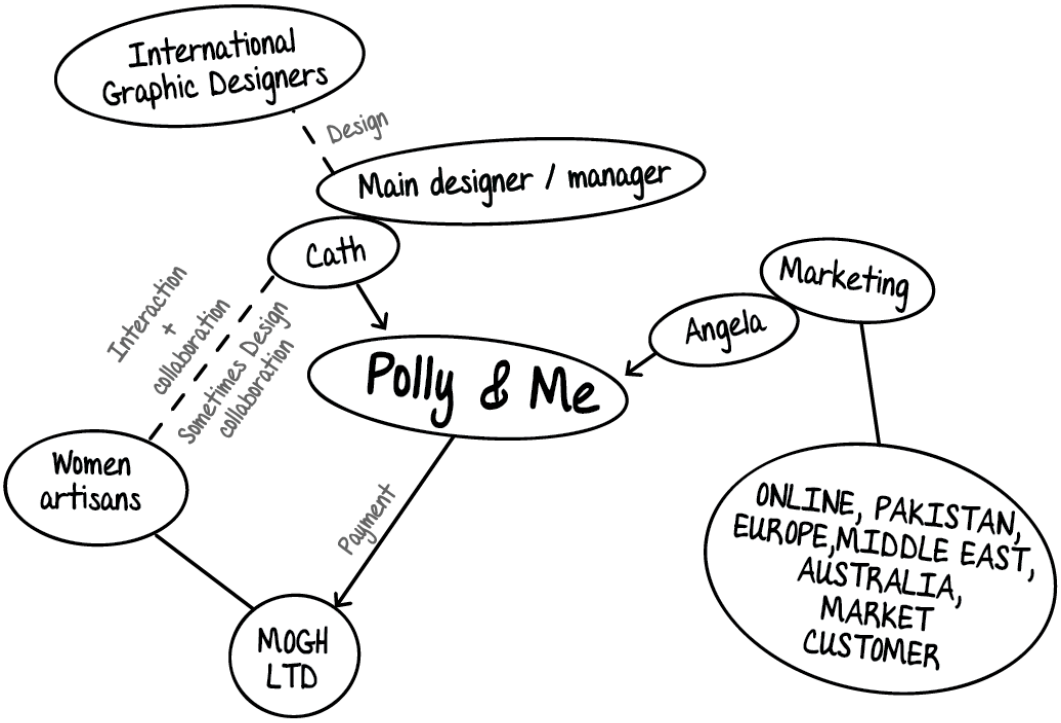


Figure 4.8 Polly&me model of work diagram

Polly&me collections were a mix of design collaborations. The first collections were designs drawn by Braid herself; later they involved the women in the design process and later on still they used graphic illustrations by established external design consultants (Polly&me 2011).

In 2008, with a grant from the British High Commission, Islamabad, work for an exhibition and collection called 'GupShup'[102] by Polly&me was organised in the city. This collection was inspired by the Chitrali craftswomen's stories and everyday life. For this, Braid used more collaborative and inclusive design processes, such as photographs taken by the women with Braid's camera and personal objects brought to workshops at the centres. Once a basic drawing was made, this was cut up and collaged together to create a larger narrative piece composed by Braid. An exhibition at the National Gallery of Arts, Islamabad, showcased the pieces.

Another later collection, called 'Ramadan Diaries', encouraged the women to keep a diary to record events, conversations and their thoughts throughout the month of Ramadan. The topics were more relational to the women and the designs were developed through art workshops.

[102] 'Gupshup', meaning chitchat, was an exhibition of wall hangings made by the craftswomen of Mogh Ltd, Chitral, held in Islamabad. The craftswomen of Sindh with SRSO in this research visited this exhibition in 2008 on an exposure visit with the consultant and main Enterprise programme officer/staff at that time

Figure 4.9 Image showing work process, Polly&me website 2014. Wall hangings collection, 'Ramadan Diaries', 2011

This experience of making by Polly&me with women artisans demonstrates a balanced model of targeted collaboration and economic return. In 2010 and 2011, permanent collections were showcased and launched in Pakistan for the first time at prestigious galleries in urban locations. This was a hugely successful model of work for Polly&me and for the women it employed. By 2011, Polly&me was well known, and other brands in Pakistan started to copy their ideas, influenced by the trend Braid had started with the embroidery and leather mix handbags.

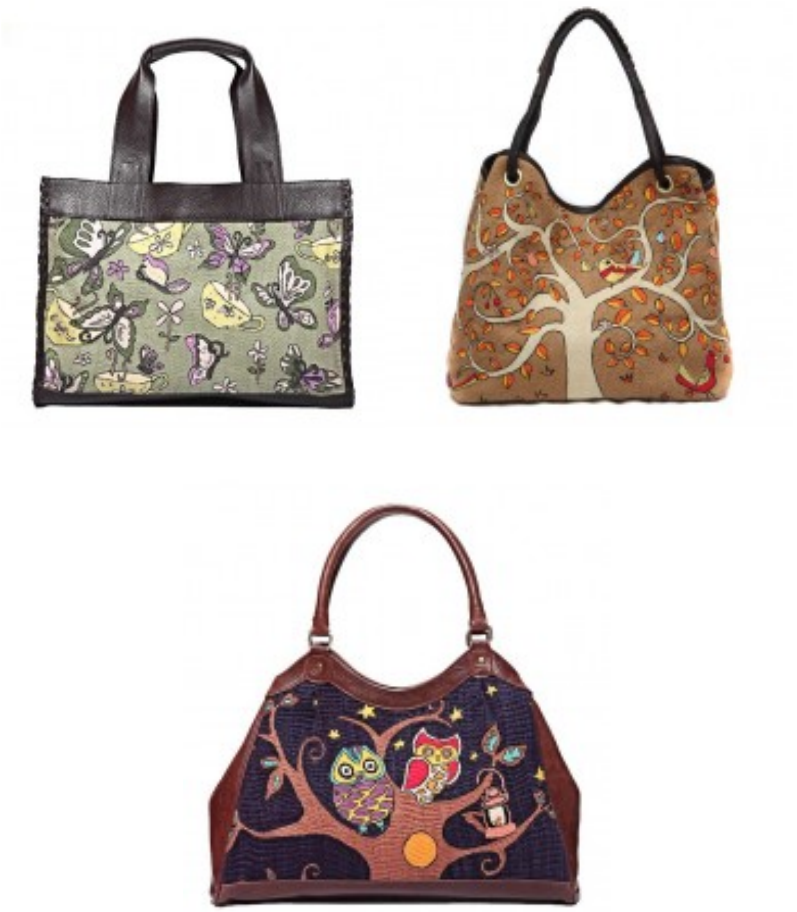


Figure 4.10 Examples of Krizmah handbags

A brand called Krizmah was established in 2011, working with the same ideas and in particular illustrating very similar seemingly replicated designs. The new handbag company procured the work through the same channel, Mogh Ltd., and the craftswomen in Chitral where the centres were set up. Braid had helped to train the women to work to high skill levels and developed a method of work that was directly adopted by this new brand/company. At first this did not affect the popularity of Polly&me; however, due to the emergence of Krizmah, some of the demand was diluted, with product change and diversification required to manage a trend and the USP that was being saturated by another brand. Braid had to develop new designs and diversify the product range, with the handbag collection no longer the sole product (as illustrated in Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11 Polly&me product range[103] 2012 and 2013

From this we can conclude that the Polly&me model illustrates some use of co-creation and collaborative work with the women. The women working with Braid could relate to the experience of making in a workshop and the products as the designs explored mainly personal themes. The resulting product had value and meaning. However, co-creation did not continue through every collection in the handbags range. If a product collection providing women with an opportunity to express creativity used designs and outside influences at the same time in every collection, this would enable a better model of participation. The reservation with this model is that the women, despite being shareholders in the company, are not taking decisions to assert their control, and that their relationship with Braid did not seem personal enough for them to retain responsibility for design rights for Polly&me, i.e. Braid. Further, despite the design collaboration and women's direct involvement in the process there is a lack of preservation of the traditional technique and pattern. The cultural identity of the craft is not sustained. The product diversification also has to come from Braid, rather than from the women's ability to manipulate the design concept and make it sustainable on its own. However, different artisans respond differently and work at various levels of skill and design interpretation, requiring a long-term gradual effort to make decisions autonomously.[104]

[103] Available from: https://www.facebook.com/112766648772688/photos/pb.112766648772688.-2207520000.1404322760./510325099016839/?type=1&theater [Accessed 01/07/14]

[104] NKS village, where I also work, is an example of a village that requires significantly more design input from me as a designer compared to other villages where I work.

Appendix 5: Designer N and the AGJ women

The case study below highlights the issues such as ethics, empowerment, social relations that were noted in the intervention of N[105] with the AGJ women. In this example N most likely does not realise the impact of working through a dominant social hierarchy. Working and interacting in this way subjugates the women that are already marginalised in their society. It also seems that income is foremost in N's approach and the women reported numerous occasions where N's reasoning was primarily based on monetary benefit.

Designer N and the AGJ women

N makes various products with rural communities for an ethically labelled brand, 'I'. One craft community she works with is AGJ. She started working with them in 2012. One of the product ranges replicates the idea of jewellery and accessories conceived as part of this research project.

The range includes necklaces, some earrings and bangles made with polyester and acrylic yarns that are available locally and cheaply but may not be as durable as cotton for example. N sets the colour palettes and 'designs' the pieces that are then produced in a standardised form with strict quality control in quantities of 30 to 50 upwards. Any products that do not meet this standard are returned to the women. When visiting the local area, N stays and works from the home of a local landlord, who is a political leader in the local area and from the family of one of its previous provincial ministers.

The women were introduced to N through a relative of theirs and one of the artisans went to meet her at the home of landlord X to work out their first order. (I was not aware of the landlord's association till 2014 only that they met N through a relative.)

A large first order was completed by the women for N in 2012-2013. Subsequently in 2013, I reminded the women of our agreement and of market dynamics that affect prices of sold products if same or similar products are available from another source especially at a lower price. The women explained that N had reassured them that it would not be a problem, '*us key liyay bhi karey meray liyay bhi karey*' ('make the work for her and also make the work for me'), '*hum dono Karachi se hain, wo meray behan ki tarhan hai'* ('we [N and Seher] are both from Karachi, she is like a sister to me') (Field notes February 2013). The women also indicated that N might have suggested that she would speak to me. I explained to the women that I did not know N even though we are from the same city nor did I hear anything from her regarding her order.

The women, after internal discussion, decided to not produce work for N after the first order. This was most likely on the basis of N's work ethic (their interaction or lack thereof with her and the way she treated them) and my explanation that if the market had the same product (especially if one is made and sold cheaper) from different avenues the value buyers place on the product will lower resulting in undercutting their own higher-end product being sold (as part of S jo).

The women reported as a result of refusing to make the same type of jewellery for N, she was upset and on numerous occasions tried to coax the women to make it, asking 'Why do you make a loss for yourself?' (Phone call 2014), 'What does Seher give [pay] you, has she bought you'? (Field notes September 2013). In a final meeting where N said she wanted to hear it from all the women collectively, she visited the village where all the women unequivocally said reportedly, 'We will not make the same type of jewellery for you, we will work for you if you give us other designs'. In what the women describe as a heated argument where N told them off for many things in 2014, N threatened '*mein kisi se kahoo*

[105] The reason I choose not to disclose this designer and brand's name is due to her association with the women and the possibility of it affecting the women negatively

gi key aap [ka craftsgroup] kaam karney ke laiq nahin hai, mein akhbaar mein de sakti hun' ('I will tell someone [to publish] that you [your craftsgroup] are not worth working with, I can get this published in a media/newspaper report [against you]')' (Phone call September 2014). The women also reported between the heated discussions N asked one artisan she wanted to address, "you, what is your name?", 'she doesn't even know our names.' The AGJ men reported to my male travel companion that N also asked the men of the village to put pressure on the women to oblige and cut off ties with this project because the men have a political affiliation with the political party of landlord X, yet the women maintained they would work with whomever they choose and the men said we can not do anything (Field notes January 2015).

As an incentive to work with her, the women reported in late 2014 N offered to double the price she paid the women originally and work with only some of the younger artisans to produce new designs for her brand. However, this created some dissention within the group with N's encouragement of splitting the group into two; while the majority did not work with her due to her unfavourable demeanour, a handful of women wanted to work with her and carry on doing so. Their choice may or may not reflect their actual feelings; ingrained social oppression and the fear of isolation in a socially disparate society could be the underlying reason or simply some valued income over others.

More recently, N appears to have changed her approach and her brand image. In 2015 the women reported that N visited the village but was very 'serious and quiet' and hardly interacted with them. The new website markets the business, adopting phrases such as co-creation, human investment, building on skill and value of craft, to name a few. It also includes a photograph of N posing with a few of the AGJ women in the village environment. There is an image of artisan Sughra as 'team leader' who leads the group for N. Previously there were no images of AGJ village or the women, except one presented as the AGJ group (but with a different set of women) where N appeared to be superimposed using photo editing software. These changes in approach, even if cosmetic, are due to the women's own raised self-efficacy, acting independently, asking for respect and upholding their rights. This can be partly attributed to the already available income options for them. The women openly stated their preferences of behaviour towards them to designer N, by making a comparison to my relationship with them.

> Our production process is one of co-creation as opposed to contractual employment. The artisans work independently, at will, at their own time, without the bounds of a formal centre.
>
> We believe luxury is in human investment.

The women's heightened self-awareness and confidence about how they should be treated as collaborative and design equal partners helped them demand more respect and the upholding of their basic human rights and their choices.

Currently, N's brand and business are on hold and she is not trading.

Appendix 6: Semi-structured Interview with Somayeh Bardai

17th August 2014 via Skype (London and Karachi)

SB: So tell me about your PhD subject

SM: Basically questioning, traditional empowerment constructs, what's used in development is not real empowerment, it does not change people…

SB: No, its not because you're not empowering them, you are just using their labour, under the banner of empowerment to, you know, generate revenue for yourself. And that doesn't empower them, empowerment for them means that they do it on their own. And the first step to any of this empowerment, in this country [Pakistan], is adult literacy for sure, especially when it comes to textiles because if they cannot count then they do not have the capability to think of how to make a product on their own. That's why design intervention is so important over here and its good that universities are teaching it because the need is there. Because we can't empower all the artisans and the workers, on an adult literacy, I mean we can't give everyone adult literacy unless some organisation wants to take on the role of just empowering them through textiles, you know. The ones that do try to empower them like Behbud Industrial Resource Centre […] their methods […] I don't find them fair trade, I don't find them a hundred percent ethical. Save the Children was a whole another ball game altogether. The thing is their primary focus … most organisations their primary focus is something else. What they do with the women is like an added value thing. *Chalo, hum health deh rahay hain, education deh rahay hain, chalo aurton ko bhi kaam pey laga dehtay hain type thing* [hey, we are providing health, education, lets put the women to work as well, type of thing]. So in a way it's a good initiative so at least they manage to get the women out of their household and you know, on a community level and bring them together to interact with each other and create things which I think is empowering to some extent. But there's no sustainability in the equation at all. And the people that are implementing these projects aren't educated in this field to officially implement the project. You can't have social studies people try and empower women in textiles. You need fashion designers to empower women in textiles; you need textile students to empower women in textiles…

…Did you have any specific questions?

SM: Yes, I do. Although, what you said is so relevant, what I find is that a maker will understand a makers predicament far better than somebody whose coming from an anthropology background or purely a development background. And that is what we are looking at. What I am concerned with particularly is the long-term sustainability because if… forget that I am giving them employment but tomorrow something happens to me, doesn't matter, if they are not able to then use that knowledge themselves and implement it for themselves then there's no point in […] what I am doing…

SB: …As in the end, their products will again then become redundant**,** unless they are thinking for themselves, they can't make this as a means to an end for themselves. They have to learn to think for themselves and its not really that difficult, I mean, its just taking the craft and whatever potential that it has and introducing a few basic… basic mathematics is for sure necessary for them, basic colour theory is necessary for them and the understanding of materials is necessary and then anything beyond that, I mean, just [use] give them Pinterest.

SM: Yes, but actually [even] NGO workers do not have access to such things [as Pinterest] because I introduced this [to staff] in SRSO.

…So can you tell me about the structure of the organisation you were working with?

SB: Structure of the organisation…now, basically the project was funded by IKEA, the IKEA Foundation, and from what my understanding was that IKEA got a lot of criticism a few years ago saying that you claim to be all natural, […] this and that in terms of your cotton, but go check out what's happening in the cotton fields, which is that women and children are primarily doing all the labour, and there was a lot of child labour, there's zero education. So…IKEA funded these projects in all the countries that they were purchasing cotton from. What they did is they handed over the project to Save the Children International and Save the Children then…at least I know that in Pakistan it was handed to Save the Children, I do not know if Save the Children was doing it in other countries or not….

…It was a four-year project [primarily] for education. So what they did is […] Save the Children then came and outsourced it because the two major districts where they were purchasing cotton from in Pakistan were Sanghar, Sindh and Muzzaffargarh, [near] Multan [in Punjab]. They outsourced the project to the local NGOs, in Sanghar and in Muzzaffargarh, and then the local NGO implemented the project and Save the Children monitored it [the project]. So that was the structure. There was one project director and there were four officers under him for each field; so there was Education, Health, Child Protection and Economic Empowerment.

Their direct beneficiaries were the children, and their main aim was to educate the children so they started second shift schools for the children that were working in the daytime and they were primary breadwinners so they could study in the evening and they tried very hard to keep teachers in the ghost schools that were there and start them up again and have the children start up school again. But, four years later…I mean sure, they empowered the kids to some extent, they got about 75% of their target kids into school but then if you are not providing them anything beyond fifth grade they don't have the ability to continue going to school then there's really no point if you're fixing the system then fix it all the way up and make sure it stays fixed.

The thing is they treat it like 'project', you know, when the funding is finished the project is finished, [and] that's that.

The Director of Save the Children [based] in Islamabad, visited the project, visited Sanghar and Muzzaffargarh for the first time when the project was over. He only visited once.

SM: Is that the project manager?

SB: That's the [Country] Director of Save the Children. […] so much of the money that is coming is going into administrative costs…

[…] The Sanghar project was finished, that was their pilot project. Now they are going to start the project again for another four years in Nawabshah and in Lodhra, so this is ongoing its not something that's come to an end. I understand their excuse was it was a pilot project, *ghaltiyan hoti hain* [there are mistakes] it's a trial and error…we are learning, we are learning…
We need someone to make a model. The major problem is nobody's made a model for people to…

SM: so there was no strategy, maybe?

SB: …there's no strategy to follow. And then, if you are hiring consultants, a) listen to the consultants because the consultant is there to tell you what you don't know and understand. From the beginning I kept telling them you need a trade facilitation centre over there, like IRC [Indus Resource Centre] is handling stuff on ground ongoing. They have hired people that take care of quality control that will do regular visits or whatever […] that they have a set-up. These guys for them it was so secondary, this whole working with the women thing, that they didn't give […] of how things were done. All they wanted at the end of the day was beautiful products. How are you going to get beautiful products if you are working with 3500 women!

…We have 10 women [at Behbud] in a set-up inside a building sitting here [accessibly] which is a pain [quite difficult to manage]. Imagine 3500 women [based] that are in the *gaon* [village], they don't come to you directly. Their model was, get a master trainer [from] each village then elect one woman to come and learn whatever product or craft or whatever training you are giving them. And that woman goes and teaches the 25 women that are in her village. So they set up centres at each village. But they weren't centres they were 'sweatshops'…

SM: So it's like a tiered model…? Trickle-down effect sort of thing… master trainers and…?

SB: …Yes, but you can't do that, right, if it's a product then its needs close supervision it needs quality control. You're putting in raw materials, you're sending it to the women and all your raw materials are getting destroyed, so why are you spending that much money, why do it? If their craft is beautiful, and its dying and you want to revive it and you want to give them work….

…First of all, the women didn't agree to work because they don't have time. They are the sole breadwinner[s] of the family! If the woman wakes up at 4 o'clock in the morning, goes to the *Kheth* [fields to harvest] and works till 4 in the evening, and then she has to come back and wash her kids and feed the kids and take care of the husband or whatever, she doesn't have time to do handicraft. They [the women] do the handicraft that they do because it is traditional exercise for them to keep their craft alive and they do it for personal purposes. *Shaadi ho rahi hai, Ralli bana rahay hain* [There is a wedding so they make a patchwork quilt]*, Apnay Kapray bana rahay hain* [They make their own clothes].

…They can't do it on a mass production scale. Unless you properly go and set up cottage industries, you give them proper training, on a village level not on a town level and then expect it to trickle down, it's not going to.

And it needs a team. *Aap master trainer la kay aap satar auraton ko traning deh dehtay hain, agay wo kachra karti hain* [you bring a master trainer and give 70 women training, in the end the work turns out rubbish]. Nothing good [in terms of product outcomes] comes out of it.

And what they did with me is...obviously, I was the face of dealing with the women, right, so at the end of the day when the organisation is not paying the women for three months, they [the women] blame it on me. *Baji ne kaam dia hain, tau baji paisay nahin de rahi* [Sister has given us work so sister is not paying us].

Appendix 7: John Gillow Conversation 2010

'Traditional Indian Textiles' talk at William Morris Gallery and Conversation with John Gillow.
William Morris Gallery, Walthamstow, London.
21st January 2010.

John Gillow is a specialist in traditional, folk and indigenous textiles, a collector, lecturer and an eminent author on the subject. I went to his talk at William Morris Gallery, today, titled 'Traditional Indian Textiles' that included work from Pakistan. Gillow went piece by piece and spoke about its significance, where it came from and who made it. He showed photographs of where he got the pieces he had brought with him and talked about the regions, the tribes or indigenous cultures that were tied to them.

First (for me, having arrived a little late), Gillow spoke about woven textiles and its weavers, how important it was for the work to find a market. 'The local market is quite saturated and in order for the artisans to sustain their work they looked for links to western markets or the west'. Second, he spoke of the craft of Block printing that spreads from India all the way into Iran in the region. 'Pakistani block Print is very fine', he said, 'Kutch has very fine Tie and Dye. Usually an old man or whoever is spare in the family will create the traditional pattern and everyone will then do it'.

'*Ajrak* is the most complicated block printing technique in the subcontinent [in Sindh, Ajrak is considered a strong cultural identity of the region]. In India, the Sindhi Muslims in Bhuj, Kutch, make Ajrak. The locals make naturally dyed fabrics to sell to the western market. However, they themselves wear the chemical dyes as it washes well'. About Tie and Dye in the area he said, 'Most of the tie and dye in Pakistan is dying out, a lot of the Hindus migrated to Rajasthan'.

Next, we were shown a Camel cloth from Rajasthan. 'The *Saami* make quilts. *Banjara* are the nomadic or gypsy tribe who also make quilts with Stepped quilting and felted wool'.

'India has got a vast tourist market that drinks up stuff from Pakistan', he added as a little known fact.

Furthermore, he spoke of how the 'surroundings can be an inspiration for the motifs and patterns that form in traditional work that local artisans do. For example, in Bengali culture, fish is the staple diet and a stylised version features in local patterns'. We were also shown a sample where a marital argument was made into a textile. Next an embroidered piece from Hazara (Pakistan), there, 'gold coloured yarn in embroidery signifies wheat fields and silver denotes money'.

He emphasised the importance of having a market for the sustenance of traditional work, 'as long as there is a market, people will continue to make it'.
He then spoke of the *Meghwall*, a leather working tribe usually, considered a low caste (in Hinduism).

'Embroidery is the cheapest way of doing things (decorating/ornamenting), you count for fabric, materials, not the labour or needles and thread', Gillow stated.

Next was a piece from the Shin people, Northern Pakistan and Chitral valley's *Kailash* tribe's headdress (that majority of the local women wear) with buttons, plastic cowrie shells along with needlework embroidery.

We were shown Camel girths next, and Gillow referred to Peter Collingwood for technique, there are 4 techniques.

Next, block print from Farghana valley in Uzbekistan, double Ikat.

'Flying geese pattern of patchwork. *Saami* women make them for themselves and if there's a surplus they then go to the market to sell'.

He also added while he was talking about the pieces that, 'maintaining quality is very important and often you see a beautiful piece and order maybe 50 of them. When you get them back the quality is not the same, as high as the original piece. So that's something that a collector or buyer has to be wary of'.

The attendees were then asked to come and handle the pieces.

I approached him once it had quieted down a bit, explained my project briefly. I told him I was a research student at the Royal College and my research was looking into how we might preserve traditional textiles, stitch craft in particular, of Sindh, Pakistan. Further, how a lot of young women were looking at different avenues and not necessarily interested in carrying on the tradition. At first, he was a bit withdrawn. He said that, 'it is very difficult as Pakistan is not in a good way at the moment'. He was slightly negative and then said, 'I'm being like that aren't I?'

He warmed up after a while and we started talking about Politics in Pakistan. Including our personal experiences of landlords of the region. Fortunately, we shared a similar view on the politics in Pakistan. I talked to him about both a contemporary approach and a traditional one. He said he could sell old textiles but not new ones. Additionally, that, 'marketing the work of the artisans' and selling it is what will get the young ones to start again or continue' the age-old custom. He also spoke about how I 'would have to be very strict with quality, saying to the women that the only way it can be sold is if the quality is very high and there should be no compromises on that'. He insisted the way forward is high-end and for me to be

very strict about accepting bad work. Tell them he said, 'that you are going to sell it and make it work but you can only do that if it's of a very high standard'.

We mainly spoke of the region of Tharparkar in Sindh that borders Rajasthan and Kutch, which Gillow is well versed in and has travelled to many a time.

'The materials will make a big difference', he said, 'imported Chinese and Japanese silk floss can be found in a lot of the pieces from Pakistan (from Tharparkar) as compared to much more cotton yarn used in the Kutch pieces'.

He elaborated further, 'There's a vast difference in the work in Kutch and on the other side of the border'.

'I would love to publish a book just on Pakistani textiles but no one has been interested in publishing it so far'.

Gillow's passion for Sindhi [needlework] embroidery was very apparent, he said, 'I just love Sindhi embroidery, I reckon it's probably the best in the world'.

Appendix 8: Selected field notes – Relationship diaries
December 2009 to January 2016

Relationship diaries: Field notes, observations and communication with the AGJ women including pre-research interaction from 2007

Below are extracts from my field notes which relate to the development of our relationship alongside craft making during participatory workshops. I was able to learn first hand from the women about their preferences (personal and craft), the strengths and weaknesses of my approach, their perceptions of others and me as we built our relationship further.

I have included two styles of writing: First the reflective aspect which benefits from hindsight and second, my notes and jottings as they were experienced during fieldwork and telephone conversations relevant to the progression of our relationship.

SRSO HRD Office
August 2007 – Who are you? Where do you belong?

I met the women before I started this project and their first instinct was to locate me in their sense of identities.
…
The first time I met the artisans was at the regional NGO, SRSO's Human Resource Development premises (HRD). My job was to conduct a design workshop and while working and guiding the women with tasks in smaller sub-divided groups, some of them gathered round and asked 'what is your caste?'
'What is my caste[106]?' I repeated. They casually replied 'yes, like we are Jatoi caste…and you are?'
I thought for a minute, realised they meant some kind of clan or belonging or perhaps wanted to have a sense of identity for me, somewhere to place me in the framework of things. Pakistan is a country polarised by its ethnic nationalities, mainly based around provinces but sub-divided even within. I come from what would be classed a 'muhajir', or immigrant[107] family. I pretended to be confused more than I was. I did not want to begin our relationship based on a preconceived notion. I replied 'we do not have that[108] [in the cities]'. There is of

106 The context of 'caste' in Pakistan refers more to the ethnic background one comes from, and further subdivided into clans or tribes. The word is influenced from religious castes, as in Hinduism, but does not always refer to religious classifications.
107 Muhajir is the term used to describe or label people that migrated from pre-partitioned India and moved to live in Pakistan. Although it happened at least two generations ago people originally from the area that constitutes of Pakistan (especially provinces bordering India, like Sindh) still use the term for later generations of these immigrant families due to ethnic polarization.
108 Classification based on ethnicity

course polarisation in the cities too but much less common and extremely uncommon in my own social circles.

The women waited for a moment then said, 'what's your last name?'
'Mirza', I replied. They said, 'okay then you are Mirza'.[109] *I do not know if they asked an NGO staff member about my 'actual' ethnicity later or not. Our other interactions and conversations were all based on craft and work.*

After this initial encounter there were several more: master-classes with designers present and then numerous workshops, which included follow-up work for the designers, quality control and preparation of samples for a London exhibition.

Field visit AGJ village
December/January 2009/10 – Just doing your job

In the first workshop of this project I asked the women their perception of me starting a new project or association with them. They felt it was out of obligation and monetary benefit.
…
My first trip for this research saw me asking the women to make samples of their work that represented them: small swatches of cloth with their names with a representation of their work which is their craft identity. One of the questions I asked the women was, 'why do you think I am doing this project and these workshops?' They replied, 'because it is your duty for your job and you are paid to do it'. They added, 'perhaps you have a gain in it as well or monetary benefit.'
I answered by telling them I had stopped working for the NGO and was now undertaking academic work and introducing this project. I also explained I had something to gain from it, of course, but I also wanted them to gain something from it.

I asked if they would like to take part in this project and study with me. Their reply was positive and one artisan said 'we will work with you all our lives and not let you go!'

[109] Most surnames in Pakistan are very telling of the provincial ethnicity of a person; however, Mirza is not one of them.

Figure 5.1 Afsana, Tasleem and Shamim, and Sughra. Dec-Jan 2009/10

Field visit AGJ village

September/October 2010 – Floods, a fact of Indus Culture / You are different, you are our friend

Till this stage I had a somewhat formal relationship with the women. There were grounds to build a better relationship though, as they referred to me as their 'friend'. Also notable was that they said they would change their attitude towards me if our association became of a more business nature. However, even though presently I give the women regular orders of work based on our design work, they are more understanding and emotional towards me than other people they work with. It might also be due to the fact that other designers who have been or are working with the women treat them in a stricter environment. This is in fact highlighted in the field notes from Sept 2013 and then again in Feb 2014.

…

The widespread floods of 2010 in Pakistan devastated the whole country, destroying crops and the benchmark of textile crops: cotton. Having waited in the city to visit the village when I could postpone going back to London no more, I asked the staff at SRSO if it was okay to visit now. She assured me the waters had subsided and life was slow: disrupted, of course, but the women agreed to the workshop, as I had to leave for London in a few days.

I begin the workshop by explaining the aim and a verse recital by a young woman from the Quran. A SRSO staff member accompanies me, as always. For the workshop I give two briefs, first for the S jo pieces. A simple brief which establishes a simple concept of using the same pattern on both sides and attaching a simple handmade string or chain. I marked out three different shapes onto fabric pieces before coming to the workshop. I run short of a few and

draw out a few more with the help of one artisan who traces the simple shape out with tailors chalk. While tracing, I tell Marvi, 'your sample where you tried different stitches in the last workshop was really good'. She says, 'yes, yes I tried something different so it turned out like that'. Another artisan looks at me seemingly trying to recall the sample and I explain which sample I meant. She then nods and her body relaxes. I add, 'everyone's samples were good, this was just a little different so I am commenting on it'. There are younger girls as well, here to watch.

Figure 5.2 Bhagul and Ghulam Zohra with daughter, Shumaila. Sept-Oct 2010

The women are quieter than usual. I start talking to the women and find out one of the artisan, Sughra's, younger sisters had passed away. Epidemics and diseases spread in the aftermath of the natural disaster. The little son of one of the artisans walks in, she smiles at him and then looks directly at me to see if I objected to him being there. I don't say anything. There is a coughing child, and another artisan has a bandage on her foot. An artisan walks in late; one of the other artisans informs her she has to finish in three hours. The women embroider and don't talk too much amongst themselves. Ghulam Zohra asks 'why didn't you bring the 'Irani' [acrylic yarn] we normally use for clothes?' I explain, 'it is not as durable as cotton devaluing your hard work, it does not come in a wide range of colours, and the acrylic yarn is woollen-looking, whereas the cotton gives a much better appearance to the embroidery as well'. I also briefly explain that 'our intended market would prefer a longer-lasting, better feel and finer yarn, not to mention ensuring there's no colour bleed'. Some women are faster than others.

There are children and babies present at the workshop. One of the babies picks up a ball of yarn, a young girl of about ten looks at her mother and then takes away the yarn from the baby.

Every time someone shows me something so I can comment on the progress, whenever I say, 'it's nice' or 'interesting' others stop to see what it is and ask that lady to show her. They seem to have a competitive streak, a feeling of wanting to do better. They use the word 'scissor' in English while passing it around.

One of the older artisans talk about another project they are working on, in particular Homeworkers Pakistan. She says, 'We don't like it too much, payments are late, they take too much time to come'. I say, 'it took me a long time to pay you last time as well', to which she replies, 'you are our friend'. Ambreen, a younger artisan, says, 'that work is for our pocket, we made very small things for you last time. When we make bigger things for you and proper orders than we will talk like that with you too and expect prompt payments'.

The women who were sitting and working while some others went for a prayer break and return say to me, 'go eat in another room; you must be hungry'. I asked them why I should eat when they haven't eaten anything themselves. She says, 'we have to cook it; mother-in-law is too old to cook for us'.

Towards the end of the workshop, I take out the first weave samples I selected and give them to the women. I ask what they think of them and if the fabric is okay for them. Shereen and Ambreen pierce the cloth to see how the needle interacts with it immediately and say nodding, 'yes, these are good [to embroider]'. Then ask, 'what should we make on it?' I ask the women to see the weaves as synonymous with our relationship and work into them however they like or choose to.

Field visit
December/January 2010/11 – Getting used to an outsider

By the third trip to the village other community members who were not a part of the workshops got more used to me visiting. I had learnt from the women's dress, surroundings and pieces they made for the NGO that they were capable of a variety of craft making than they could relay in words. Previously, I never accepted meals at this or any other village and brought lunch[110]. This was the first time I accepted a meal.

…

Bitterly cold this winter. As we drive towards the village (with SRSO staff) the canal is being drained and people are fishing. I ask her why, and she tells me, 'its due to the heavy silting because of the floods and all the extra water that came as a result of the overflowing rivers'.

[110] This was both an NGO protocol and personal choice of not taking of the few resources rural communities have but this can translate to social disparity in marginalised communities thinking that what they are offering is not good enough. Offering hospitality to anyone who visits is also a big part of Pakistani and Sindhi culture.

When we arrive there children who come greet us with their hands extended to 'shake hands'.

This time instead of working in the room as we did last time we work in the open courtyard. I also collect samples of my weaves that the women have worked on. One piece is still unfinished and the artisan has not brought it with her.

Figure 5.3 Workshops Dec-Jan 2010/11

Having spent some time thinking about what sale products we could make based on the women's skill level, I had the idea of jewellery; necklaces, in particular, which would make use of the women's tassel-making techniques and embroidery with cotton wool-filled cushions like they make small key chains from for the NGO. This came about seeing the women's responses in the last workshop to smaller versions of their embroideries and taking into consideration their range of craft skills as separate components.

I have brought material including buttons and small cardboard cut-outs to serve as templates to place inside 'badges' and for the option of flat pendants. I ask to divide the group in three, one to undertake my natural yarns weave samples, one to make badges and the other necklaces.

So we start the necklaces with a brief of single and three pendant necklaces with a simple twisted string joined together with buttons if the women choose, embroidery, their choice of colours and what the women do after that is up to them. Some women prefer to use the cardboard cut-outs. The women making the necklaces giggle among each other and laugh. 'Are people going to wear this? A necklace made of thread and fabric? Will it look nice?' I encourage them 'to try it out, without trying things out we never know'.

While the workshop is ongoing a young boy brings a local fish to show me and be photographed. Senior artisan Bakhtiar asks me, 'do you like fish, will you eat it if I cook for you?' I replied I do but she should not bother herself with it. She later cooked this for me in a curry. It was caught in the canal while the silting was being done (Video recording and field notes December 2010).

Field visit
April/May 2011 – Ideas and creativity

In this visit I noticed even the quieter women were growing in confidence. Aalia could not see the objects for the still life series from where she sat and decided to embroider a collection of her own everyday objects she put together. The other women all interpreted the still life series in their own style of imagery and embroidery. Through trying different ideas for necklace strings, a version hand-bound at intervals was realised similar to tie and dye techniques. Some necklaces were becoming recognisable through the women's individual sense of colour and preferred stitches as they adopted their own distinct styles of work.
…
I divide the tasks again for S jo products and research pieces but this time over the different days.

The first workshop is aimed at the 'still life' idea to give the women more creative freedom and expression through what they do or at least for them to experiment with their craft. The brief is to bring personal objects into the workshop, which is an idea inspired by the Polly&me brand project (Cath Braid) for their work titled 'Gupshup'. I use plain red and natural woven cotton as the 'paper.' The women found it odd but brought a few personal items such as rings, nail polish, lipstick, earrings and suchlike. They asked, 'shall we bring anything we like?' and I replied 'yes anything you want that is personally yours'.

Figure 5.4 Still life workshops Apr-May 2011

Figure 5.5 Marvi. Still life workshops Apr-May 2011

We didn't have much but the idea was to inspire the women to think differently through their craft. Other women who sat further away could not see the small display we had so they attempted their own everyday objects, life in general. Some women ask for a helping hand with drawing and I help one or two get started.

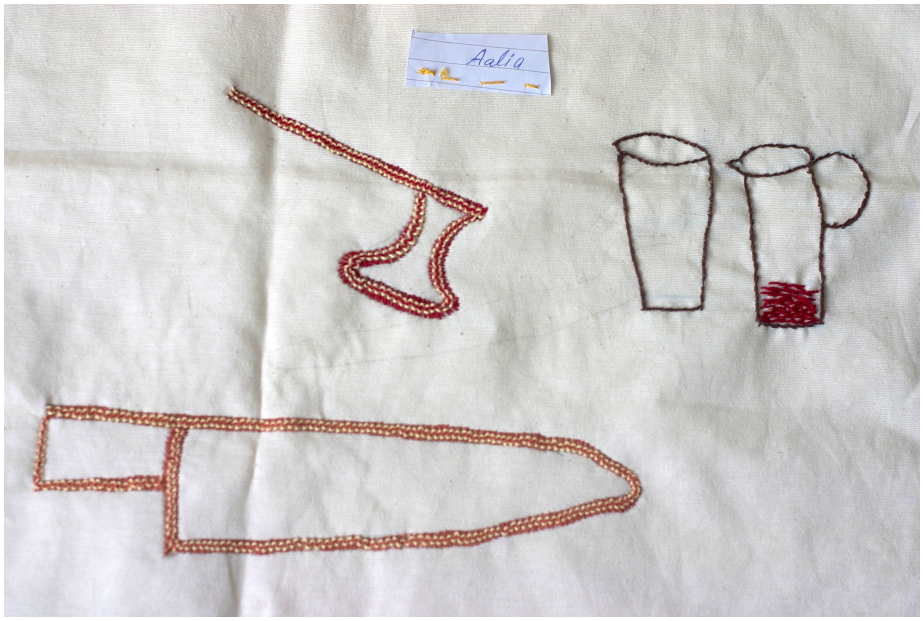


Figure 5.6 Everyday and personal objects still life interpretive textile dialogue series 5 by Aalia

In the second part of these workshops we worked on our necklace designs to elaborate them and I encouraged the women to try different, more sophisticated types of string-making from techniques of binding, twisting and tying, that I saw on both their traditional 'Gajj' dresses but which was also used to make their traditional hair accessories.

Figure 5.7 Marvi making a necklace string by binding threads. Apr-May 2011

There was no set rule except that the pieces should be technically sound, and each artisan interpreted the brief in their own way, which was the intended purpose. By now, it was easier for me to identify pieces made by certain more active craftswomen as they were developing their own styles and had preferred colour palette choices. Shereen, for example, loves to use lilac and lavenders combined with dusky and light pinks. I comment on this in the workshop and Shereen replies, 'Ahh Seher notices everything, even our likes and dislikes.'

Another sale brief is cushions, for the first time for this project. I have cut out small circles in hard white card, some large, some small, to create a template for the women to place and play with the composition of embroidered design and placement with the cushion. I have also bought some other fabric with stripes for the women to interpret, as they like.

Figure 5.8 Cushions for S jo 2011

Field visit
June 2011

This trip we undertake more new briefs for the sale products, simple embroidery on scarves as well as my weaves. The scarf brief interacts with the women's colour and sense of pattern. By creating different mixes of tie and dye, it gives the women different spaces to interact with; natural and dyed.

For my weave, this time I wove samples that were more representative of me in the fourth dobby warp. I did ones with 'likes' and 'dislikes', the one with likes having fine yarn, bright use of colour, my favourite colour, extra weft technique, all things symbolising what I like. For the 'dislikes and fears' sample I created black spaces, which represented the unknown and the dark – my fears and dislikes. I explain this to the women so that they could also embroider things they like in one and in the other their fears and dislikes. The idea for this came about from Shereen's comment about knowing their colour and pattern 'likes'.

Field visit
November/December 2011 – Woven images and representations

Through the exchange and reaction at the first jacquard pieces I learnt that the women appreciated my craft making skills. They expressed delight and sensed reciprocity. I noted that the artisans were able to express more of their feelings as a direct result of my efforts through my craft (weave) than an exchange of words.

…

The next brief we undertook was a different style of cushions and necklaces to create a more varied vocabulary.

I also brought the first two of my woven Jacquard samples, both based on photographs I took in workshops. The first Jacquard weave is of a mother embroidering and her daughter looking on and learning. The second is by one of the more accomplished embroiderers who is studying at a higher education level. I show these to the women at the end of the workshops and they are delighted and seemingly grateful, saying, 'thank you so much! We work hard for you and you also work hard for us!'

As always, the women are also meant to create their own versions of the necklaces and jewellery (including earrings) which we started making after Sughra made a pair and customers asked for earrings in London.

Field visit

July/August 2012 - Changes in design vocabulary

Having placed trust in the women and their ability to be creative and 'think' differently in design terms has created an expansive vocabulary for the design concept initiated as part of the step towards the self-sufficiency of the project. Younger artisans were also beginning to incorporate traditional embroidery in their own way into their dress, as evidenced in the sample Ambreen showed me of her work-in-progress tunic.

…

I receive weave samples worked on by the artisans already sent to my parents' home where I base myself on my trips to Pakistan. They smell of smoke and open fires used to cook food at the village. I also find another surprise in the parcel from the village, a larger version of the necklaces we had been working on consistently to elaborate and build on. I was delighted; inside a note read; 'please don't mind I made this piece. Hope you like it.'

When I went to the village we worked on larger design briefs of necklaces. I had done some mock up photographs of larger necklaces in London putting together smaller ones to show how we could build them further. Based on what the women had sent me (i.e. the earlier parcel), I felt they could respond to more complicated briefs as part of the process to build up a craft lexicon. The materials I took varied and included templates and cut-outs from recycled aeroplane tyres.

Figure 5.9 Workshops July-Aug 2012

I knew the women were at a more advanced level of interpretation and also able to make creative solutions in their own way. Every time I go to the village the women are excited about trying something new in the workshops and look forward to them. We worked on some new briefs for earrings, bracelets and armlets as well.

Figure 5.10

Figure 5.11

Figure 5.12

Figure 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12: S jo pieces making detail July-Aug 2012

Having placed trust in them and their ability to be creative and 'think' differently in design terms has created an expansive vocabulary for the design concept initiated as part of the step towards the self-sufficiency of the project.

Ambreen shows me a tunic she is making for herself that uses their embroidery but it consists of a repetitive broken pattern rather than a traditional style of pattern. 'Seher look at this, I am making this for myself, is it good?'

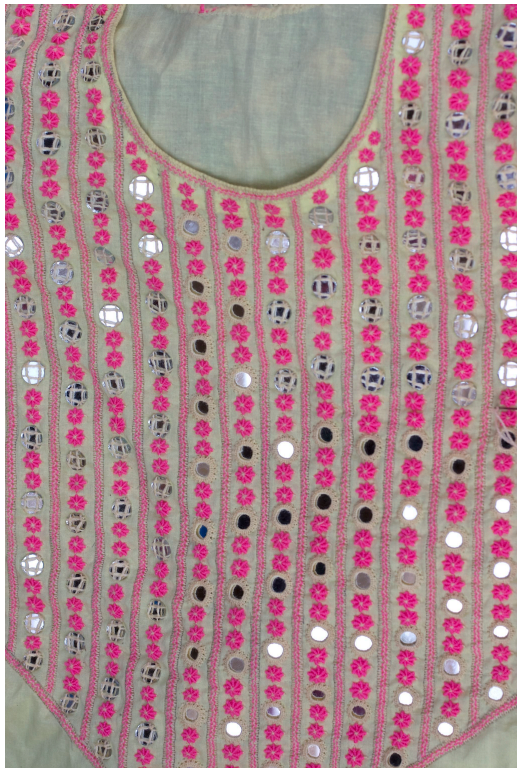


Figure 5.13 Ambreen Tunic

I also took another bigger Jacquard as part of this trip, to gauge the women's reaction to it. I placed an image of myself in this one so that they could respond to it in whatever way they chose.

Field visit
February 2013 – We can't have that. Plagiarism and feelings

Before this trip I had learnt of the similar jewellery work that the women had done for N. I shared my feelings[111] with the women first, and later explained the practical implications of demand and supply[112] again. This misbalance in our relationship clearly upset them as well as they had questioned amongst themselves whether to do the order or not. They decided not to do the same work for others and N's involvement actually made our bond stronger as I learnt in future trips.

…

At the village we sit down to discuss the issue at hand. The women seem to be unsettled and emotional too as they think to have upset our relationship. They explain N saw the products being made the village when she visited and they had shown them to her proud of what they had achieved. After seeing these pieces, the designer asked them to replicate the idea for her. The women revealed that when they voiced this concern the designer responded she would take it up with me personally as I was like a 'sister' to her and we were both from the same city. This of course is not the case; although we might have a few mutual Facebook friends, I do not know this designer. This is an important point to consider in projects of this nature.[113]

We move on to the workshop agenda and prepare to do some new samples, with advanced design briefs and ideas, which require adjusting and working together. Sughra agrees to wear the piece while other artisans and I adjust the piece and make sure it is finished. The workshops whether design briefs or research-based tasks are much more informal now, and generally more relaxed.

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111 I felt hurt that they did not tell me about it themselves and disappointment as I thought we had an agreement.

112 I explained that making too much of a niche product will inevitably bring down the price consumers are willing to pay for it, as it is no longer novel. This also brings down the price the women get for the product.

113 Even though this is a research project with an empowerment element, any project with design or creative elements might be faced with this issue. Pakistan is a developing country, and certain laws are not taken as seriously or implemented due to widespread corruption, and plagiarism is rife.

Figure 5.14 Sughra at workshop Feb 2013

I ask to see the weave samples. The women have worked on them a little but have not completed them. However, despite it all, what seems of serious concern to the women is our relationship. The women don't want to upset and unbalance our relationship. So having spent countless hours and prolonged contact and communication, this so far seems to have had this benefit.

Field visit
September 2013 – She eats with us, sits with us, talks with us

Collaborative work on larger pieces highlighted the women's ability to confidently speak of their own ideas regarding it and trying to solve the design problem at hand. The relationship with the whole community is much more relaxed, and workshop environments informal. The women laugh and joke while working. Although still an outsider, the uniqueness of my relationship with the women was highlighted by them, in their own comments in relation to designer N and myself. This made me realise the impact of social inequality and that, the women saw certain choices made by me as positive. They became comfortable sharing their personal views of community issues.
…
At our workshops we try more complex briefs and work collectively to produce the designs. For a neck and shoulder accessory we ask Ambreen to model the piece while the other artisans and I adjust the piece.

Marvi suggests crisscrossing her hands in the air, 'Why not make loops and fasten the threads like this, this this…like the laces of a boot?' While Ghulam-Zohra suggests, 'How about making small fasteners to keep some strands together?' While crouching on the charpoy, I nod and agree and we try to make it work in the prototype piece.

Although for this overall design piece I had an initial idea, the women by this stage feel free to suggest, even change and give their ideas with confidence.

There is a natural flow in the workshops and we are all comfortable in the space. While the piece is adjusted and finalised by Naz, Ambreen starts to jokingly hold her throat, gestures she is being choked by Naz and falls back laughing.

Figure 5.15 Naz adjusting the accessory on Ambreen. Sept 2013

A male member drops in for some lunch, yet there is no longer any awkward space where the women feel uncomfortable or where I feel uncomfortable and intruding.

The women have tried out some designs of their own which they show me. I had sent them material earlier to try various ideas they might have as well as some images for inspiration. They amodel the pieces and ask me to take photographs.

Figure 5.16 Bhagul and Sughra. Sept 2013

Once again, we go over copyright and IP rights at the workshop in relation to selling products. This is a serious issue in Pakistan, as copyright and law enforcement of any kind is very weak. So direct relationships may provide a good basis to explain these design conflicts and issues to do with market dynamics, work and IP rights. This is useful for both the women and myself. For the women as they are paid a premium price for a niche high-end product that allows for their creativity and identity to shine through and for me as I have the responsibility to sell the work to clients.

Artisan Naz tells me during the workshop that when the women told designer N we cannot make the same design styles for you as that is work we do with someone else. The designer pursued the issue, asking, "Why? Has Seher bought you?" Naz tells me one of the artisans Ambreen replied, "No. She sits with us, works with us, and eats with us; she's [like] one of us."

For one of the days we had scheduled two half-day workshops, one in a village for SRSO and the other in the main research group AGJ. On our way back, running very late from the first village, I got a call from the women to see where we were. When I was done, the SRSO staff member accompanying me said, 'they really look forward to your visit, they wait all year for you to come'. We went to the village afterwards but with no time for a workshop we just decided to chat over some tea. We talked about all sorts of personal things, including marriage. Different artisans tell me about their prospective husbands. Then ask, 'is that okay, you think its good [to have marriage arranged like this]? […] Who will you marry? Will your parents choose? Or will you?' It was on this trip that I first learnt that the arranged marriages

here were agreed when boys and girls were children. One artisan says, 'her fiancée is younger than her', while another gestures with her hand, 'my fiancée is only this high' while laughing. Some older women say, 'What are you talking about, stop, now.' A few younger artisans say,' Seher humari friend hai' ('Seher is our friend' meaning we can share this with her)

Telephone Call
December 2013 – because we had to
I got a phone call from the women asking me to call them back for something urgent. When I call them, they tell me that SRSO (staff) is asking them to make very similar sale products as for the parallel enterprise S jo, and at a much lower price. As I was not communicated any of this directly by the enterprise staff at SRSO, I assume that the products will be sold without any credit to the research project. The women express they do not want to make the products anyway as the price is too low and I tell them not to make the products then. When the women refused SRSO, stating it was their work with a specific designer/project, the staff put pressure on them as 'their development organisation' that initiated work with them.

There were also threats of cutting off all other project based work and support to both the men and women of the community, and benefits or subsidies the NGO provided. The NGO was persistent and made many claims on the women, which they finally gave in to. The women said, 'well we had no choice but to make this, they did guide us and were the organisation that got us into this in the first place but we didn't do it with our heart, we did it because we had to.'

Field visit
February/March 2014 – independence

As I visited on my own account without the support of SRSO on this trip, the women seemed to realise that my work was not out of obligation. This also prompted them to visibly try and grow our social relationship further. I also felt acceptance by the larger community.
…
I undertook this trip completely self-funded and without the support of the NGO. The women asked me, 'you came in your own car?' I replied, 'yes I did'. They seemed delighted and said 'that's great!' I travelled in my parents car from Karachi with a family driver we all trusted

At the workshop, while artisan Shereen works on a piece, she says, 'we are lucky (using the word lucky in English) that we work with a nice designer like Seher. N, she's very strict.'

We work on some large accessory samples that require more than one artisan to make each. Below, Ghulam Zohra discusses her idea (embroidered hangings) for the scarf sample. She asks for my advice regarding how many she should place in one piece and we work it out by placing them on the piece.

Figure 5.17 Collaborative discussions. Feb-Mar 2014

On the last day of workshops, the women wanted to end the workshop early so we could go for a walk and they could show me around the date palm plantations that lead up to the banks of the river Indus. They said, 'usually you come with the NGO in their car and have time restrictions, you don't have any now!'

While we walk there most, perhaps all, the children of the village follow us through the date palm fields up to the river. Ambreen says, 'do you want to play cricket?' I say 'yes, lets.' But an older artisan says no to Ambreen as she thinks it unsuitable. I repeat, 'I don't mind and quite like to play'.

They tell me about how they lost land to the floods. After the river swelled and water level returned to normal it deposited a lot of silt, which meant they could not cultivate anything in the soil until large quantities of other soil were mixed in.

While I was waiting for the women to finish the task for the day, an elder man of the village approached me. He asked the group if I understood Sindhi, the regional language, and I replied that I understood a little. He walked closer and put his hand on my head (this is a sign of blessing from an older person in the subcontinent). He proceeded to say, 'We are grateful and really appreciate that you came and worked with the women'. He added that 'You valued their [the craftswomen's] work/time properly and paid a fair recompense for it, it enabled the whole community to survive in the hard times such as the flood when our crops were washed away'. I smiled and nodded, warm feelings and emotions stirring up. The women started chattering loudly discussing what he said. They then said together, 'you know he is our old uncle, he was the one who used to run after us with a stick threatening to beat us when we first started to work [on outside projects]!'

Field visit
January 2015 – discussing social relationships and issues

The women openly share their views about me, on issues that affect their community and other local socio-political issues (that I did not know before) come to light. I also learnt that the women stood up for working with me against social pressure.
…
On this trip the workshop is organised on the roof of one of the artisan's houses. It's a newly built concrete house that is the tallest of the village with a roof where we all gather. As we wait for others to arrive we exchange general pleasantries and there is an element of stillness in the air before we start making anything.

Once everyone arrives first I share the hard copy of a rough draft of my thesis to explain what I have been doing academically. Second, we discuss the letter of affirmation[114] that I had sent earlier to the women for their signatures.

We begin work on some new necklaces. As always some of the new necklaces are samples the women composed themselves and had sent to me. The necklaces we work on in the workshop

[114] The letter of affirmation is a letter I drafted for permission of personal details and process of craftwork for research study and project. It includes IP rights of products as well. It affirms that the process of the jewellery products (necklaces being our first) was introduced as part of this project and study, something that the women did not make before our design work together and how we developed them further. It helps to protect our mutual commercial interests in the project too.

are designed using the women's skills in manipulating thread and mine as a weaver who loves Ombre (graduating colour) effect in warps and weft.

We also work on the incomplete large jacquard weave sample in this trip. One of the artisans, Rifat, jokes around about why I have not married yet, saying 'I will ask your mother, Khala [maternal auntie] why have you not got her married yet?' She also jokes about how to interpret the weave and drapes it over her head and shoulders pretending to be an aged woman, using my camera tripod as a walking stick.

Figure 5.18 Jacquard textile dialogue. Jan 2015

Figure 5.19 Rifat. Jan 2015

I ask the women if they would like to learn English over Skype[115], to which they replied we will discuss it with our elders and get permission then we will get back to you.

The women comment that I have not taken a group photograph in a long time. I oblige with a still shot from the video camera but they shout out 'what about you! You come in too!'

115 A relative of mine teaches women English over Skype, she is part of a group of expats based in Canada who do a range of social work especially marginalised Pakistanis as she speaks Urdu. We met in Karachi and she offered to do this for the community I work with.

Figure 5.20 Group photograph 1. Jan 2015

Figure 5.21 Group photograph 2. Jan 2015

After we wrap up the tasks for the day, I ask about whether anyone from SRSO had come round to investigate for the British Council. No one knows anything about it except Sughra says she got a phone call from an SRSO staff member[116] to ask if designer N has pressurised the women to make things. Sughra says she replied 'no, N didn't threaten us. Another artisan says, 'we are not ones to come under (her) threats.'

This conversation leads to the women telling me more about the same incident with N. After our argument, she (N) said, "I will discuss this with the men of your community as they are of the same [political] party". I ask for clarification, an artisan explains local party of the local landlord and political leader.

[116]This is the same staff member whom the women reported was pressurizing and threatening them to create products for low prices for an SRSO event

Our next conversation was about Pakistan and what the women saw as problems in the country. They named, 'the elimination of terrorism' as number one. When asked what they thought was required for Pakistan to prosper they said, 'education and employment'. Further, on the subject of how more job creation was required, one said, 'they should have more factories for employment.' To which I asked, 'do you think they are ideal places of work?' they replied, ' not for us, for the men! So they have more opportunities of work (as some are unemployed). We have a good income from our work, we work hard and expect good recompense in return.'

The women ask me to give my views of what I think is required for the country to prosper too. I state quality education as number one in my view as well as a truly accountable government that doesn't rely in social hierarchies.

Sughra asks me, 'what benefits do you [one] have of living abroad?' I tell them about positive general aspects such as healthcare, the social welfare system and state education being free till sixth form (A levels) while countries like Scotland have free undergraduate degrees for students. I mention China where only one child is allowed per family and most expenses borne by the government however, the birth of another child sees them revoked. Bhaitan says, 'here when you send a child to government schools the teachers don't turn up. We are then forced to try private schools'. Further that, 'there should only be proper government run schools in Pakistan too so everyone has equal opportunity of education.' Marvi comments how she thinks, 'there should be a mixed system of both types of schools'.

Through discussing autonomy and independence free of socio-political bindings where every individual is accountable and makes their own decisions, our chats take another turn. The women talk about issues around marriage and how arranging marriage when (people are) young is not a good idea as often people end up with those they do not like and get along with when they grow up. A few women comment on the unfairness of men marrying twice or even three times, and getting away with it by saying they are allowed four marriages in Islam as per the Prophet Muhammed's Sunnah[117]. Others pipe in saying, 'what about other Sunnah, treating wives exactly the same and many other Sunnahs that are not followed [only those that work in men's favour]!' They add, 'women never say I am leaving you (to her husband) and they don't get that choice then why should men marry again and again?'

One artisan explains how her uncle was going to marry again and she advised him, saying, 'for you it might be okay you will marry again but what about your poor wife, what's her fault in all this? I said you should get her treated at a hospital and God will give you a child. After two years of treatment she has a son now and this is an example for the whole village.'

On the drive back, S (who drives and accompanies me on all trips from Karachi) tells me, 'a brother of the artisan's was telling me that a relative of the local landlords in political power,

[117] Sunnat or Sunnah (pl.) is examples and habits set by Prophet Muhammed during his lifetime, although not obligatory or mandatory, many Muslims aim to emulate these hoping to live by his example

N, who has also been working with the women - said to the men that they should tell their women to stop working with you (Seher). He said they told her, "the women completely refused, what can we do? We support our women." S advises me to not take up conflicts with political landlords, he says, ' the women can refuse her and that's okay but if you do that might not be a good idea.'

Field visit
September 2015 – Transforming

I was hesitant to ask direct questions to the women in any form of interview again but they surprised me with the clarity and reflectiveness with which they answered. Compared to the group conversation conducted in 2009, the women were much more articulate and expressive about their lives. They had also succeeded in making some changes they wanted to see within the community level.

…
In Karachi, I learn that one artisan is in a coma, critical medical condition suffering a sort of concussion. She is in the best private hospital in Karachi where medical fees are substantial but local hospitals had given up on her. I have been in constant phone contact with B (her sister) and go to see her and her family.

Other artisans are there as well as the unwell artisan's mother. I ask where her sister is. Her mother explains she has gone to get some teacups for sister. I sit and chat for a few hours while we await news of whether she will be transferred to the general ward from the Critical ward. One artisan explains that her husband has three wives and R is her stepdaughter along with S but from his other wife. I knew that this artisan's husband was also married to another woman but did not know there were three.

At the village a week later I was keen to find out about any changes in the way the women live their lives and how the craftwork helped to steer these social changes. I decided to ask questions both casually over lunch as well as during the making in the workshops by starting the conversations. I felt a marked difference – since the first unstructured interview in December 2009 – in the way the women communicated, speaking their mind with more comfort and confidence.

Our making consists of lots of new necklaces and some ideas that came about during the making process as we tried different new things out. I brought some drawings of new statement necklace designs I want to try for the range and showed them to the women.

From the way some women tackled some of the briefs I realised they had worked on some designs in the meantime.

Over lunch, which Ghulam Zohra's mum Bakhtiar had prepared for us I ask Zohra, what changes have come into their lives since the start of the project and for the community. She states, 'since doing this craft work we have become more confident and independent. We travel to the local markets by ourselves and even travelled back from Karachi unaccompanied when Marvi's son was at the hospital there. Ambreen and I said to my brother, 'we have pending work at the village and need to go back. He said, "Okay, will you be able to do it yourselves? Will you know which train station to get off at?" She said I replied, 'yes, of course we can do it and nothing will happen.'

Another thing she mentions is how when a school head teacher visited their village she remarked how confident they were, like educated people. 'She (teacher) asked how much we earned from the craft, when I told her she gasped and said to her colleague we may as well start working on craft rather than teach!'

G. Zohra also describes how the women had [made efforts to] eliminate commonplace domestic violence, where men would often hit or beat women. 'Ab humaray Goth mein auraton pe haat nahin autha (now in our village the [men] don't raise their hands [on women]' She explains how they went about it, 'we explained calmly to the men (once their anger cooled down) that there should be no beating and that the women deserve to be treated with respect and have rights!'

After lunch we carry on with the multiple briefs of necklaces, earrings, bracelets and other S jo work which carries on beyond my research. Often I bring different beads, hooks etc for the women to experiment making with. I brought a variety of such things, some of which are used during the workshop and some I leave with the women to try in their own time. There is no wrong or right way to use these is what I say to the women if they ask how they should use various bits. By now they are aware that they can use them whichever way suits them.

After completing the brief for a necklace design I drew, Mahirah, says, 'Seher, name this necklace, Mahirah, after me!'

I also thought we could raise money for the artisan whose family bore the high expense of her treatment. I asked the women if they would like to do something and they say, 'we were thinking ourselves of doing something for her.' We decided to make small bracelets, an idea I suggested, as our joint effort to raise money for her. We agreed neither of us would take any percentage of the money raised - the women for their time and work, and me for materials and selling the bracelets.

As I only had my notebook and pen during lunch (without much chance to write) I decide to ask the women collectively in the workshop (while making) with both my voice memo recorder and video camera to detail the changes both social and others.

I ask Shamim to help as she is not making in the workshop while she answers my questions, others listen and pipe in while making. I sit to one side of the workshop.

I start by asking what impact working in these workshops with this study and project has had on them, on the way they think and how they are able to solve problems for example.

Figure 5.22 Shamim. Sept 2015

Shamim: 'When you come here for a workshop, we all come together and we try new things, by the time you come next time we have many new ideas in our mind about how we can apply our craft in different ways and variations.'

I inquire about any social differences they see and experience in their lives now as compared to five years ago.

They reply laughing and others grinning, 'there is a huge difference! Before we didn't even know that we could use our craft in this way to make these things, we had no idea. Now everyone has ideas about the craft work.'

Ghulam Zohra: 'as village women, we didn't know about cleanliness and keeping our children clean and healthy. Now we are much more aware of these things. Other village women do it but they don't have the same habits as us now, like personal hygiene, not wearing the same clothes consecutively for 6 - 7 days. We didn't know how [have the confidence] to go outside of the village.'

Shamim: 'When we go to the local bazaar (market), shopkeepers say to us there are no young girls from the same caste [Jatoi clan affiliation] as you, that go outside their community like this, shopping themselves. When people see us, their mouths open wide saying that, 'you are coming out of your community and village!'

Ghulam Zohra: 'When I went out with my daughter to shop once, the shopkeeper said, "both your choices of materials and things is very keen, you are an aware customer, examining details. You have come as a doctor, no other village-based woman is like you, with an eye for detail and such awareness".'

Shamim affirms: 'This is true, women from villages don't go out of their village - with independence like us. We have been going (outside) since we have joined up with this [craft work].'

Other women join in to say: 'We all go outside the village area unaccompanied, with no restrictions imposed by our men. In other villages, there are many things men say to the women of the village such as, "why do you go, its not safe etc", but our men support us and have given us permission.'

I ask why they think the men don't say anything now.

Jamal Khatoon says: 'its because they have faith and trust in us.'

Shamim adds: 'its since we were joint with this [craft] work, since then they don't say anything.'

Another adds: 'Even when one of the illiterate women of our village go outside to the markets or such, local people ask us, "are you educated?" They go in such a manner, that they ask, this was never the case before. We would just go without any awareness or consciousness.'

Shamim explains: 'you know like tailors or shopkeepers, they ask us. The way we conduct ourselves, travel, talk, they ask us if we are educated because in our caste there are usually not many educated women.'

I say to Shamim, you were always eager about education and she replies, 'No, anyone who goes outside, Chachi[118] *Zohra for example, the way she speaks and interacts with confidence.'*

'Before we used to be afraid of (the men) going outside of the village. We even had to take permission and were afraid to go to the doctor.'

I ask about their perception of their own abilities (self-efficacy) to which they reply, 'yes we know we are able to achieve and do it. We earn ourselves and can spend on our children and ourselves. The men like that. We also always buy something for our husbands with our money so they are happy that, "the women shopped for themselves and brought something for me too."

[118] Uncle's wife

'The neighbours used to gossip, comment and stir up controversy with our men saying your women are open to go out of the village, visit other countries, do you not have a problem with that? Our men said, "they go to learn something, it's their income they go for that." If our men agreed with them and said yes they go outside and will do something wrong, then they would have a chance but our men supported us and didn't give them a chance to incite further so they stopped talking like that.'

GZ refers to the RSPN project when a team came to video the village after taking formal permission. She says, 'my husband incited by the neighbours came angrily and stopped it from happening. He then beat us. We then explained to him, that a wife forms the dignity of a man and he should not raise hands on his dignity. We had to talk to him to make him understand repeatedly over a long time, that we only went out (to work) to make our children's lives better and we work from home usually.'

Shamim reiterates Zohra's earlier statement that 'the men of the community do not beat or hit us women anymore at all.'

Why do you think this change happened I ask?

'This change came due to our craft work, when we went outside and experienced more of the world, we were able to deal with the situation differently and with patience. Before we would fight with them (the men) escalating the situation if they told us off, now we wait patiently until they have calmed down, then we explain and ask why they are upset, reasoning with them. Then they understand.'

'In the past we would react by screaming, fighting back and crying, not reasoning and the men didn't realise their mistake. Now we talk to them and explain so they know what they did wrong.'
I ask what they say and how they explain this to the men?

The women say: 'we say this is wrong, we also have rights, we have self-respect. Our village is very different from other villages now.'
I inquire further about what they think is the most important thing for the next generation to prosper or what their vision for their next generation or themselves is. 'Education', is the main reply. Shamim says smiling, 'you yourself must be aware and understand what difference education can make.' I tell her people say to me that you should stop (studying) now, how much more will you study and the women reply, 'no no studying is vital.'

What do you think the difference is between making (a craft piece) for yourself or for an order I ask? 'We make work for orders more quickly especially if we need money or something and put our own things aside taking longer. Before we had no consideration for time, now both in our work and in our lives we are more aware of time keeping.'

I ask if income were not a consideration, what would the women say was the thing they liked making most, that they enjoy. Bhagul replies, 'the work we do with you.' I comment laughing, 'is that because I am here and you are saying that to my face?'

They smile, 'no we like the work we do with you.' While Shamim more diplomatically says we like the string making jewellery work. I ask why they prefer that and Jamal Khatoon replies, 'because it is faster to make and we get bored of constantly embroidering our Gajj (tunic) and doing the same thing over and over.'

I try to get more explicit insight into what motivates the women in their work and what they like about different orders they receive from various individuals, organisations and designers. I frame the question several times as the women interpret it in different ways. They say they like to do all orders and are happy to do them. Jamal Khatoon says, 'if a product doesn't work after all the hard work, it feels like it was wasted.' I explain that the hard work is not necessarily wasted, as it is a craft question answered. Shamim adds, 'now we use all the yarn off-cuts in the necklaces which were thrown away before. We are much more aware of waste and throwing away bits of material.'

I probe whether they like to make orders where designers take all design responsibility. They say, 'well, designers don't like us to make things they haven't asked for or different to what they ordered. Designers say no I didn't ask for this why did you make it, I don't want it!' Jamal Khatoon notes, 'but some women send things in your S jo orders which is different to what you ask for.'

I explain I don't necessarily mean in terms of business or orders. Jamal Khatoon says, 'yes we make it and like it, my sisters-in-law say that I always make things with my own ideas different to what has been asked for!'

Sughra steps in and tries to articulate my questions to the women. Marvi says, 'it is important for us to evolve our designs and if we can save a bit of material to try something new than the craft can grow. Through making, physically trying out an idea we can see what works and is beneficial for us. It shouldn't be like just making the same thing over and over, we should think about how we can reinvent designs that get old, for example the key chains we do will get old for people (customers).' Do you think this way for business or because of your personal interest I ask? 'Both, our creative interest and for business.'

Field visit

January 2016

This trip was primarily for S jo; however, I noted a few things that were useful to the research and I imagine I will continue to do so working with the women.

Similar to my last trip I brought some necklace drawings for the new collection. During the workshops, Bhagul and Marvi also brought their own drawings of some necklace ideas they

had using the new beads I had left last time. They wanted to discuss what I thought of the necklace ideas and how they were going to execute the design.

Ambreen and Sughra had both shared pictures of Sughra and a few of the girls who were married last October (2015) through Whatsapp. Zohra showed me the Gajj that she had been making for me that I had asked for and provided materials for. She has been working on it for 2 years.

Figure 5.23 Naz and Seher, January 2016

Other direct communication
2014 - 2016

I have been in touch with artisans Sughra (since October 2014), Ambreen (July 2015) and Fahmeeda (March 2016) over whatsapp, sending images and keeping in touch about personal life including any order details. We have also had one or two skype sessions but this is largely unreliable due to the mobile internet connection at the village.

Appendix 9: Workshops

For this study, all the workshops were held at the village; in summer we worked and sat either in a room on the floor covered with patchwork quilts or in the shade in a covered porch on charpoys, four-legged woven seating platforms as seen below.

Figure 9.1 and 9.2 Study workshops at the village in the summer

In the winter we sit in the open courtyard on charpoys. More recently winter workshops are conducted on the roof of one of the artisan's homes on the floor. The women choose the location within the village themselves, dependent on who is able to provide the space at the time for us to congregate.

Two parallel types of workshops and outcomes were adopted for this project. Conceptual research development workshops, the first type, created a vocabulary of patterns, stitches and craft responses. This generated a visual design dictionary, with a series of deconstructed traditional set patterns, for the women. They were then able to build up various different compositions from the smaller components of their own craft that they had identified. This helped to keep the essence of the traditional alive yet developed it through participatory design, creative freedom and collaboration rather than this being imposed by an outsider. The aim was for the women to use this extensive vocabulary to create their own new versions of their own craft, keeping the identity of the craft 'theirs'. My hand-woven pieces that experimented with colour, pattern, space and fabric structure 'asked' different questions of the women's stitch-craft. To respond to these craft questions the women had to think about and adapt their stitch-craft as a response to the textiles. This meant using and applying their craft in ways they had not tried earlier.

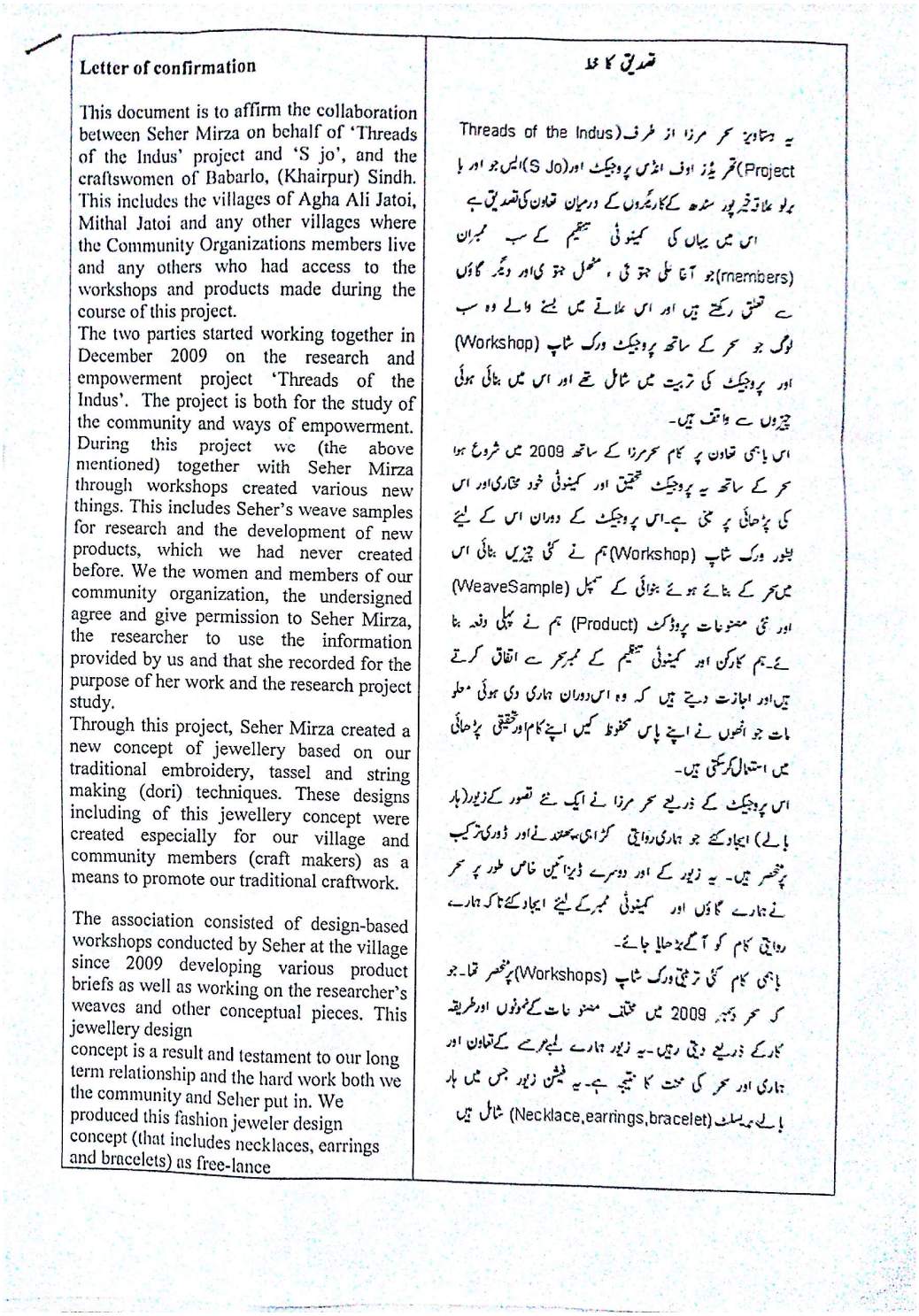
The design and product development workshops were run in parallel. These helped the women to create new products suitable to the target market, while practically implementing ideas generated in the conceptual research workshops. The design workshops concentrated on confidence-building and decision-making by encouraging the women to create their own

design versions. All products are labelled with the name of the artisan who makes them. Self-initiated designs or products by the women are named after them.

In the design workshops for this project, I collaborate with the women when first brainstorming for a product idea (such as a necklace, for example). They give technical design input, discussing how they could best use their skills.

For conceptual research pieces, we consider the type of weave structure and cloth the women prefer: for example, the needle being able to 'grip' the fabric as it pierces through was an important factor when planning and making my weaves.

Appendix 10: Letter of Affirmation 2015



Letter of confirmation

This document is to affirm the collaboration between Seher Mirza on behalf of 'Threads of the Indus' project and 'S jo', and the craftswomen of Babarlo, (Khairpur) Sindh. This includes the villages of Agha Ali Jatoi, Mithal Jatoi and any other villages where the Community Organizations members live and any others who had access to the workshops and products made during the course of this project.

The two parties started working together in December 2009 on the research and empowerment project 'Threads of the Indus'. The project is both for the study of the community and ways of empowerment. During this project we (the above mentioned) together with Seher Mirza through workshops created various new things. This includes Seher's weave samples for research and the development of new products, which we had never created before. We the women and members of our community organization, the undersigned agree and give permission to Seher Mirza, the researcher to use the information provided by us and that she recorded for the purpose of her work and the research project study.

Through this project, Seher Mirza created a new concept of jewellery based on our traditional embroidery, tassel and string making (dori) techniques. These designs including of this jewellery concept were created especially for our village and community members (craft makers) as a means to promote our traditional craftwork.

The association consisted of design-based workshops conducted by Seher at the village since 2009 developing various product briefs as well as working on the researcher's weaves and other conceptual pieces. This jewellery design concept is a result and testament to our long term relationship and the hard work both we the community and Seher put in. We produced this fashion jeweler design concept (that includes necklaces, earrings and bracelets) as free-lance

تصدیق کا خط

یہ دستاویز سحر مرزا از طرف (Threads of the Indus) تھریڈز اوف انڈس پروجیکٹ اور (S Jo) ایس جو اور بابرلو علاقہ خیرپور سندھ کے کاریگروں کے درمیان تعاون کی تصدیق ہے

اس میں یہاں کی کمیونٹی تنظیم کے سب ممبران (members) جو آغا علی جتوئی، مٹھل جتوئی اور دیگر گاؤں سے تعلق رکھتے ہیں اور اس علاقے میں رہنے والے وہ سب لوگ جو سحر کے ساتھ پروجیکٹ ورک شاپ (Workshop) اور پروجیکٹ کی تربیت میں شامل تھے اور اس میں بنائی ہوئی چیزوں سے واقف ہیں۔

اس باہمی تعاون پر کام سحرمرزا کے ساتھ 2009 میں شروع ہوا سحر کے ساتھ یہ پروجیکٹ تحقیق اور کمیونٹی خود مختاری اور اس کی پڑھائی پر مبنی ہے۔اس پروجیکٹ کے دوران اس کے لیئے بطور ورک شاپ (Workshop) ہم نے کئی چیزیں بنائی اس میں سحر کے بنائے ہوئے بنوائی کے سمپل (WeaveSample) اور نئی مصنوعات پروڈکٹ (Product) ہم نے پہلی دفعہ بنا ئے۔ہم کارکن اور کمیونٹی تنظیم کے ممبر سحر سے اتفاق کرتے ہیں اور اجازت دیتے ہیں کہ وہ اس دوران ہماری دی ہوئی معلو مات جو انھوں نے اپنے پاس محفوظ کیں اپنے کام اور تحقیقی پڑھائی میں استعمال کرسکتی ہیں۔

اس پروجیکٹ کے ذریعے سحر مرزا نے ایک نئے تصور کے زیور (ہار بالے) ایجاد کئے جو ہماری روایتی کڑھائی سےمتعدد نے اور ڈوری ترکیب پرمنحصر ہیں۔ یہ زیور کے اور دوسرے ڈیزائین خاص طور پر سحر نے ہمارے گاؤں اور کمیونٹی ممبر کے لیئے ایجاد کئے تا کہ ہمارے روایتی کام کو آگے بڑھایا جائے۔

باہمی کام کئی تربیتی ورک شاپ (Workshops) پرمنحصر تھا۔جو کہ سحر دسمبر 2009 میں مختلف مصنوعات کے نمونوں اور طریقہ کار کے ذریعے دیتی رہیں۔یہ زیور ہمارے لمبے عرصے کے تعاون اور ہماری اور سحر کی محنت کا نتیجہ ہے۔یہ فیشن زیور جس میں ہار بالے بریسلٹ (Necklace,earrings,bracelet) شامل ہیں

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craftperson's for Seher and she holds the rights to sell these products.

Today in 2014, we carry on making these products for Seher Mirza. We have never made or used our skills to create these products before this intervention. Any work for others came about as a result of Seher's work with us.

We the undersign agree with and affirm all of the above is true.

Signed by present members of the community on behalf of all stated above,

ہم نے بطور فری لانس کاریگروں (Free Lance Craftpersons) سحر کے لئے بنائے اور سحر کے پاس ان مصنوعات اور نئے پروڈکٹ (New Product) کو بیچنے کا حق ہے

آج 2014 میں ہم سحر کے ساتھ یہ مصنوعات بنا رہے ہیں اور آگے بھی بناتے رہیں گے سحر کے ڈیزائن سے پہلے ہم نے اس طرح کے زیور کے ڈیزائن نہ پہلے کبھی بنائے تھے نا اپنے ہنر کو اس کے لئے استعمال کیا تھا ۔ یہ ڈیزائن اور زیور دوسرے کسی کے لئے بھی ہم نے سحر کے کام کے بعد بنایا۔

ہم دستخط ذیل اوپر لکھی سب باتوں کی تصدیق کرتے ہیں اور اس سے اتفاق کرتے ہیں

موجودہ کمیونٹی ارکان کے دستخط اوپر سب کی طرف سے

Sign.....

دستخط .....

افسانہ
شہزاد
شاہین
نصرت
10-1-2015
یاسمین
چوہدری

عیرین
شعائلہ
غلام زہرا ن
ماروی
یاسمین

Bhaiam
Shamim
رفیق
Sughra.
لیلا
شاہدا
ناز گل
سیرین
Fahmeeda
ثمینہ
Fajeela
گل بیدا
پاکل
زیبل ساءٔ
سلمان
دعا یونس
Saima
نسلیم

Scanned by CamScanner

Appendix 11: Textile dialogue series

Textile Series 1
Representational samples

December 2009

Bought Khadi (handloom) fabric

Embroidered (Cotton): December 2009 at workshop

Based on the research concerns two key ideas had to be established, that of autonomy and individuality of makers in a community.

For the first series small samples of bought hand-woven cotton cloth[119] was provided. I explained the brief to the women as, 'the best way of representing what you can do through a sample', adding 'along with representing yourself'. It was up to the women to interpret that (fabric) space however they wanted, and decide to use traditional or contemporary representations.

The women were requested to stitch their names into the pieces, so the makers behind the textile representations were not anonymous[120] but represented 'next' to their work. I hoped to communicate from the start that identity, recognition and the individual as integral to the whole, i.e. the group was important in this study. However, further exploration is needed to ascertain whether those women who cannot write their names would prefer to create a pattern or other form of signature.

[119] Although I would have preferred to provide my own weave samples I was not able to weave in time for the field trip

[120] While not all makers are literate most can write their just names.

Ambreen

Zaibunnisa

Asia

Ghulam Zohra

Shamim

Mahirah

Ghulam Sughra

Shamshad

Afsana

Marvi

Bhagul

Bhagul

Samina

Shereen

Shahida

Tasleem

Shereen and Marvi volunteered to respond to some hand-drawn designs (roughly sketched out lines) by me. [121] This intended to see the early response to figurative rather then symmetrical lines/pattern.

Samples by artisan Shereen (above) and Marvi embroidered onto hand drawn design

[121] In the previous RSPN project the women also had a boost to their confidence so they were not entirely new to the idea of workshops and were used to me conducting them. They had also had design briefs given to them by me in the previous project. The only thing that changed was the open-ended self-interpretation they were asked to do

Textiles Dialogues Series 2 & 3
Traditional colour/pattern and stitch

Dobby weave (16 shaft loom) and Needlework/Stitch-craft
Warp 1 (Silk/Hemp chemical dye indigo blue, Silk extra warp) woven: February - April 2010
Warp 2 (Natural undyed Silk/Hemp, Silk extra warp) woven: February - April 2010
Warp 3 (Mercerised Cotton double warp - indigo dyed, natural) woven: June 2010
Embroidered (Cotton, Acrylic, Polyester floss): September 2010 – April 2011

On my previous field trip, when I asked the women what they look for in a fabric to embroider, they requested 'the fabric should grip the needle' (AGJ group conversation 2009). I tailored my choices to natural yarns, avoiding glossy yarns such as floss. This approach intended to subtly indicate my consideration for their craft concerns and show respect towards their practice.

I planned the first warp (warp 1 and warp 2) as two, with further possibilities. It consisted of a main warp and a second warp that was about three quarters of the width of the main warp. I dyed half of the main with chemical dye: a blue that was reminiscent of traditional Ajrak cloth. The rest was kept as natural undyed silk/hemp which became warp 2. The accompanying second warp of shorter width was of 2/60s silk that graduated from a deep red to rust orange. The colours used were all commonly found in traditional embroideries of Sindh and symmetrical patterns were created using a point draft.[122]

Upon reflection, I felt most of the samples woven on the first warp were too patterned defeating the purpose of the exchange, and I had to learn to control the urge as a maker to imbue my fabric with only my emotions. I was using my weave as a metaphor for my approach, and therefore I had to be conscious of my practice and take into account what might be more advantageous for the women.

Warp 3 was woven as a double warp as well, however, it was 100% mercerised cotton with one dyed with indigo and the accompanying warp kept natural. This warp aimed at creating

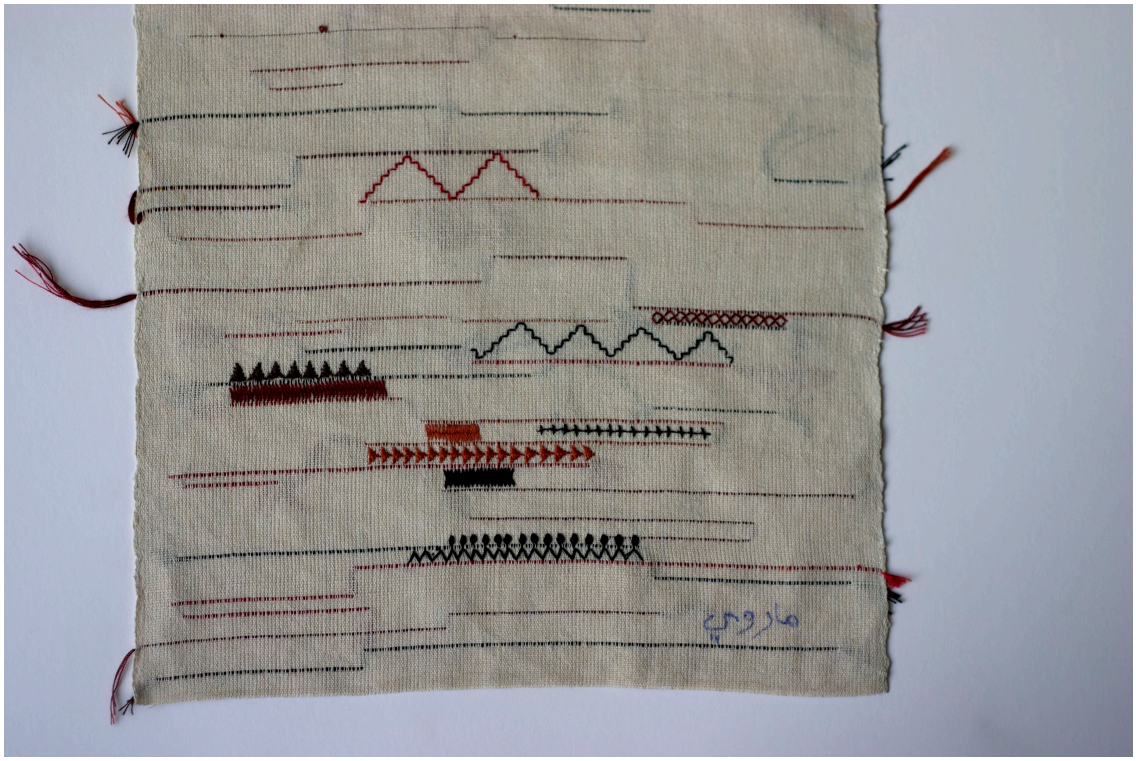
[122] A point draft is a sequence of threading on a loom that gives the patterns in weave. The threading is mirrored and enables circular or wave like patterns. Another example of sequences is block draft that gives asymmetric patterns broken into sections on the woven cloth.

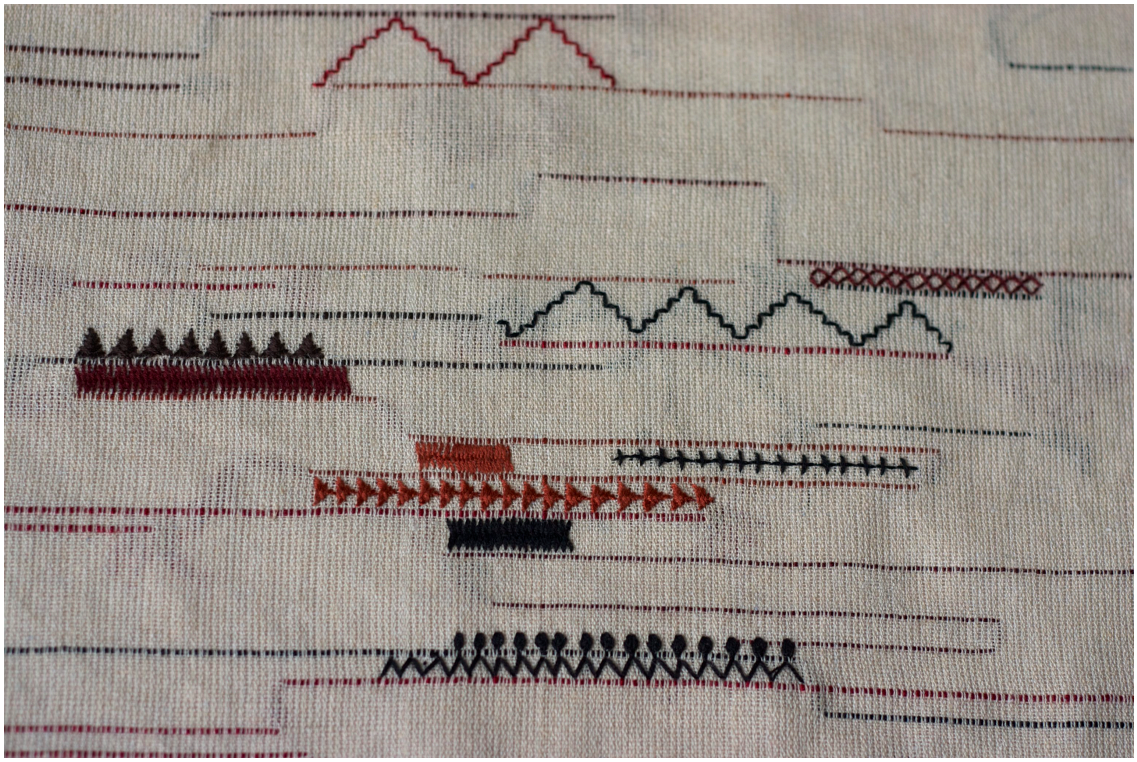
more embroidery inquiry and less complex weave. I was keen to still retain patterns, though, as I wanted to reflect local patterns that can be seen at the village.

Ghulam Zohra and Seher

Zaibunnisa and Seher

Shereen and Seher

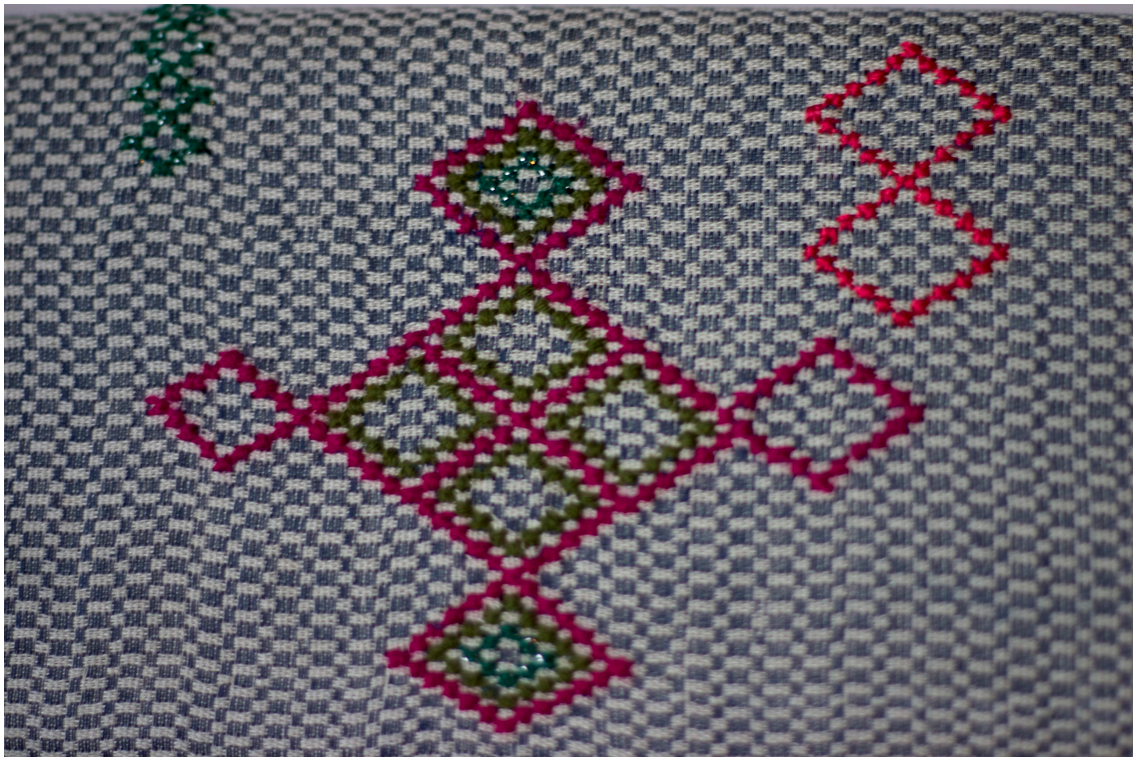




Marvi and Seher

Bhagul and Seher

Ambreen and Seher



Marvi and Seher

Given, embroidered and received later:

April 2011 – March 2013

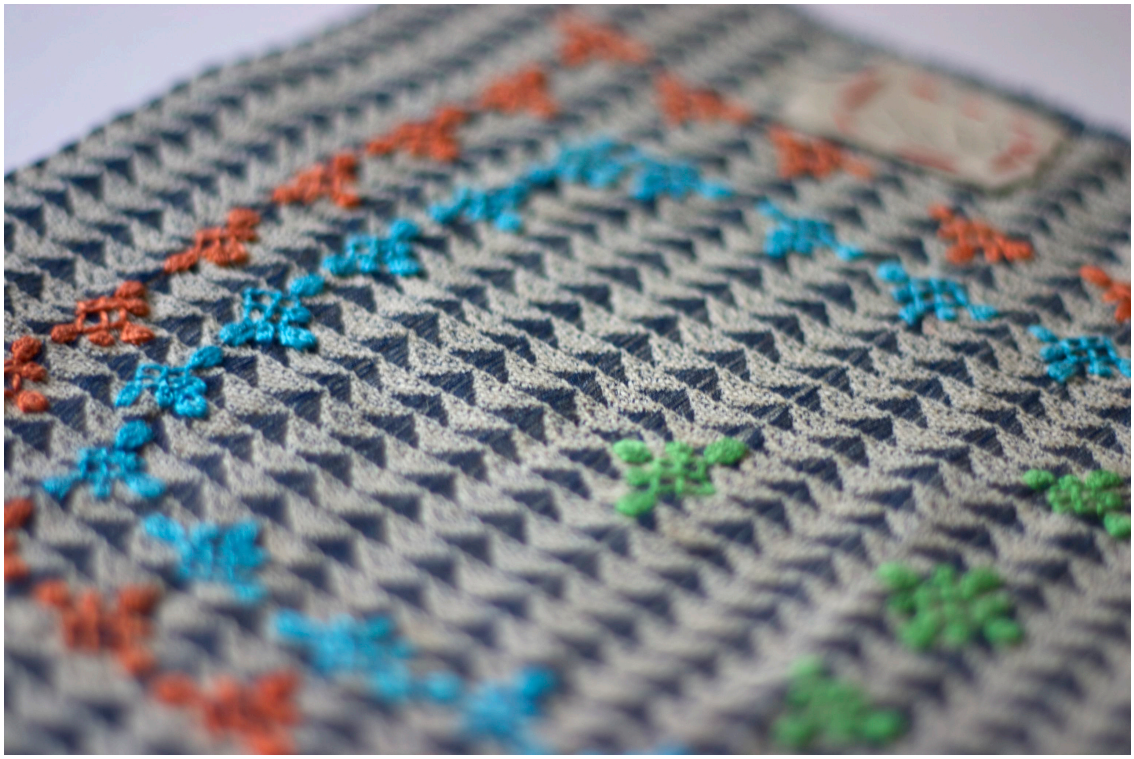
Allah Warai and Seher (detail)

Allah Warai and Seher

Allah Warai and Seher (detail)

Leila and Seher

Shereen and Seher



Fazeela and Seher

Marvi and Seher

Textiles dialogues series 4
Texture and stitch

Dobby weave (24 shaft loom) and Needlework/Stitch-craft
Warp 4 (Silk, Hemp, Wool, Cotton natural undyed) woven: October – December 2010
Embroidered (Cotton): (below pieces) at workshop January 2011, remaining received February 2014

This warp was made up of a range of natural undyed yarns. I used a block draft thread up to create columns and bands of differing textures. The aim was to provide multiple asymmetrical spaces for the women to see their response. Some samples were created with limited coloured weft to provide a 'foreword' of colour and encourage the women to imagine and compose the piece further. The women made free-hand figures and surprisingly some chose to leave some patterns asymmetrical or 'broken' to form unconventional shapes rather than their usual 'completion' or banding of traditional motifs.

Sughra and Seher

Shereen and Seher

Shereen and Seher

Samina and Seher

Samina and Seher

Tasleem and Seher

Textiles series 5
Still life with personal and everyday objects

Still-life interpretations, everyday objects and perspectives
Bought Khadi cotton
Embroidered (cotton): at workshop June 2011

The aim of this textile series was to enable the women to use their craft in a way that was completely different to their traditional use of skill. The brief given was to embroider personal and everyday objects in their surroundings. It encouraged thinking and engaging critically with their craft: its stitches, but not necessarily the patterns of their traditional textiles, suggesting a critical thinking approach towards achieving the design task.[123] These figurative patterns are a means, an experiment to reflect back a different perception of one's abilities, they are not products or finished outcomes in their own right.

Ambreen

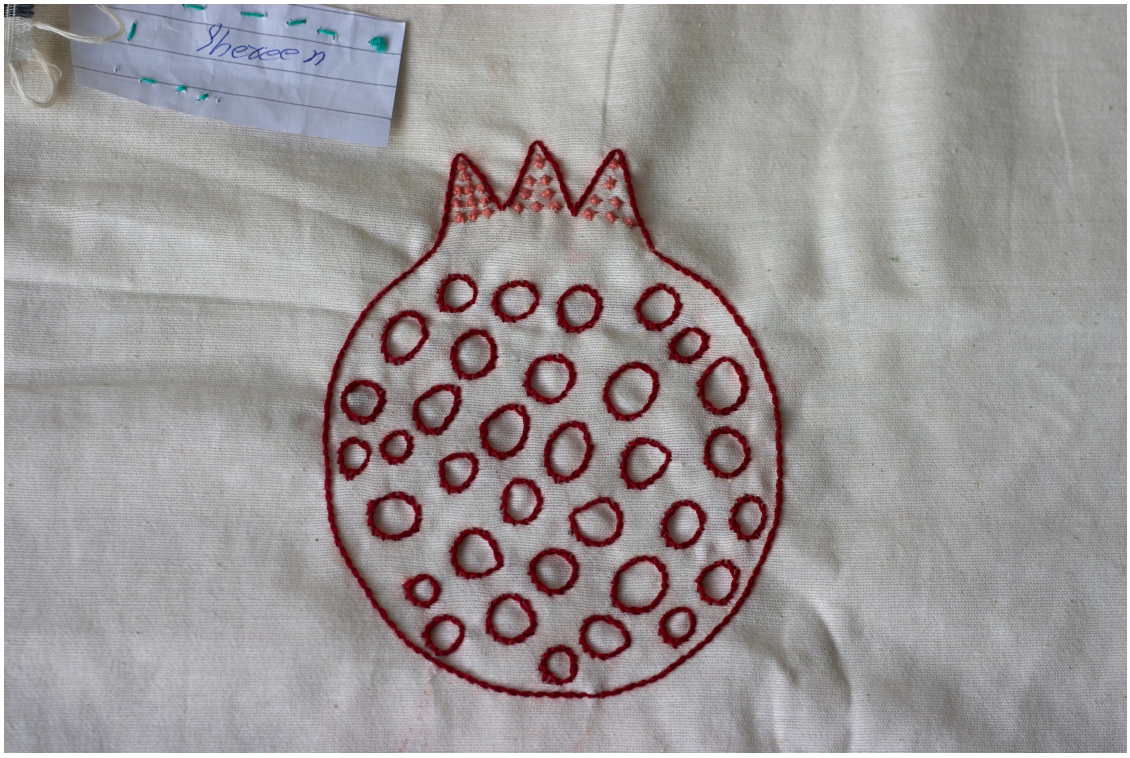
[123] See appendix 8 for more details in corresponding workshop field notes

Jamal Khatoon

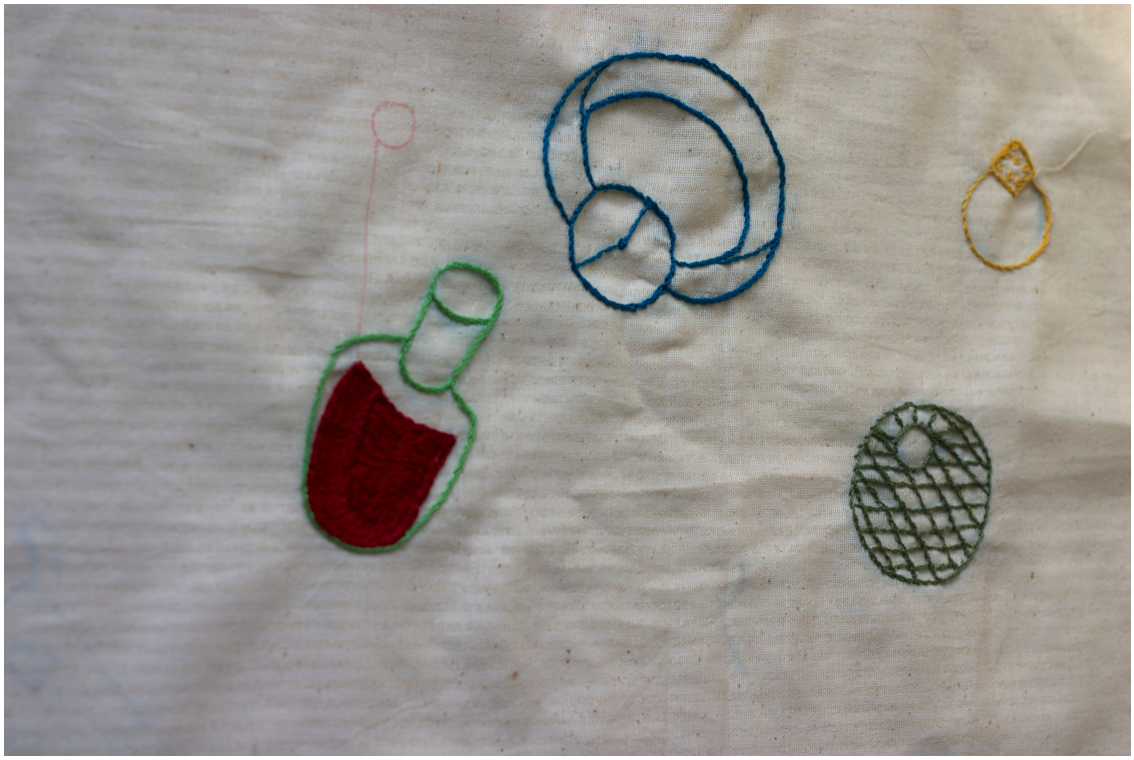
Nusrat

Ghulam Zohra

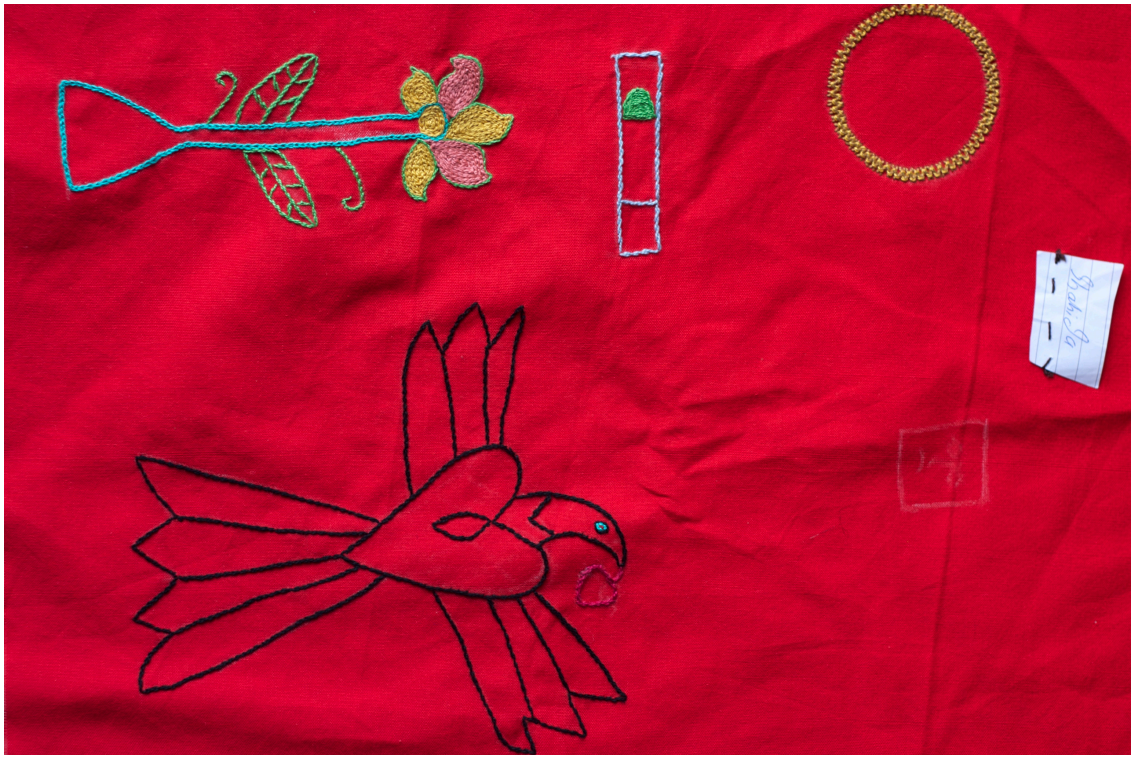
Zaibunnisa



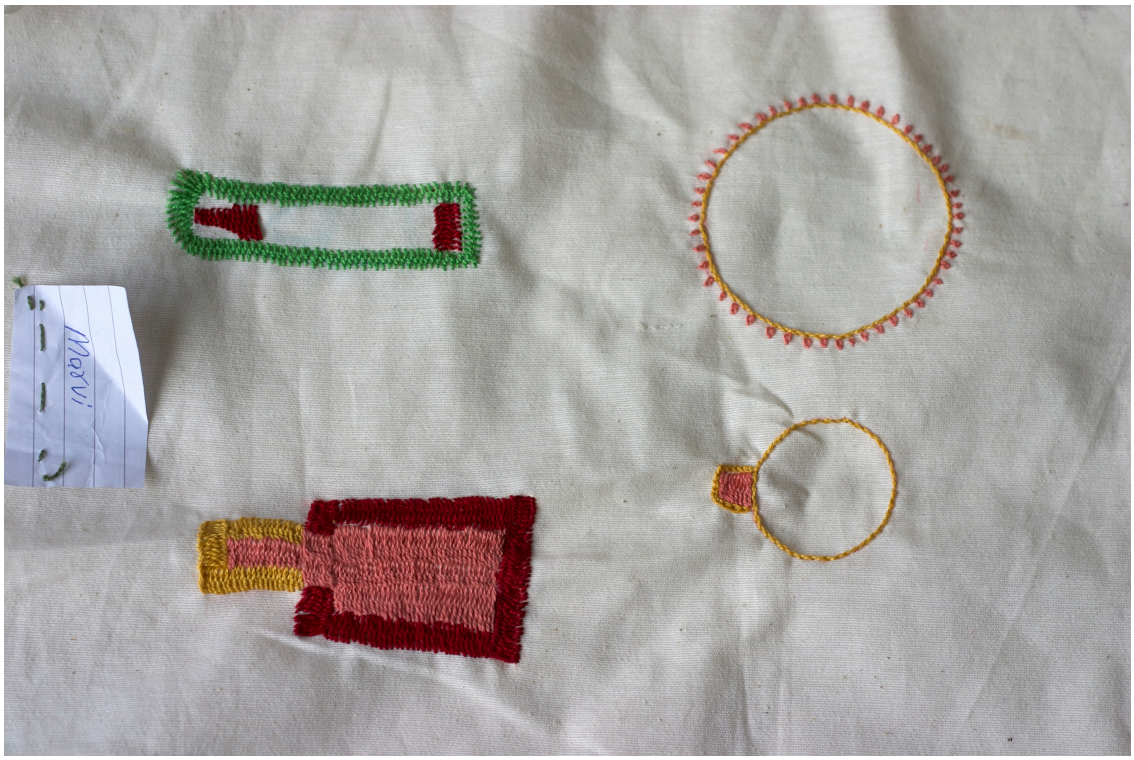
Shereen



Sughra



Shahida

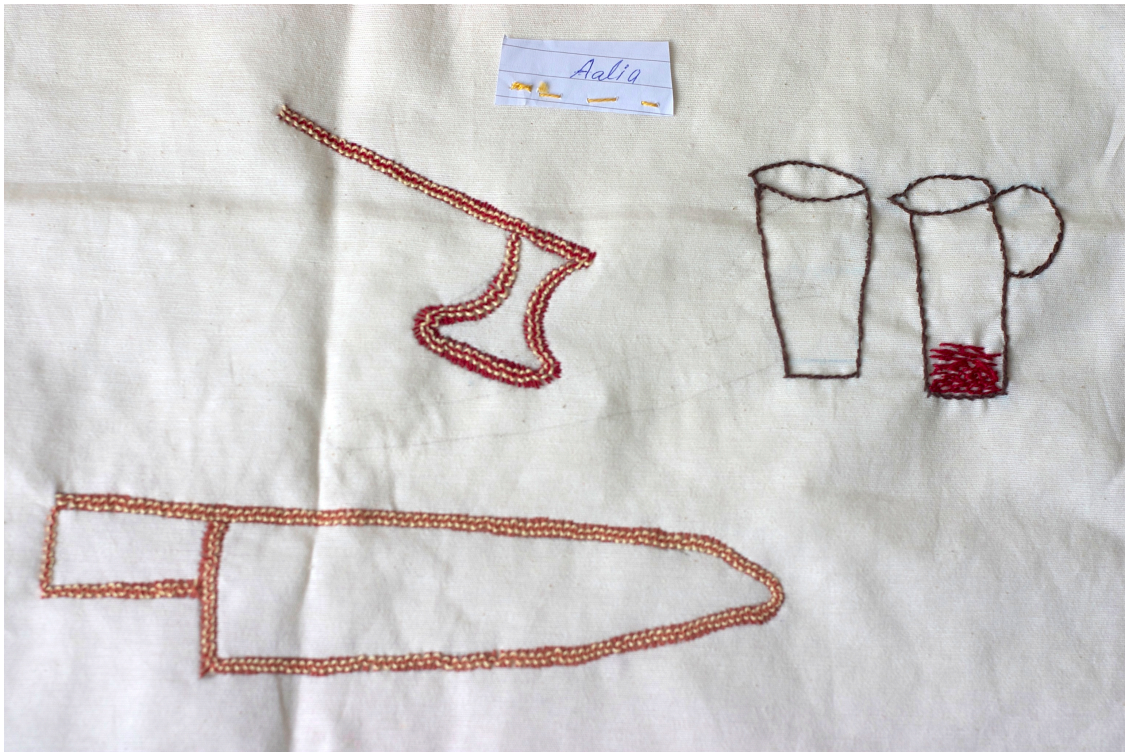


Marvi

Afsana

Samina

Mahirah



Aliya

Hafiza

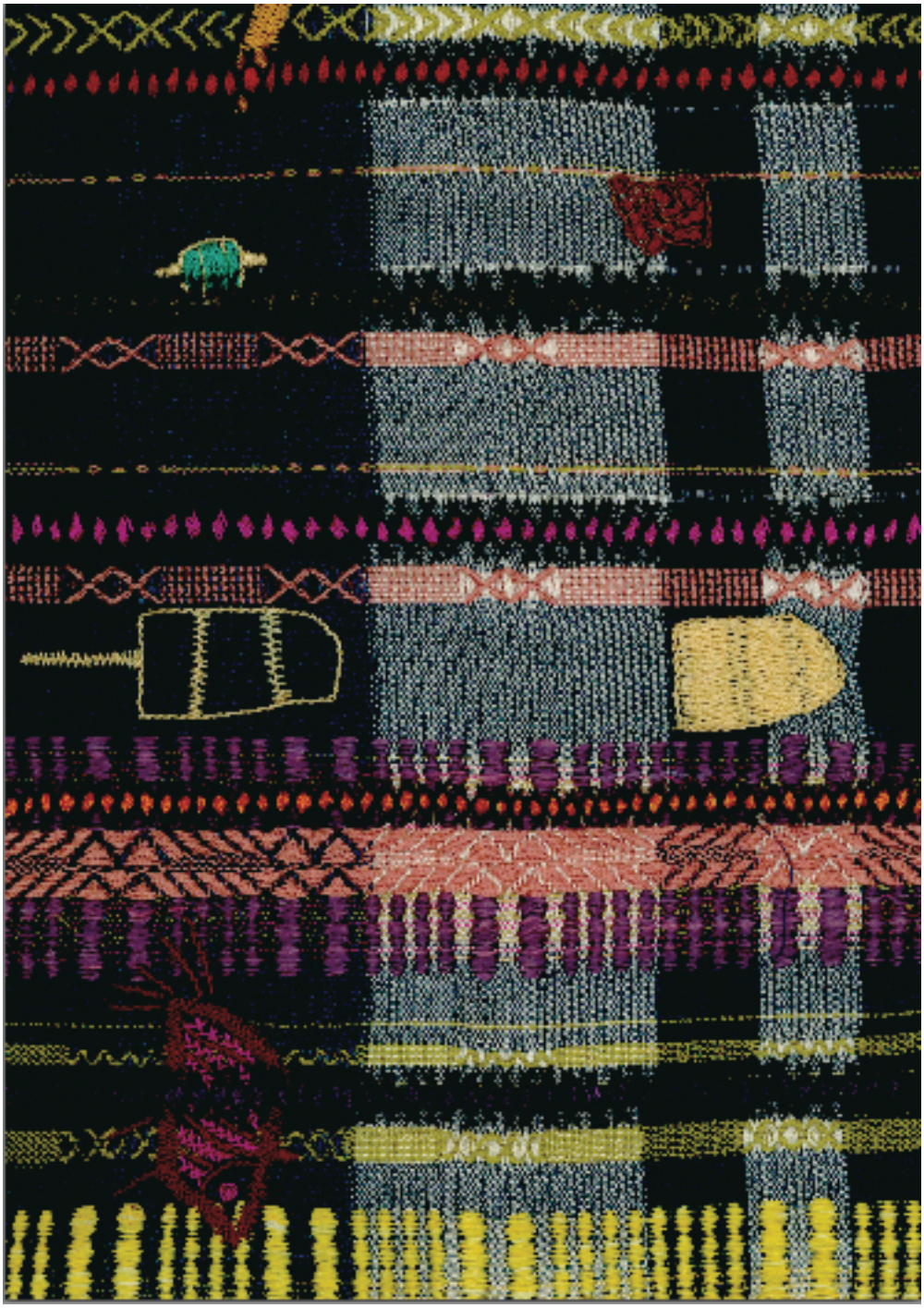
Bhagul

Textiles dialogue series 6
Likes and Dislikes

Dobby weave (24 shaft loom) and Needlework/Stitch-craft
Warp 5 (Silk natural, cotton indigo dyed) woven: February – April 2011
Embroidered (cotton):

I created three long samples from this warp, one featuring my 'dislikes' in weave, depicting my fears such as the dark, a second depicting my 'likes' in weave, and finally a sample that was more like a regularly patterned scarf. The women were asked to respond with their respective likes 'pasand' and dislikes 'napasand'. The aim was to encourage the women to think creatively about how to interact with this fabric. Marvi and Bhagul embroidered several objects such as a cricket bail to represent cricket, cooked fish, ice cream, bananas, dates and 'mithai' sweetmeat for their 'likes', while 'dislikes' had images of local lizards, snakes etc. but were not returned to me.

Marvi and Seher



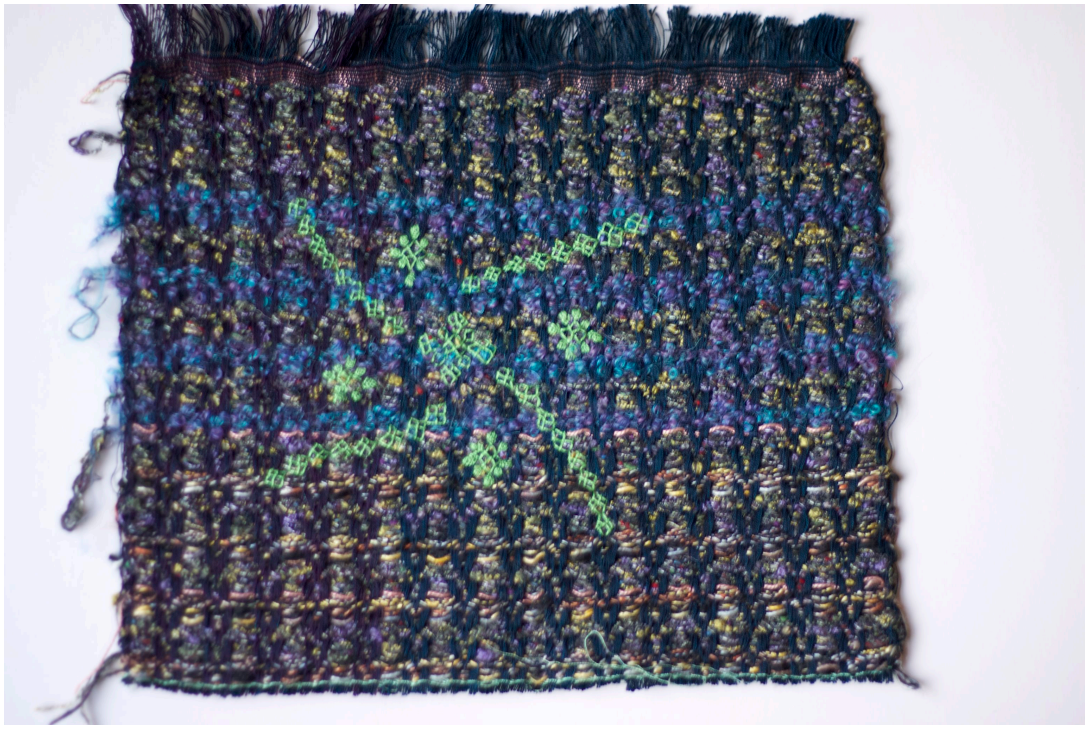
Marvi, Bhagul and Seher

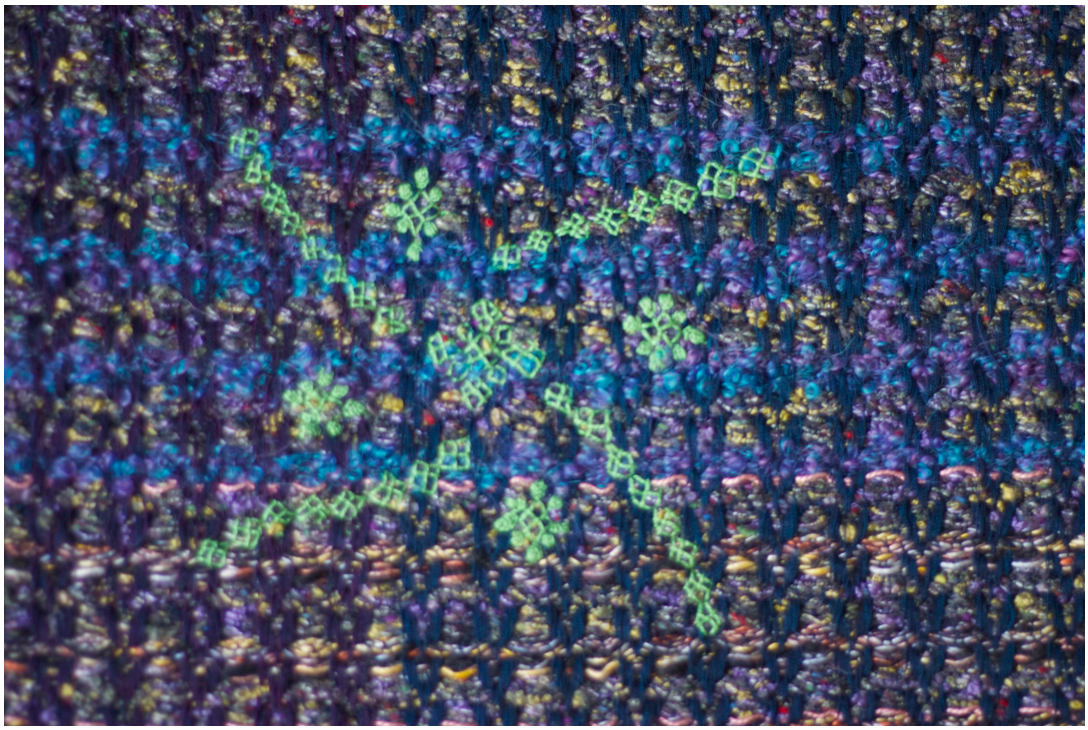
Textiles dialogue series 7
Trying different colours and textures

Dobby weave (24 shaft loom) and Needlework/Stitch-craft
Warp 6 (Silk chemical dyed) woven: September – November 2011
Embroidered (Cotton): November 2011 - March 2013

The aim of this warp was to create a fabric with a contemporary look, feel and colour. I chose a navy and dark purple colour mix, creating a simple texture, and then a heavyweight, textured sample with bulky yarn. Up until now I had used relatively familiar colour palettes and textures. I wanted to see how the women responded to all over colour and texture.

Afsana and Seher





Mahirah and Seher

Textiles dialogue series 8
Working together, collage and surreal figures
Seher & Marvi, Bhagul, Rifat, Bhaitan, Sughra, Naz and Ambreen

Jacquard weave and Needlework/Stitch-craft
Woven in Cotton and Silk: April - October 2011
Embroidered with Cotton: November 2011 – February 2014

Initially, I created two jacquard samples from photographs of artisans I had taken at the workshops. The first two are still with the women who were woven into it: Ghulam Zohra with her daughter, Shumaila, and Sughra while she embroidered. It occurred to me later that the women might have liked to keep these pieces, or maybe thought it was something I made for them. Once that had occurred to me, I wanted the women to keep the pieces.[124]

The third sample is a large piece with multiple images collaged together like a patchwork quilt. It consists of images of artisans such as Shereen as she wrote something and groups of women working together. It also includes an image of me. I wanted to present a different figurative canvas to explore how the women might respond and whether they might treat my image differently from their own. The women had this piece for a long time. From the progress I could follow, Marvi was the first to embroider into it, embellishing my monochrome piece with colour, first into the images of herself and her sister, Bhagul and then into the image of me. I discussed with the women that this would be shown as a central piece in an exhibition and some women wrote messages on it signing it with their names.

[124] I address this again in the conclusion