

**Intangible heritage and livelihoods: a case  
study on the heritage of Purulia chhau dance  
from India.**

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# Abstract

UNESCO and many governments around the world have begun to consider intangible heritage relevant to creating sustainable development. Economic investments in this direction are rapidly growing. However, research on intangible heritage has focused mostly on heritage nomination process and current museum practices, at the expense of a detailed consideration of alternative safeguarding measures and of the heritage ability to function in the wider sphere of people's life.

This PhD recognises the intangible heritage roles in people's livelihood and development practice, and related research gaps, examining the functioning of an intangible heritage-based development project, implemented in rural India. It presents the case of Purulia chhau dancers from West Bengal, nominated intangible heritage of the world in 2010, and their relations to a development project implemented between 2009 and 2011. The objective is to examine how project's actions worked, extending the investigation to actors' positions and uses of the intangible heritage in the practice of safeguarding through livelihood transformation.

To achieve this overall aim, this PhD employed a research design and analytical framework which comprised more than one level, based primarily on actor-network theory and on sustainable livelihood framework, through which project actors and actions are investigated. At the methodological level ethnography and document analysis were selected.

The development project provides an outstanding context for social analysis and reflection on the practice of safeguarding and that of development. It informs the manner that macro level policy of safeguarding and development, as well as heterogeneous actors' interests, increasingly impinges upon the micro level dynamics of intangible heritage creation and management. It also offers an interesting strategic challenge to unpack the role of intangible heritage in a rural livelihoods system. This PhD shows that the concept of livelihood as an analytical approach furthers the understanding of intangible heritage and shows the limitation of previous livelihood frameworks. Overall, this thesis prompts a rethink of the boundary between intangible heritage and development with a new conceptualisation of intangible heritage as a livelihood that encapsulates the functionality of the cultural element in everyday life of the people. The analysis shows that there is a conscious process of cultural commodification, so that the commodification is not something to avoid that can only negatively impact the heritage, but something that they, the artists and the heritage, as well as other intangible heritage-networking actors (as the project actors), can benefit from it.

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I am grateful also for the scholarship I had when I came into the IITCD at London Metropolitan University, it was an invaluable incentive for beginning this research; for the work done by previous scholars working on related approaches to culture, tourism and development actions whose efforts inspired mine and are referred to in this thesis.

Last, I owe a deep expression of appreciation to all my family and friends who are not mentioned here, particularly to my mother and my friend Annalisa, who have patiently supported me and offered encouragement during moments of crisis.

# Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of the author, Stefania Cardinale.

The fieldwork reported was covered by LMU Research Ethics Approval of the 19th April 2012. All names of informants and organisations involved in this ethnography have been changed in order to protect identities, according to London Metropolitan University's ethics rules and regulations. However, I have chosen to indicate place names within the territory of fieldwork by their actual names.

Ethnographic data in this dissertation are presented with a different font, font-size and line-spacing, to distinguish them from other sources.

All translations, diagrams, maps and photographs are my own, unless otherwise indicated. Non-English words are italicised throughout the text.

Material that can be helpful for the reader who seeks further information can be found in the appendices of this thesis, such as some source texts, maps, example of ethnographic data and tables.

Part of this dissertation has been presented in several international conferences and also published as follows:

- Cardinale S. (2016) 'Intangible Cultural Heritage Revitalisation for Development and Tourism: the case of Purulia Chhau dance', *Material Culture Review*, 82-83. Canada: Cape Breton University. pp. 43-56.
- Cardinale S. (2016) 'Beyond Safeguarding: Intangible cultural heritage in international cooperation', in Lira, S., Amoêda, R. and Pinheiro, C. (eds.) *Heritage 2016*. Porto: Green Lines Institute.
- Cardinale S. (2015) 'Modernisation for Development: the living and changeable identity of Purulia Chhau dance', in Lira, S., Amoêda, R. and Pinheiro, C. (eds.) *Sharing Cultures 2015*. Porto: Green Lines Institute.

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# **Glossary of Abbreviations**

AL – Art for Livelihood

ADB - Asian Development Bank

ANT – Actor Network Theory

DGDEVCO - Directorate General for Development and Cooperation

EC – European Commission

EZCC - Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre

EU – European Union

GI - Geographical Indication

ICCROM - International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICOM - International Council of Museums

ICOMOS - International Council on Monuments and Sites

IHL – Intangible Heritage Livelihood

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NCSP - National Country Strategic Plan

RGSP - Register of Good Safeguarding Practices UNESCO

SE – Social Enterprise

SHG – Self Help Group

SL – Sustainable Livelihood

UK - United Kingdom

UN - United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

WBI - World Bank Institute

WHL - World Heritage List

WTO - World Tourism Organisation

# Chapter 1

## 1 General Introduction and Rationale for this PhD

Almost a decade ago, Hafstein with his PhD thesis argued that intangible cultural heritage is a tool of intervention, a normative rather than descriptive concept transforming people's relationship to their cultural practices, rearranging and integrating vernacular culture into official administrative structures and institutions (Hafstein, 2005). Hafstein's position, among other scholars, opened up the investigation on intangible heritage definition and practice to the investigation of the broad array of institutionalised measures of safeguarding (Hafstein, 2005; 2018), such as intangible heritage inventories, official UNESCO's intangible heritage lists, museum practices and archival documentation. Yet, since then the spheres of circulation of intangible heritages (and its safeguarding) interlinking with people's ways and means of living are still unexplored. In other words, very little is known about the role and functionality of today's intangible heritage in people's livelihoods and strategies for coping with everyday vulnerabilities and stresses, especially in developing countries such as India, where the case study is based.

The importance of traditional cultural expressions in people's lifestyle is one of the key incentive for their recognition and inscription in world heritage lists (UNESCO, 2003; Blake, 2009). However, the relations and translation of intangible heritage as livelihood, as planned development strategy and also as measure of safeguarding, could frame the intangible cultural element under different regimes of valorisation and new spheres of circulation (Appadurai, 1988). A current approach to safeguarding intangible heritage is geared to these ends, including, notably, intangible heritage-based tourism development as alternative livelihoods for artists' communities, with international cooperation actions recently ranging from micro-projects to programmes on culture and heritage valorisation and revitalisation in development and cooperation perspectives, for over 35 million euro (Jeretic, 2014).

As declared recently by UNESCO New Delhi, culture (and intangible heritage above all) has a key role in reaching local sustainable development:

“For the first time, culture has been referred to as a sector by the international development agenda within the structure of the SDGs. The operationalization of UNESCO's Culture Conventions on safeguarding and promoting cultural and natural heritage, along with cultural and creative industries, joint programmes with other UN agencies and strong cooperation with national authorities will play a key

role in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”  
(2016, p. 12)

This growing tendency of safeguarding intangible heritage as assets for development, in order to promote cultural diversity and also foster local development, is strongly exemplified in this Thesis, by the case of the heritage of chhau dancers from Purulia, in India, who have been the recipient of an international development project: the *Art for Livelihood* (AL) project, introduced in section 1.3 below. Relations and tensions posed by the centripetal and centrifugal forces of project's actors, international development aims, tourism promotion, safeguarding goals, globalisation and localisation on intangible heritage of Purulia chhau dance in this study provide the contemporary background where practitioners of intangible heritage, accredited UNESCO NGOs, social enterprises, experts, researchers, locals, artists, projects and funds, governments, cultural institutions, work to safeguard, revitalise and promote the cultural expression today. As such, the AL project raises questions that have relevance in several correlated research areas including heritage safeguarding studies, tourism and culture-based livelihood investigation and development planning, which this PhD attempts to cover.

To do so, this introductory Chapter begins by setting the scene – introducing the rationale for this investigation, the practical and theoretical contexts which this research is situated. The first two sections (1.1 and 1.2) present the background rationale for this investigation. The next sections (1.3) then presents the contextual background to the development project and the Purulia chhau dance. This is followed by section 1.4 which discusses the political context in which this research was situated. The fifth section (1.5) introduces the research objectives and questions of this investigation. The following section (1.6) briefly introduces the thesis's approach – actor network theory and ethnography, which will be used to analyse this cultural heritage based development project. After this, the structure of the thesis will be outlined (section 1.7) before moving on to Chapter 2.

## **1.1 What Type of Cultural Heritage?**

Institutionally, it is only under the UNESCO Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003 Convention) (UNESCO, 2003) that traditional cultures, practices, indigenous cultures, or other traditional knowledges are recognised internationally within the area of cultural heritage to be protected and transmitted to future generation.

The question of the meaning and identification of cultural heritage has been extensively debated within the literature of the cultural heritage sector. Ever since the adoption of the first Convention for Safeguarding World Heritages (UNESCO, 1972), what scholars and



UNESCO's experts have meant by 'heritage'—and consequently how to protect it—has been constantly evolving and quite a lot has been written on the controversial role of tangible cultural heritage within tourism and economic development processes (e.g. Silberman, 2012; Smeets, 2004; Throsby, 2008; 2010; UNESCO, 2001). With the installation of intangible cultural heritage by the 2003 Convention, as a new category of heritage to be protected, the definition of heritage came to include traditional cultures and folk elements, that may associate different communities and be cross-borders (UNESCO, 2001; 2003). Today, especially in non-Western countries, the label of UNESCO heritage comprises material, natural and cultural - tangible and intangible - elements. When investigating matters of cultural heritage management, it is now more important than ever to define from the beginning of the investigation what kind of heritage one is investigating. Thus, at the outset of this thesis, it is essential to define what intangible heritage means according to UNESCO and the Indian National Inventories. The following definition lists several types of intangible cultural heritage:

“[p]ractices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated in addition to that - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO, 2003, Art. 2.1).

The cultural element of Purulia chhau dance, introduced below in section 1.4 , is listed among the intangible heritages of UNESCO since 2010 (UNESCO, 2010a). It is therefore recognised among India's intangible heritage that needs to be safeguarded, separated from tangible heritages, such as other Indian monuments or sites, accordingly.

## **1.2 Why an Investigation of Intangible Heritage in Livelihoods Development Context**

After the 2003 Convention stressed the importance of intangible heritage in people's lives, its safeguarding, defined as

-“[...] measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage” (UNESCO, 2003, Art.3) -

is becoming a crucial issue for governments, groups and individuals still practising their traditional cultures. Implementing the 2003 Convention has “generated new practices, analyses and discourses which together are shaping the understanding and practices of intangible heritage” (Agakawa and Smith, 2018, p. 4). Many countries have seen the advent of the 2003 Convention as the opportunity to raise their traditional cultures at the status of heritage, as a chance to overcoming a Western hegemony for long established within the first Convention on World Heritage (1972) in cultural heritage management field (Agakawa and Smith, 2018; Hafstein, 2018; Smith and Agakawa, 2009; Vecco, 2010). Safeguarding the intangible heritage is also seen as an opportunity to promote traditional cultures and use their potential in terms of tourism attractions, and therefore economic development lever for poor community around the world (UNESCO, 2009a; 2013c).

Crucial messages towards the direction of recognising traditional cultures as heritage and practising the intangible heritage as an enabler of development processes are found in several UNESCO’s Conventions and documents (e.g. UNESCO, 2005; 2013b; 2013c; 2015a; 2015b) and in United Nations’ reports that over the years have contributed to change the perspective over development conceptualisation UNESCO and UNDP, 2013; UN, 2001; 2010). For instance, the Outcome Document of the 2010 Millennium Development Goals Summit, published in 2010, emphasised the importance of culture in development and its contribution to the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (UN, 2010). Recently, examples of international actions from Brazil, Egypt, Estonia, Kenya, Samoa and Spain, illustrating how cooperation and development initiatives investing in intangible heritage and traditional cultures are contributing to building sustainable development for local and poor communities around the world, were shown as part of UNESCO’s exhibition and stories of success in Paris, in October 2013 (UNESCO, 2013a). Many rural areas around the world have re-defined themselves as also cultural tourism spaces in which local history, monuments, natural resources and traditional cultures as intangible heritage take over from traditional agricultural system (Bowers and Corsane, 2012; Iorio and Corsale, 2010; Richards, 2011; Richards and Wilson, 2006; Roberts and Townsend, 2016). Culture and heritage as sectors of activity, with creative industries<sup>1</sup> and tourism above all, are increasingly recognised as powerful drivers of development, acknowledged as economic assets (Jeretic, 2014; Throsby, 2016; UNESCO, 2015a; UNDP and UNESCO, 2013; World Bank, 1999; WTO, 2005; 2013; Yúdice, 2003). This recognition resonates with financial

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<sup>1</sup> In defining the cultural and creative industries this research adopts the approach from the European Commission’s Green Paper ‘Unlocking the potential of cultural and creative industries’ where cultural industries are defined as those industries producing and distributing goods or services embedding cultural expressions. This definition is in accordance to the definition of UNESCO 2005 and 2003 Conventions and includes a wide range of content, such as performing arts, visual arts, cultural heritage, film, DVD, radio, video games, new media, music, books, etc., (European Commission, 2010).

investments in culture and heritage for development cooperation<sup>2</sup> promoted and funded by international agencies, such as European Commission (EC) and its Member States (Jeretic, 2009). Hence, cultural heritage, monuments and intangible expressions, such as practices, artefacts, traditional music, dance, performances, etc., are among the possible cultural assets today at the top of the EC Directorate General for Development and Cooperation's (DGDEVCO) agenda for 2014-2020 (Jeretic, 2014). A range of intangible heritage expressions are indeed considered by government and international institution as strategies for alleviating poverty, generating employment and promoting social cohesion and democracy under new forms of neoliberal management of culture in tourism and development (Da Costa, 2010). The fact that Indian intangible cultural heritage gets a role in the last XII National Country Strategic Plan (NCSP) that also states "culture should not be seen as a mere 'fringe' activity but is now at the 'core' of the holistic development strategy of the country and its people" (India, Planning Commission, 2013, p. 391-392) is telling. However, as this thesis will show, this growing investment and attention at institutional and policy level towards recognising the role of intangible heritage in development process is not accompanied by the same detailed attention at research level. From one side, the extent to which intangible heritage-based development actions foster bottom-up approaches to value intangible heritage, increase local livelihoods opportunities and impact on cultural element transmission, is rather unclear and under investigated. The way in which development actions occur can sometimes become a charged issue given that it touches on locals' cultural identity and most intangible values (Kuutma, 2012). There is the danger that the intangible cultural element and its bearers may regard these project actions as trivialising their heritage. From the other side, reframing the intangible heritage in a development and livelihoods perspective through projects and programmes of cooperation and development, is also seen as a way to guarantee the viability of the cultural element and sustain its bearers. At the same time, the intangible heritage safeguarding may subsequently depend on international funds and development projects success. International

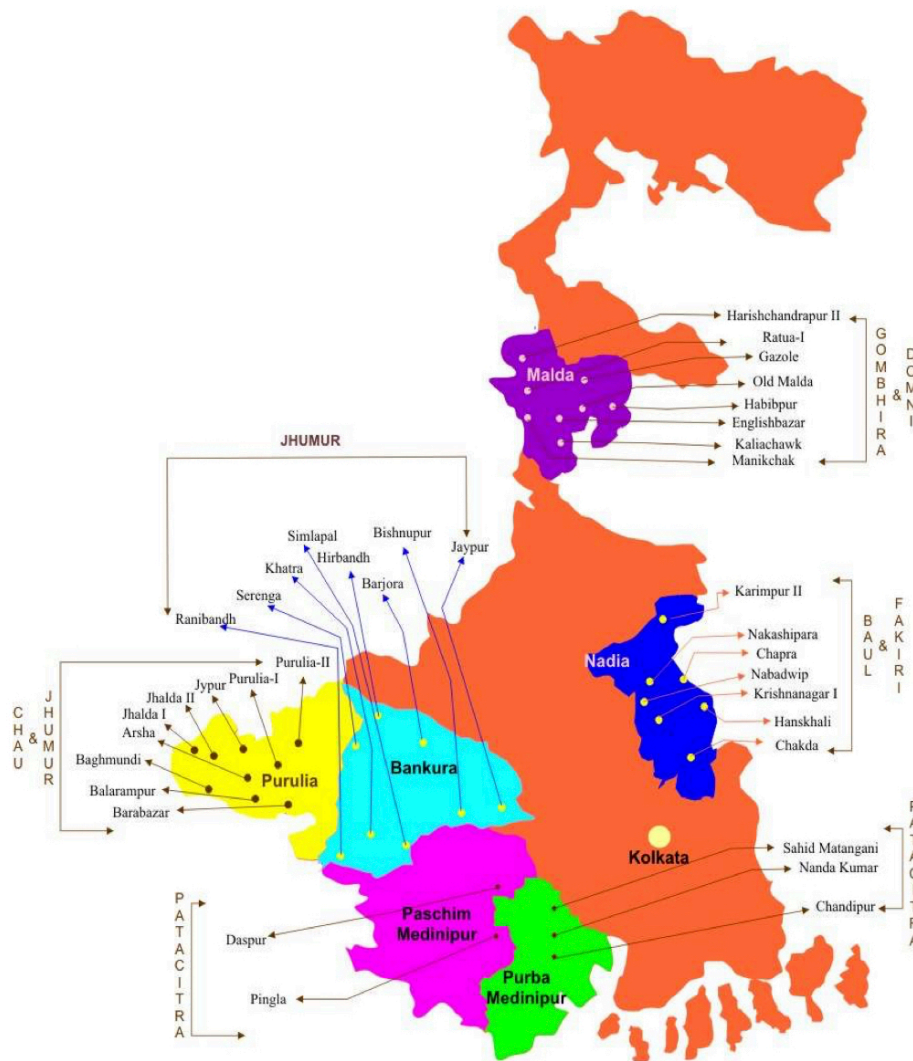
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<sup>2</sup> Culture as a sector has been gaining a prominent role into EU Cooperation, programmes, policy of cohesion and therefore funds. According to the European Union Expert Group on Cultural and Creative Industries (EU Expert Group) culture-based creativity is an essential feature of a post-industrial economy that should be more and more mainstreamed into development strategies that are integrated and built on partnerships between public authorities, cultural organisations, the relevant business interests and representatives of civil society. In 2003, the turnover of the cultural and creative sector in Europe amounted to €654 billion. Cultural investment represented 2.6% of Europe's GDP. The investment on this sector is still growing. Since 2007, investments in culture through the EU Structural Funds (which are part of the Cohesion Policy of €344 billion for the 2007-2013 period), have been largely linked with the protection and promotion of cultural heritage in view of enhancing local tourism. Besides, the European Regional Development Fund established in article 4 "protection and preservation of cultural heritage; development of cultural infrastructure and cultural services" and funds directly allocated to culture approximately €6 billion (1.7% of total funds of ERDF) for the objective protection and preservation of cultural heritage; €2.2 billion for objective of development of cultural infrastructure, and €797 million to support cultural services (European Commission, 2012, see page 9 through 11).

development and cooperation projects, indeed, can create and sustain those practical conditions (e.g. funds, networking relations, actors, and instruments) in which intangible heritage circulates and is revitalised, promoted and transmitted for its viability. Consequently, to foster intangible heritage-based development projects can also be one measure of implementing the safeguarding by international and local actors.

Nonetheless, we still know relatively little about the interlinks between rural livelihood development strategies and intangible heritage safeguarding. So far researchers and heritage experts have primarily focused on the role of cultural institutions, UNESCO's experts, lists and governments' approach on the heritage practice of preservation and management (Agakawa and Smith, 2018; Kuutma, 2012; Smith, 2006). This disregards the increasing role that grassroots actions and actors, such as international cooperation projects, plays in shaping the cultural heritage, privileging specific forms of safeguarding (for instance, through livelihoods transformation) and impacting the knowledge production and representation around the cultural element. Under the framework of international initiatives, an array of driving forces and conditions engage with the intangible heritage in the field, that have not yet been investigated, in turn challenging and sustaining the way the heritage is produced, represented, materialised and circulated in various contexts. This study focuses on these circulations to point to what these relations and paradoxes raise in terms of impacts, power relationships, practice of safeguarding and knowledge around the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau dance, in India.

Let me now introduce the case study of the development project and the intangible cultural heritage of Purulia chhau.



1 West Bengal Map, from the Social Enterprise Activity Report (SE, 2010a, p.4)

### 1.3 The Case Study

A number of important initiatives of rural development and poverty alleviation through folk arts, handicraft and other cultural productions and promotion for tourism and creative entrepreneurship are taking place in India<sup>3</sup>. In West Bengal (see fig.1 above), where the case study of this PhD is based, the Ministry of Rural Development of India and Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC) of West Bengal, with active involvement of other actors (e.g. local banks, NGOs, cultural associations, etc.) began the projection and dissemination of local traditional cultures, such as folk-art forms, for promoting opportunities of self-employment and increase the livelihoods for rural people. In this framework, the international

<sup>3</sup> The Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) programme is an example of poverty alleviation governmental scheme for rural areas of India. It is an integrated scheme to create opportunities and employment by enhancing the skills of rural artisans and on which the AL project was developed. A more in-depth discussion of the role of this scheme will be discussed in Chapter 7, section 7.4.

development project, presented in this study, uses cultural expressions as vector of development.

### **1.3.1 The Development Project**

Financed by the European Commission within the programme ‘Investing in People’ (European Commission, 2008), the AL project was part of European Commission’s international cooperation “aimed at protecting and promoting cultural diversity, especially as a way of promoting multi-ethnic and multicultural dialogue” (European Commission, 2008, p. 5) in accordance with UNESCO’s position in the Convention for Cultural Diversity (UNESCO, 2005) and the 2003 Convention.

The AL project, implemented in West Bengal between 2009 and 2011, is an effort to improve artists’ livelihoods from the revitalisation of their intangible heritage and cultural practices into a livelihood perspective. It aimed to develop artists’ cultural heritage for new markets, to create cultural tourism options, increase awareness on local folk arts and economically sustain artists (SE, 2010a; 2010b). Revenues from the intangible heritage based – livelihoods, under the project, were to create the conditions for artists to sustain their family, perpetuate their art as well as invest money at village level, allowing economic benefits from the project’s activities trickling down to local community (SE, 2010b).

For years, the Social Enterprise (SE) leading the AL project, and its staff have been working with folk artists and their communities in creating Self Help Groups (SHGs), using theatre as a social tool and raising awareness on several social issues. Later, with the AL project, the SE worked specifically on crafting cultural expressions, such as the heritage of Purulia chhau, as means of livelihood for artists and their villages.

When trying to understand the processes of revitalising and promoting intangible heritage in development projects, such as AL project, several questions emerge including the role of actors, the power dynamics, the impacts of project assemblages on the intangible heritage and its commodification, therefore directing our attention to the process and relations between intangible heritage, livelihoods, commodification and safeguarding, yet very unexplored in literature (Su, 2018a). These issues are further complicated by the nature of the intangible heritage<sup>4</sup>, which is constantly evolving with its tradition bearers’ lifestyles. Certain traditional cultures, such as Purulia chhau dance that is briefly introduced below,

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<sup>4</sup> Intangible cultural heritage in UNESCO 2003 Convention definition is described as a living cultural element where the living essence of the element is embodied in the local community way of life. This is regarded as an essential factor to maintain a sense of place and sustainable conservation of the cultural expression.

are intricately connected to the lives of their communities and therefore are constantly changing as the artists lifestyles adapt to internal and external influences.

### **1.3.2 The Origin of Purulia Chhau Dance**

Chhau dance is a ritualistic folk dance, usually performed by men, very common in the States of West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand in India. Today there are three different forms of chhau dance, recognised under the label of intangible heritage of India (UNESCO, 2010a) that have developed according to local influences and taste and Purulia chhau dance is the typical style of the dance practiced in West Bengal and of course in Purulia region (see Appendix A). Purulia chhau dance, unlike the other two dance styles, is characterised by very large and colourful masks and very elaborate costumes depicting mythological characters from religious texts (Ramayana, Mahabharata, Vedas folklores and Puranas).

There are limited studies on chhau dance by international scholars most likely due to the language barrier being an impediment, but there has also been limited attention from Indian researchers (Chatterjee, 2009; Shuba, 2011). Documentation on the origin of this folk dance is very scarce and its origin has therefore not yet been firmly established (Shuba, 2011).

For Mishra (2012) the physical geography of Purulia, with its thick forests and hills, helped local people, tribal communities remain isolated and shaped their culture without external influences for years. Purulia' local communities like Kurmi, Kumhar, Rajwar, Ghatoal, Mal Mahali, Bhumij, Dom, Kamar, and Bagdi, and tribal groups like the Santhal, Munda, Orao, Ho, Kharia, and Birhor tribes are living in the Chhotanagpur region and around Purulia District (Field notes, 2011) (see also Chapter 2). Chhau dance in Purulia is particularly popular among the tribal communities (UNESCO, 2010a).

According to Mukunda (2012) the long-lasting geographical inaccessibility of the area of Purulia, Bankura and Medinipur region (see fig. 1 above) helped the local people nourish their culture and costumes without outside influences for years. Only after 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> century the influence of Hindu culture and religion entered these territories and had effects on the local costumes. According to Bhattacharya (1989), an anthropologist and folklorist, who devoted his life to supporting and researching the chhau dance the origin of this folk dance “stays mainly with musicians and drummers”, who still today have a key role in the dance (see Chapter 6 and 7) (Bhattacharya, 1989 cited in Barba and Savarese, 2005, p. 208). Bhattacharya hypothesis is that this masked folk dance was initially shaped by the *Dom*, an outcaste group of soldier-drummers, highly educated compared to the local tribal communities and probably not from the same region of Chhotanagpur (Bhattacharya, 1989). The link with soldiers and mock combat techniques has been traced also by other researchers (Kothari, 1968; Reck, 1972). In the Oriya language (from the State of Orissa) the word

‘chhau’ has military meanings, deriving from the words *chhauka* (the quality of attacking stealthily), *chhauri* (armour), and *chhauni* (military camp) (Kothari, 1968). A hypothesis from David Reck (1972) is that the dance originated from military exercises and mock battles that were performed by soldiers in the royal courts both for physical exercises and amusement (Reck, 1972). He also suggested that the word chhau derives from the Sanskrit, *chhayi* (shadow, image or illusion) because of the use of masks in some forms of chhau dance, such as the famous style found in the Purulia District (Reck, 1972, p. 9). An in-depth discussion of chhau dance is presented throughout all the analytical Chapters of this thesis (Chapter 6 through 9).

Since chhau dance was nominated intangible heritage of the world in 2010 (UNESCO, 2010a), there has been a renewed attention to this dance, its transmission and its role at village level. As Srinivasan Shuba (2011) pointed out in her book on the state of intangible heritages of India<sup>5</sup> “the government and the performing community made a joint declaration for safeguarding this dance form in 2010” (Shuba, 2011, p. 64). However, as her study also identified, intangible heritage empirical studies undertaken by scholars in India have remained scarce (Shuba, 2011). Thus, this PhD will also contribute to filling this gap, and to showing how chhau dance adapts, is shaped and participates within specific safeguarding practices, as the AL project, while also attempting to remaining true to its traditional roots.

### **1.3.3 The Research Team and the Researcher as Project Partner**

The AL project was developed out of a partnership between two main actors who wrote the project and submitted the project proposal to European Commission (EC) for funding. As per the requirements of EC, the project proposal had to include a partnership with at least two partners (in addition to the applicant). According to the official documents (see for instance, SE, 2010a) the AL project partners are:

- London Metropolitan University and specifically the International Institute for Culture, Tourism and Development (IICTD) forming a research team (RT), based in London and, Planet Art eXchange (PAX), a cultural association (CA), based in Liverpool (UK) partnering in the cultural exchange among artists.
- As associate of the project: UNESCO India, New Delhi Office (from now on UNESCO Delhi) which plays a supportive role in the action but cannot benefit from funding under the grant.

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<sup>5</sup> India has ratified the 2003 Convention in 2005.



The role of RT in the project network was greater than the role of PAX and UNESCO Delhi, in terms of people involved and activities carried out together with other project actors, such as the SE and the artists. This actor (RT) will also be presented and positioned within the project network in Chapter 6, along with the main actors, but it deserves a broader description in this doctoral research that derives from that specific team and its network reports.

The project's general activities included and were not limited to the documentation of art forms (video and music recordings), the development of new markets and creative entrepreneurship (organization of popular festivals, product workshops, capacity building, etc.), artistic exchanges and cultural tourism development (research and construction of resource centres). The IICTD RT had the skills, competences and technical knowledge in relation to research in tourism, culture and development. So, as soon as the project network was established and the project grants were guaranteed, the SE that led the project and the RT defined a second action, the PhD Brief. The PhD Brief was the action that mobilized two doctoral students in the AL project network to conduct qualitative ethnographic research in West Bengal, as defined by the project activities (see also Chapter 6). The specific call that brought the doctoral students (Rose and me) into the project network was launched later than other project activities, due to budget constraints (March 2010) and stated:

[...] Opportunities have arisen for research leading to a PhD linked to an EU project creating a cultural tourism product around the intangible cultural heritage of several districts within the Indian state of West Bengal. [...] (RT, Anthropology Matters.com, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2010)<sup>6</sup>.

The PhD Brief, as the initial mediator, established the relationships and roles of doctoral researchers in the network, including the main research objectives, the methodology, the expected results and specified that:

[...] The research will be of a strongly applied nature, with the need to develop a close relationship with the SE who have been working over an extended period in the region and devised the project in direct consultation with the effected local communities. At the same time, the research should aim at a critical analysis of the material practices of tourism, development, and project implementation, which will have wider applicability beyond this specific project. Additionally, the two PhD researchers will be placed in a supervisory role with groups of 3-4 postgraduate students, who will be acting as additional researchers for shorter periods of around 2-3 months at various times throughout the 2010-2011." (emphasis as original, RT, PhD Brief, 2010)

The PhD Brief mentioned above mobilised the two doctoral researchers to join the network. It allowed RT to establish its role, its main networking actors (supervisors, postgraduate

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<sup>6</sup> As stated in the preface of this thesis, all ethnographic data extracts will be in a different font/size to distinguish ethnographic data from the rest of the text.

students and doctoral students), a geographical space of action (West Bengal), a way of acting in “close relation with the SE” and “direct consultation” with the "local communities" concerned (the artists), an “extended period” of time, as well as funding for the university and academic state. All this were created with the assumption that all the other project actors, in particular the SE and the communities concerned, were on board with agreed actions.

An expected result of this initial limited and guided network relationship is this doctoral thesis, although the results were unpredictable because each actor - and in particular the research actors - needs to constantly negotiate their field of action, or their field work. The presence of doctoral students, senior researchers and graduate master students at project level stabilised the relationship between the actors, legitimised academically and therefore in other spheres (such as international conferences, universities, etc.) the project action and created a platform for knowledge exchange concerning intangible heritage based livelihoods, that the project network did not have previously.

#### **1.4 Purulia Political Context and Research Field Work in 2011**

The fieldwork for this research has been "multi-site" and has spread to shorter periods in 2011, 2012, 2013 and again in 2017. Tracing the association of the AL project actor-network and following its actors required that the researcher acts in the network and to follow the actors beyond the geographical boundaries, for a long period of time (Latour, 1986; 1999). As a result, I conducted a fluid field work, not only linked to a specific geographical area, such as West Bengal, where the project was implemented, and with a wide time span also in the future, after the official "end" of the project in December 2011. During the period of the AL project in 2011, I spent four months between Kolkata and Purulia; I stayed linked with the network and when I returned to Europe, I followed some actors (chhau artists and SE officers) in Paris in June 2012, and again in 2013 and in 2017 in London, where I gathered also notes from our conversations for research purposes and with the purpose to trace AL project development narratives on the past that were also produced in the future. When in Purulia in 2011, the ethnographic fieldwork process was impacted by the changing political context.

Since the independence as a colony from the British (1947), West Bengal has been linked to a strong sense of nationalism and to some political agitation, due to the presence of armed groups: the Maoist Naxalites. The Maoist movement in all India has a long history associated to rebellion groups of villagers against landlords and government impositions. The movement has been recognised as the “political assertion of vast sections of the rural poor, especially Dalits and Adivasis, who are alienated from a mainstream economic and

social development” (Basu and Das, 2013, p. 366). To Kennedy and Purushotham the Maoist groups in West Bengal are commonly associated with the uprising groups of Naxalbari: “Naxalbari is an area of West Bengal where a faction of the Communist Party of India (CPI) (Marxist) incited sharecroppers and agricultural labourers to undertake insurgent activity in 1967. Naxalbari has a unique position in the popular imagination of left-wing insurgency among all sections of Indian society, including the government, the revolutionaries, and the wider public. The dominant narrative presents Naxalbari as the originary point of reference for understanding Maoist politics in India.” (Kennedy and Purushotham, 2012, p. 832)<sup>7</sup>. These revolutionary groups “base their programme of social transformation on an understanding of society that borrows heavily from the Chinese Communist Party (CPC)” (Basu and Das, 2013, p. 365) and since the ’90 they are largely centred in Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and the densely forested zones of West Bengal. While it seems that today the areas of military influence of Maoists are contracting, at the time of the fieldwork the conflicts were growing.

Since 2009, the conflict has extended from the district of Medinipur, West Bengal, to the districts of Purulia and Bankura. The conflict has been accompanied by murders and attempted murders of local leaders and civilians; violent protests; road blocks; attacks on police and security personnel; police atrocities; and the destruction of roads, houses, offices, bridges, and rail lines (Mukherjee, 2010). In particular, the year 2011 witnessed several violent clashes between opposition party workers and the ruling Left Front representatives (Field notes, 2011). New state assembly elections were scheduled for April 2011, during the fieldwork period. Although the political situation was not an object of analysis of this thesis, I often discussed politics with other international visitors and locals, as when I asked questions to the villagers, answers about the Maoist presence, related risks and future election were rather vague (see also Chapter 2). Nonetheless, my access to the field was impacted by this political situation in Purulia in the surrounding areas, as will be outlined below.

Throughout my fieldwork in Purulia I did not see any visible Maoist actions, but in the weeks that led up to the election, the area witnessed frequent attacks and several villages experienced violent incidents and murders (Field notes, 2011). During this period, I attempted to determine whether the coming election and increased Maoist actions would prevent me from carrying out my field research, and if so, in what ways. Whenever I asked chhau artists, I was reassured: “for sure people know you are here with the SE, so they will never

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<sup>7</sup> According to Basu and Das “its genesis can be located two decades earlier, in the Communist Party of India (CPI)–led armed peasant struggles against the Nizam of Hyderabad in the Telengana region of colonial India in 1946 (Ram 1971).” (see Basu and Das, 2013, p. 365).

do anything to hurt you or your work” (Amid, 2011, pers. comm., 8 February). My identity as a foreigner linked to the SE’s staff provided more security. Kabir, a local researcher very close with Purulia chhau groups, and also working with the SE confirmed "there is no risk, but we should be back at the hotel before night” (Kabir, 2011, pers. comm., 10 February). Therefore, I was guided back to the hotel every day around six in the evening. I did not notice any danger but it was apparently dangerous to go around after dark.

Life continued around everyday activities: rehearsals, chhau productions and performances, daily conversations and *bidi*-business (see Chapter 7). Nothing was ever said about the Maoist attacks, and whenever I asked project field project staff or chhau dancers, they said that everything was fine, and that I should not worry. However, when I planned to visit Charida, a main chhau mask maker’s village, the problem of Maoist presence surfaced again. The field project staff kept cancelling my visits until eventually they clearly said that I should not go to Charida because of the high risk of getting caught up in political protests and Maoist attacks (Field notes, 2011). Charida, in the block of Baghmundi in Purulia, is renowned for the variety and quality of Purulia chhau masks. More than 300 families within the village are engaged in chhau mask making business (at the time of writing). It is also an area with large clusters of Maoists’ groups. I felt that I was missing a relevant part of the chhau art process by not visiting Charida. This is probably true. Therefore, I had to find a way to fill in the gap of the masks-making steps in chhau, and I negotiated with project staff to secure other opportunities (such as visits to other mask makers’ villages) to interact with mask makers to get access this specific knowledge. As a result, the social agitation from the political changes in Purulia had impacts on my field research and data collection.

Having not travelled to Charida, I am unaware of the possible value of the data which would have emerged, if I had the opportunity to work with, interview and observe the mask making processes in Charida. This political situation made me realise, that in the field, I could never detach myself from being an embedded researcher or a project worker dependent on the SE, or from the fact that I was also an outsider as a foreign researcher in terms of ethnographic research. As a result, my research work emerged from a highly complex set of relationships, where not only myself, but many other actors, shaped the results and impacted data collection and interpretations, as I will explain further in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

## **1.5 Objectives of the Study and Research Questions**

The main PhD’s aim is a contribution to the intangible heritage knowledge and its empirical investigation in the context of livelihoods development, with an enquiry into single events with heterogeneous stakeholders. Few studies have investigated the dynamics between

policy level and the micro level actions for safeguarding traditional cultural expressions, proclaimed heritages, through livelihood transformations; an alternative approach to established methods of intangible heritage inventories or museum practices.

This study, therefore, answer the need for case studies on the application of the 2003 Convention for safeguarding of intangible heritage as there is an increase in intangible heritage-related actions for cooperation and development in many developing countries, including in India. The case study will, also, shed light on the role of intangible heritage in international development actions and contribute to the international debate on culture for development (UNESCO New Delhi, 2016).

Conducting ethnographic fieldwork on the AL development project presented me with a whole set of ideas that led me to rethink the relationship between the interpretations, uses and representation of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau among the different actors. In fact, the PhD focuses on establishing *how* the initiative of the AL development project reflected the tussle between safeguarding and development practice through livelihoods transformation in which different stakeholders were engaged. The three research questions emerged from the ethnographic fieldwork interactions and the researcher's interest (Chapter 4), and also a review of the literature (Chapter 3) in the following questions:

- Does the relation between intangible heritage safeguarding and development action reveal something about the nature of intangible heritage and development?
- What is to be gained and lost from linking development agendas and livelihoods strategy to the safeguarding of intangible heritage?
- Should intangible cultural heritage be managed and safeguarded through the use of developmental project action?

To summarise the main five research aims of this thesis are:

1. To increase knowledge about intangible heritage, and the practice of safeguarding through development project actions, with an enquiry into single events and phenomena, involving different stakeholders;
2. To critically investigate the rural livelihoods of Purulia people, their links with the intangible heritage of chhau dance and the development project's role in the process of promoting an intangible heritage (based) livelihood strategies;
3. To highlight any impacts of the AL project for the folk artists, with emphasis on the material-semiotic translation of the intangible heritage, and draw out the theoretical and practical implications for intangible heritage knowledge, policy and practice;

4. To present a contribution to new knowledge through the development of a theoretical framework of analysis to inform intangible heritage studies and UNESCO's approach to culture and development based on ANT;
5. To consider the research process and myself (the researcher) as all of a piece with the patterns of the social event (Law, 2004) being investigated. This is relevant to understand the knowledge production around the node of the heritage of chhau dance.

On the practical side this study illustrates an international project experience on intangible heritage led-development trying to make explicit the design praxis of a new model methodology of "art for livelihood" today, which is now widely acknowledged in India by UNESCO and other institutional stakeholders in the field of intangible heritage safeguarding. Besides, with this investigation I want to draw attention to what goes often unnoticed in the global discourse around intangible heritage that is the lively culture and arts of Purulia chhau dancers from India. Hence, this study also offers an anthropological analysis of a rural community from India, mainly known for their poverty rather than their art.

## **1.6 Research Approach**

Existing research on intangible heritage deals mainly with definitions, policy and 2003 Convention implementations (Deacon and Bortolotto, 2012; Kuutma, 2012) with limited case studies that fully explore the realities of actions that gain first-hand insight into understanding stakeholder approaches, interpretations and use of intangible cultural elements. Recently, however, there has been a call for expanding the ontological investigation and research methods used in intangible heritage and its practice (Harrison, 2015; Kuutma, 2012). This call comes from the recognition that a constructivist approach is suitable to observing contextual social situations (Law, 1997) and to better understand how individual or collective, people and things and power relations work in dynamic social systems as those created around intangible heritage.

The ontological position of this thesis is driven by constructivism, as intangible heritage, as a cultural practice (Bendix, 2009), is performative; through performances it transforms individual realities, a complex "social reality" (Law, 2004, p. 39) that is itself an ongoing process to which actors were bringing different interpretations, interests and knowledge

As a methodology, a constructivist approach enables the research to extract and assemble information from the knowledge constructed by actors involved in a network, such as within the AL project. An actor-network theory (ANT) approach is therefore mobilised as the conceptual framework to analyse and reconstruct the AL project actor-network (Latour,

2005), as it ensures that this project is not presented as a ‘black-box’. The ANT approach (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005) serves the purpose of exposing and later discussing the entanglements between separate entities (actors); hence, exposing the relationships between each actor and the intangible heritage of chhau. A detailed discussion of the relevance of an actor-network approach to studying an intangible heritage development project will be outlined in Chapter 5.

To study how actor-networks are composed and maintained, actor-network theorists suggest that social scientists should ethnographically follow the actors (Latour, 2005; Mosse, 2005), which was the field methodology of choice for this study. The field research work based on ethnography combined participant observation, informal conversations, field-notes, video and photo records, as well as secondary source analysis, as will be outlined in Chapter 4, allowed the AL actor-networks to be traced and collect the knowledge being produced. It is through ethnographic fieldwork that AL actor-network can be described along with uncovering how the actors’ actions impacted the intangible heritage of the chhau dance.

This study is based on the field experiences of conducting research on the practices of a rural livelihoods, tourism and development project. It investigates the AL development project relationships with the intangible heritage of the Purulia chhau and the AL project context as a relationship space, highlighting the power relations and the impacts on the intangible heritage. The analysis through an ethnographic actor-network approach therefore extends the ontological exploration of culture-based development initiatives.

An ethnographic actor-oriented approach also requires the research processes to be discussed, as it is relevant to the knowledge production around the node of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau and how this research constructs intangible heritage as a research subject in the process (Law, 1997; Ren, Pritchard and Morgan, 2010). As seen in Ren, Pritchard and Morgan (2010) and Mosse (2005), merging personal, academic, also policy and public level in research account it is also a way to “challenge the idea of traditional scientific division between the person and the researcher” (Ren, Pritchard and Morgan, 2010, p. 891) which actually does not really exist. Ethnography serves to account for the development project structure as a form of *agentivity* (Mosse, 2005) on the intangible heritage safeguarding approach that could be passed or ignored by UNESCO experts and other practitioners in the field. Understanding these multiple forces and actors however requires following the transformation of intangible heritage within a project, in our case, following AL project actor-network across a specific time and space.

I have deployed the object of study as a combination of elements and unfolded actors’ roles. I refer specifically to actor-network theory and model of representation elaborated in a four-phase translation model of network construction (Callon, 1986). In my interpretation this

actor-network model applies to the case reconstruction of the AL project. Therefore, I have applied the four phases model (*problematisation, interessement, enrolment, mobilisation*) as seen in Callon (1986) and analysed the actor's positions and emerging points of controversy. Through the analytical model from ANT I could indeed draw attention to how negotiations and relations happened under the project and the different enactment of the intangible heritage. This theoretical and analytical approach of actor-network therefore helped to build bridges across different qualitative methods and analysis of contemporary social events and development project practice (Scott-Smith, 2013).

By tracing the AL project its assemblages around the intangible heritag of Purlia chhau, the case study in this thesis, through an ethnographic actor-network translation model the role of culture in sustainable development will be outlined; thus, contributing to the analysis of the discourse of intangible heritage safeguarding and of sustainable development. Rather than produce a study with two distinct levels of analysis – one an abstract meta-analysis and the other, an empirical study – this study aims to address the theoretical questions of producing intangible heritage-based development while also safeguarding the cultural element from an empirical case study. In words already used by Law “this research project is an attempt to respond creatively to a world that is taken to be composed of an excess of generative forces and relations” (Law, 2004, p. 9).

## **1.7 Thesis Structure**

The structure of the thesis follows the conceptual argumentation that networks are present whenever actions are to be redistributed (Latour, 2011). This is a well-known assumption in researches exploring projects of development where any project outcomes can also be seen as the result of different actors' engagement: policy paper, experts, beneficiaries, administrators, international funding agencies, project manager, NGOs (see also Mosse, 2005). One might represent actor network theory by telling the story or by performing it rather than summarising it (Law, 1997). Therefore, the main Chapters of this research deal with the AL actor-network and actors' roles reconstruction, description of field events, as well as background information and the research process, to help the reader to ‘follow the actor’ (Mosse, 2005) as much as I did during my fieldwork. Findings are presented throughout all the thesis, although I specifically dedicated the AL project actor-network reconstruction to the five analytical Chapters.

Having already presented in Chapter 1, with the background and rationale of this investigation, its objectives and research approach, Chapter 2 draws an initial description that connects villages' lifestyles, field project networking actors, local folk dances, chhau villages' social structure and actors' social position within the network of the project. The



relational constructs that emerge from the descriptions of Chapter 2 sheds light on how power relations are established within the project network.

Chapter 3 develops the line of the empirical enquiry of this thesis through conceptual development and formulation of theoretical frameworks around the case study, which are duly based on a thorough literature review. Chapter 3 looks at the debate around intangible heritage definitions and safeguarding, as it is a new emerging sector of UNESCO intervention, academic research and also international cooperation investments. It sheds light on the very recent turns in literature setting the background to the analytical approach of the intangible heritage from a social and material perspective. Therefore, it positions the thesis in the gap within heritage studies concerning intangible heritage safeguarding practice analysed from the perspective of socio-material processes. It also reinforces the rationale of the study drawing attention on the literature on the uses of heritage as resource in developmental process, as livelihood, as the specific case study highlighted. Seeing intangible heritage based development as an emerging multidisciplinary field of research, consolidated by international and policy collective interests, rather than a specific approach or theoretical orientation to studying heritage, tourism or development, the literature review in this Chapter seeks to interrogate some predominant perspectives on cultural heritage for tourism and sustainable development that are also impacting today's narrative (and practice) of intangible heritage safeguarding.

Chapter 4 explains the research approach and describes the methodology providing theoretical stance. In this Chapter qualitative interviews, participant observations, and the link between ethnographic research and actor-network investigation will be outlined as research methods of this study. Moreover, this is the Chapter where I detail the personal research path, the process of data collection and undertaking fieldwork in West Bengal and discuss how issues of positionality and ethics impact on this PhD research.

In Chapter 5 I move to the project reconstruction according to model suggested by Callon and other actor-network theorists (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005; Law, 2004). Overall, the purpose of Chapter 5 is to explain the analytical framework this Research adopted in order to link the theoretical questions to the empirical data collected in the field and establish the basis for understanding the internal workings of the AL project actor-network and the processes of intangible heritage safeguarding through a livelihood approach discussed in the following Chapters.

In Chapter 6 I give space to relevant actors to position themselves through their working relations inside this development project network and around the intangible heritage of

Purulia chhau. I delineate how the main four relevant actors of this project network positioned themselves towards Purulia chhau dance and its practice of safeguarding, making and transmission. This Chapter purpose is to challenge the taken-for-granted assumption that the intangible heritage community relies only within the boundaries of the original community of tradition bearers, where the intangible heritage was first born and manifested.

Then, in Chapter 7, I delve into the world of the cultural heritage of Purulia chhau dance, with particular attention to the interpretation of local livelihoods system and the role of the intangible heritage in it. This Chapter provides an ethnographic overview of the rural livelihoods system of Purulia chhau artists as well as discussing the limitations of previous livelihood frameworks to account for the role of intangible heritage as livelihood asset and it shows how the AL project positions itself as mediator towards the intangible heritage livelihood strategy in the research area.

Chapter 8, focusing on the review of the livelihood diversification strategy the AL project operated, uses the concept of ordering to investigate how the AL project's translations mobilised the actors, enacting different ontologies for the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau. By describing the workings of the project activities, different representations (and translations) of the intangible heritage are made traceable, therefore showing us also another perspective on the process of commodification of cultural expression.

Next, in Chapter 9, I describe the main events of disconnection in the AL project actor-network: this Chapter confirms the contestability of revitalisation through modernisation of the intangible heritage and reveals friction points (controversies). Finally, I address the emerging issues that create controversy among actors and their impacts on the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau: namely the innovations introduced into the folk dance by the project workers and the representation of the folk dance at international and local events. It is this Chapter that examines whether actors' participation served the project's interests, how and whether they continued to support them, thus allowing the network to stabilise.

Chapter 10 concludes this Thesis. This Chapter re-visits the main concepts, along with the thesis objectives. Key findings and conclusions are then presented, and some attention is then given to reflecting upon the development of this thesis. This is the Chapter where I trace links between the initial questions, the ground investigation and the findings; and where also recommendation and limitation of this study are addressed.

# Chapter 2

## 2. Politics and Social Productions Around the AL Development Project

The question of the relationship between people, cultures, social structures and development arrangements has catalysed most researchers' attention. Anthropologists of development are familiar with the balance and imbalance of power relations in development processes (Lewis and Mosse, 2006). Often in development context, the socio-cultural background of locals is being regarded as in opposition to the efficiency of development networks (Crewe and Harrison, 2005) with social and networking relations presented as tensions<sup>8</sup>. Accordingly, part of the analysis on how power is produced focuses on the ways in which development network relations are constituted and how they (the relations) are handled by actors in the field (Faik et al., 2013; Golini et al., 2015).

To understand any possible social and political implications of the AL project network, one has to take into account local social and cultural traditional institutions and within their framework the position of project's actors. The cultural and social background is essential in a context like India where cultural and social institutions such as caste, tribes and village community are pillars of the traditional social structure. As per the provisional census at the time of my fieldwork in 2011, India's population included nearly 104 million "Scheduled Tribes"<sup>9</sup> (ST) (Indian Census, 2011) in a list of officially recognised tribe members.

Thus, a relevant question to begin this PhD research is not whether local cultures and social structures in Purulia contrast the AL project network, its establishment and success (Crewe and Harrison, 2005; Dessein et al., 2015), but how the AL project actors and network assemblages make use of local social structures? How these local structures reinforce, embed or are dismissed in the project network: which social norms, structures and cultural ideas are invoked consciously (or unconsciously) by project actors for the performance of the AL project.

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<sup>8</sup> A detailed analysis of the literature in this field is given in Chapter 3.

<sup>9</sup> Scheduling caste and tribes in India is considered an important process of conferring status and entitling people to benefits, particularly those groups and communities traditionally considered the lowest Hindu caste (e.g. shudra and sub shudra castes) and the outcaste groups who are socially marginalised. With the term 'tribes' or 'adivasis' are often addressed people that encompasses a group of communities classified by the India Constitution as "Scheduled Tribes" (Guha, 2007) - The Scheduled Tribes (ST) list is a governmental list of tribes all over the States of India. As reported by the Indian Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the last Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes: "the term 'Scheduled Tribes' first appeared in the Constitution of India. Article 366 (25) defined "Scheduled Tribes" as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution" (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013, p. 323).

To this end, this Chapter draws upon ethnographic description of the rural lifestyle of (some) Purulia villages where most chhau artists live. These initial observations offer to the reader a portrait of the social structures and cultural context circulating around and interweaving with the AL project network.

The main point shall be to highlight ways project actors established (or reinforced) new/old social associations (caste/tribal/class status position), throwing into sharp relief elements of social inequalities and hidden social inequalities and asymmetric powers relations of development projects.

During the fieldwork, it was my intention to follow the project's flows, specific actors, relations and nodes of action from Kolkata to Purulia region, in order to trace the project actor-network and act within it. In so doing, I was an actor in the project implementation phases and within the project network constitution as well. I had the relative freedom to enter and follow the project network wherever and whenever I wanted. These privileges of access and mobility to the AL project are inextricably bound up with both personal positionality (I am a white, Italian female graduate conducting fieldwork on behalf of one of the project partners – and therefore I had access to various project actions.) and project processes.

As a way to introduce how most actors with their actions and intentions fitted into the AL project network, this Chapter adds an ethnographic reflection on project 'key officers' and 'field officers' and the researcher's engagement - my own place - in the structure of the project network and in relations with chhau artists.

Let me now begin with some field notes from my field trips in Purulia to describe the field locations of Purulia villages.

## **2.1 From Purulia Town to the Villages**

By train we arrived in the main town of Purulia District called 'Purulia Town'. The District is situated in the north west region of West Bengal and is my main field location. It is an area well known for being rich in folk cultural traditions (Purulia chhau dance is among them), for the presence of numerous communities of tribal, indigenous or migrated in historical times (Burman, 2009), but also for poverty and water scarcity, as it is a drought prone area.

The hotel Majur, where I was based during fieldwork, is right in the centre of the town, not far from the main bus stand. Within walking distance from the hotel there are many shops

of sarees, electronic devices, food and some food street sellers. Most people<sup>10</sup> in this city are dedicated to commerce, a good percentage of its inhabitants are unskilled workers whom migrated from smaller villages who apart from agricultural related jobs also work for local shops, as domestic workers in households, driver or in stone-crusher units around the main town. The town is a mix of busy commercial life and slow dusty rural atmosphere. Many cycle-rickshaw, buses and some motorbikes and white taxis cross the main road towards west and Jharkhand Region. All the district of Purulia is well known for the lac production<sup>11</sup> but also for tourism. Located near the centre of Purulia city is the Saheb Bundh lake and on the northern bank of the lake the District Science Centre, both are attraction for many tourists also interested in bird watching.

My fieldwork includes several visits to chhau dancers' villages such as Bamnia village (also known as Bamania) to follow chhau groups involved with the AL project. In Bamnia, I liaise with three chhau groups' leaders concerning project activities, coming festivals including visiting their homes. These experiences and interactions allowed me to understand their culture, their daily lives, and family structures. What follows is a description of my first field visits to the three main villages that were part of my study.

### **2.1.1 Bamnia village**

Bamnia is a small rural village about 35 km away from Purulia city, under the administrative block of Jhalda II, with a population of almost 2785 people distributed in 455 households (Indian Census, 2011). Walking around Bamnia and its tiny lanes, some which have open drains on both sides, I see that the village is arranged longitudinally with houses built on the two sides of a central lane at the end of which is situated the Hindu temple. It is the beginning of February and people are busy with their daily work and food related tasks (taking water, sorting out the granary, preparing lunch, etc.). In most of the chhau dancers' houses I visited here, daily activities are linked to agriculture, both for subsistence and as primary employment coupled with some casual works as secondary source of income. However, other inhabitants are also involved in casual works such as constructions, brick making, tobacco products making, bamboo crafts, tea shops, other shops employers, etc. as their main economic livelihood. I will discuss the livelihoods system of chhau dancers' households with more details in Chapter 7, but it is important to understand that life in villages like Bamnia depends mostly on land and forest related products and that due to

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<sup>10</sup> According to the last Census 121,067 people live currently in Purulia city (Indian Census, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> Lac is the resinous secretion of an insect commonly known as lac insect. The raw resinous is processed to produce shellac and from shellac then used for making various handicraft products, bangles for instance. The raw lac is extracted, twice a year, from several trees commonly growing in Purulia.

namely ecological, political and environmental circumstances (deforestations, climate conditions, water scarcity, political reforms and lands distribution) there is an high incidence of economic poverty and scarcity of resources (Banik et al., 2004; Biswas et al., 2019; Dasgupta et al, 2008).

One of the first house I visited is nearby the end of the main street crossing the village in two. It is a famous chhau master's house, a semi-pucca large house. Most people here in Bamnia village live in semi-pucca and pucca houses: these are houses made of more permanent material with some baked bricks, cement, with roof made of tiles. As an alternative to pucca house in many villages of Purulia is very common the *kuccha* house, made of non-permanent material such as thatch, un-burnt bricks, mud and grass, material which have to be replaced frequently.

The chhau dancer's house in Bamnia is essentially composed of a group of large semi-independent rooms arranged around a rectangular semi closed courtyard. Here the main rooms are used for sleeping and inside gatherings, a room is for the kitchen, another for the storage granary and there is also a space for animals and traction animals, such as cows.

On some of the external walls, surfaces are smooth, some are covered with mud and also decorated. Decoration of walls is a distinctive trait of local communities that communicates in this way some celebration, traditional rituals as well as membership<sup>12</sup>. In this house, on some of the external walls and on the floor near the doors there are few white drawings for ritual purposes.

Carved out of the external walls of the house in the courtyard, there are benches where we sit to talk and drink tea. The space of the courtyard is a place for doing several things, talking and drinking tea as we are doing, but also for cooking, washing things and clothes (there is a water pump and a traditional stove), sorting out and drying food grains (such as rice), praying and celebrating rituals too. In his house, the chhau master lives with his large family: a wife, two sons and his brother with its family. While we are looking at some framed pictures (fig. 2) of the chhau dancer's father (now passed away) a woman brings us some

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<sup>12</sup> Wall drawings and paintings is common in Purulia District. Here, in the house I am describing, at the time of my visit there were some white drawings of flowers coordinated with the floor drawings at the entrance and related to some rituals. The walls of several *kuccha* and semi-pucca houses in Purulia display paintings, for different purposes: according to interviewed people some wall paintings are for decorative purpose, e.g. to celebrate marriage or birth, some are ritual art forms to represent deities or benevolent spirits, the last in form of natural elements and some paintings represent political symbols, especially during elections time. The colours of the wall paintings are also relevant and distinctive of the social status and hierarchies at village level: the most common colours I saw for wall paintings were white and red, fewer of those I have met were coloured. In fact, colours and motif are distinctive of specific groups, such as tribes. Very coloured wall paintings are a distinctive feature of a specific tribe of the area, the Santhal people (Kisku Kumar and Santra, 2017), while white and red is more distinctive of Hindu and other communities (Bharat, 2015). Besides, it is also common to find chhau dance related drawings on specific houses used by chhau groups, for instance rooms used as place to store masks and costumes or shops of property of chhau members: sometimes indeed near the draw showing chhau dancers is also present the name of the chhau group and details (mobile number and names) on how to hire them for a specific festival.

tea and then she disappears. As the chhau dancer says his father was a popular chhau and won several prizes. We decide that later that day the master will accompany me to pay a visit to his father's commemorative bust that he erected on his land (fig. 3).

The fact that he owns some land and lives with his family in a semi-pucca house reflects his relatively high economic and social status in the village community.

Most of the house in Bamnia are stacked next to each other in groups that create a sort of unit among family members and sometimes also among non-blood related members. In fact, some houses are so close to each other that to reach one house sometimes you have to get through another house's courtyard, so the privacy is limited. Almost all houses have a courtyard and some have a backyard too to keep crops that needs to dry out of sun. As it emerges during my visits, e.g. in Tunta village, the harvests are usually shared among cultivators - who are very often land-less farmers - and landlords who could live near or out of the village.



*2 Pictures of an old chhau master from Bamnia, picture by the author.*



3 Stone bust of a famous chhau master from Bamnia, picture by the author.

### 2.1.2 Tunta village and the landless fight

The first time I reached Tunta village, in February 2011, we had to stop the car to a nearest area and then walk off the road to the dancers' houses because the road was not passable by car. Tunta is a small rural village with a population of approximately 906 people in 161 households (Indian Census, 2011). The village is surrounded by fields, so is quite isolated with its closer market almost 10 km away. Unlike Bamnia, in Tunta the houses are mostly kuccha. We meet the chhau master in front of a small petty shop where there is a young boy working at the shop, we get over the young shopkeeper and enter the back room of the shop where he keeps the masks, instruments and costumes of the chhau group. The room is very small with two short bed in wood and row where we sit and start chatting about chhau dance and his group. Large and colourful chhau masks are displayed on the walls and drums with some musical instrument on the floor. From this place, we walk through the village and visit his main house where we had some tea before moving again to visit his last harvest and a sort of granary. This time the house is a bit different, and I can tell that is not a house for living but a sort of storeroom nearest to the field where he and his family keep the instrument for farming and where they rest from work during the very hot hours. The house is again a kuccha house with one single room, rectangular ground plan with inclined roof and the roof is elongated so as to form a verandah. Under the verandah there are several farming tools, water recipients and a bed and in front some of the last crops are drying under the sun. We sat under the verandah to shelter us from the sun, I take some picture of the place and of a man that is sorting out crops in from of us while we talk (fig. 4 and 5 below). In my conversation with the chhau master there were frequent references to problems with the in terms of the scarcity of water and soil erosion. The land is very arid and for the majority



unirrigated with almost the total absence of water canals. As a result, many families move from time to time out of their villages for larger towns leaving behind their original houses.



*4 Under the verandah in Tunta, picture by the author.*



*5 Tunta village - crops in front of the verandah, picture by the author.*

Most people in Purulia do not own lands and have restricted access to the forests by several government legal restrictions (Basu and Das, 2013; Kennedy and Purushotham, 2012). So, people often work as share-croppers giving part of the crops to landlords or working as daily wage labours. The question of land ownership by the locals and that of dispossession of forest resources (and resistance against it) are known problems: they are also the struggle

of village based armed oppositions and insurgency groups of the Maoists<sup>13</sup> whose actions against the State and the ruling Government<sup>14</sup> intensified in the pre-election time of 2011. “In 2009 the Indian state banned the Maoist party and its mass organisations” (Basu and Das, 2013, p. 378) making it impossible for them to have a legal political voice and also limiting their actions to paramilitary fights, hidden meetings at village level and in the forest areas. Villages in Purulia, near the forest fringe of Ajodhya hills and on the border with Jharkhand State<sup>15</sup>, became places for at night Maoists meetings and where children and youths were being recruited for the armed fight.

It was the pre-election period in Purulia during my fieldwork and politics was abuzz with activity, as I had anticipated in Chapter 1. Purulia has experienced theatre of violent actions against the State, the police and landlords in the name of landless poor and local communities’ rights. At the village level there is a risk of kidnapping or murder, indiscriminate killing of politicians and village headmen, the use of landmines, the recruitment of minors by the Maoists or the risk of being associated with Maoists by the police. As a result, being arrested or killed by the police was seen as a real threat by locals. Most chhau masters and project field offers therefore expressed concerned for my security including the risk of being inadvertently involved in Maoists actions<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, late night travels on the roads were considered unsafe for me, as well as wearing red or doing any explicit actions that could be clearly associated with Maoists as this could have exposed us to violent reactions from the police. Despite this, none of the chhau dancers interviewed ever expressed a position towards the actions of Maoists in my presence.

### **2.1.3 Towards North: Chelyama, Sagarka and Chakra Village**

My fieldwork brought me often also towards the Jharkhand borders. Travelling towards north, I visited Chelyama, Sagarka, Maldi, Balarampur, Bankura, Kachahatu that fall under different administrative blocks. In Chelyama, Sagarka and Chakra I have learned more

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<sup>13</sup> The clashes between Maoists and police were intensified during my staying in Purulia by the arrival of the general election, which eventually took place on at the end of April 2011. For this reason, as I also explain in Chapter 4, I could not visit some of the villages during specific days, for instance after some political party person had been killed by the Maoists. Previous studies generally agree that among the insurgents’ and their supporters there are predominantly various sections of the lower castes and tribes (Kennedy and Purushotham, 2012, p. 835).

<sup>14</sup> At the time of my field work the West Bengal Government was run by the Left Front with a Chief Minister from the Communist Party of India (Marxist). After the election in 20 May 2011 was elected as Prime Minister of West Bengal, Mamata Banerjee from the All Trinamool Congress, a Centre-left party, still today the fourth largest party in India.

<sup>15</sup> The area on the border with Jharkhand is also known as the “red corridor”. According to the last Census “the Red Corridor is a region in the east of India that experiences considerable Naxalite–Maoist insurgency. These are also areas that suffer from the higher illiteracy, poverty and other social issues.” (Indian Census, 2011, p.6).

<sup>16</sup> I talk about how my fieldwork was affected by the presence of Maoists more in Chapter 4.

about jhumur songs and music that usually accompanies chhau dance<sup>17</sup>, about rice storage and decortication, open-air altars, karam tree festivals and *tasar* silk.

Chelyama is about 45 km away from the town of Purulia and is where the AL project set up a second cultural hub, a resource centre (see Chapter 8) for the usage of chhau and jhumur groups of the area of Bankura and Balarampur administrative blocks. Chelyama is primarily a commercial village with a population of 7413 people and 1433 households (Indian Census, 2011). It is here that I discovered many *tasar* silk shops. In fact, the area is a silk weavers' area with a group of families dedicated to the production of this specific raw silk called *tasar*, which however is a business more profitable for those who sell than those who produce, according to locals. The last is also the reason why many weaver families have left the area for better opportunities to other silk weaving areas like Karnataka or Uttar Pradesh or have simply moved to the town of Purulia, for simple manual work which fetches more money than weaving.

Almost in the same area I went to visit Sagarka, in the neighborhood of Chelyama village, and then Chakra.

On walking in Sagarka village, one finds a large number of houses lined up one after the other sharing a courtyard or a wall (fig. 6). The village is very tidy with many kuccha houses with smooth surfaces and homogeneous neutral colours, ranging from ochre yellow to red-brownish. I go to visit a chhau master's house. He lives with his family of 7 members in a kuccha house where there is also a portion of the house made of baked bricks and a portion which is thatched because it needs repairing. On a side of his courtyard, almost in front of the main door, and near the animals' space there is a short pillar, almost above a meter, with a small tree planted on the top (fig. 7). The courtyard in Purulia rural houses is where some important everyday social and worshipping rituals take place, such as marriage celebrations. The pillar, for instance, has decorative purpose as it gets graven and covered with light colours (white and light blue or green), but it also has ritualistic purposes as an open altar, as they explained. Branch of different trees such as *karam* tree, or *mahua*, blackberry, mango or *sal* tree are usually planted in the pillar as it is believed that benevolent spirits dwell in these trees. Seasonally, around August-September, the family makes offers and rituals dedicated to harvest around the house pillar. They collect branches of a specific tree in the forest and plant it in the house's pillar, as well as they perform other the pounding of rice to make flour and brown rice not only for food consumption but also for ritualistic

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<sup>17</sup> Jhumur songs, music and dance is famous traditional folk music and dance from Purulia. Songs and music are associated with Purulia Chhau dance. Jhumur folk music and dance is specific of indigenous communities namely Kurmi, Kumhar, Rajwar, Ghatoal, Bhumij, Hari, Muchi, Dom, Kamar and Bagdi and tribal people like Santhal, Munda, Orao, Ho, Kharia and Birhor tribes.

offerings. To this end, in Sagarka, a woman wants to show me how to pound rice the dheki: a long ground-level wooden lever that ends with a cylinder, a sort of the pestle. The dried rice gets decorticated from the outer husks with the pestle of the dheki and the floor hole gets filled up with hulled rice. She moves the pestle up and down pushing it with her foot to show us how the rice gets cleaned (fig. 8) and then she asks me to try. It was heavier than I thought and when everyone laughs, the woman reassures me of my performance with the dheki because it was probably really fun to see the new guest pounding rice for her!

In most of the village visited in Purulia public services and infrastructures are poor – for instance, there are very few medical basic care centres, but for medical emergency or tests one has to take the patient to main towns, such as Purulia town. Similarly, in terms of transport, drinking water and power supply amenities. In fact, most of villages such as Bamnia, Tunta, Baliagara, Chakra, Sagarka, Maldi and Kachahatu have power shortages and do not have tap water in the houses. Taps are placed in public spaces (e.g. main streets) and they supply drinking water for few hours per day. Almost every cluster of houses and shared courtyards have hand-pumps used for bathing and general washing purposes, and access to tanks or ponds in the neighborhood. Tanks and ponds are important due to the water scarcity, for agriculture, but also for lifestyle elements, like puja rituals during the several village festivals that mark villagers' lives.



*6 Kuccha House in Sagarka, picture by the author.*





*7 House pillar in Sagarka village, picture by the author.*



*8 Dheki tool in Chakra village, picture by the author.*

#### **2.1.4 Festivals, Celebrations and Folk Dances**

My notes on which communities - Hindus, Muslim, tribal communities or mixed - celebrate which festivals often merge in my notebook. At village level, there seems to be a mix of similar rituals performed in coinciding festivals called by different names, depending on the community that celebrates them or the geographical area, and for which also my interlocutors find it difficult to trace the origins.

Generally speaking, all the chhau villages visited and most of the rural villages of Purulia celebrate harvest festivities and *pujas* linked to Hindu, Muslim and tribal spiritual rituals. For instance, in all the district it is worshipped Siva and Hanuman, as well as natural elements – like trees, stones, etc. - in which it is believed are dwelling spirits. Thus, the practice of mainstream Hinduism gets mixed with local rituals typical from tribes and mixed communities. As previous researchers reported, the mix of rituals and festivities with Hinduism and tribal rituals may be due in part to a process of gradual 'hinduisation' (see, for example, Bhowmick and Jana, 2004 or Biswas, 2018) of locals and of nomads who established in this area.

Worship typically involves open-air altars – like the private house pillar - and *puja* rituals, fasting and celebrations with food, music and dance. Some of the *puja* rituals during festivals are performed to the nearest pond or digging a small pond-like hole filled with water in the courtyard of the private house. Most of the popular folk dance forms from Purulia like nachni, natua, karam, pata, jhumur, santhal, kirtan, chhau dance, etc. are often associated with local festivals.

When visiting Chakra village, almost an hour away from Chelyama near the border with Jharkhand, I was also delighted to observe a brief demonstration of the typical karam dance for the festival dedicated to the harvest, for better crops. In the house of a jhumur master in the open-air space of his colorful and large courtyard a group of young girls enter with baskets decorated with green (plastic) tree branches, symbolising the karam tree. They start dancing simulating rice harvesting movements (fig. 9) accompanied by the music of harmonica and folk songs. The dance is typically performed by young unmarried girls during the karam festival.

Chhau dance is another famous folk dance of the area often performed during local and religious festivals: Durga *puja* that celebrates the victory of the Hindu Goddess Durga over the (evil buffalo) demon *Mahishasura* and the *Chaitra parab*<sup>18</sup> (known also as *Gnaer parab* - village festival) dedicated to Lord Siva. These festivals are accompanied with open-air *pujas* at altars, at nearby temple, with fairs, music and several group dances, among which chhau is popular.

Chhau dance is a group, masked dance with an acrobatic as well as a drama character, as the dancers perform mainly stories of heroes or fights among deities and demons (fig. 10). When asked if other folk dance traditions have impacted chhau dance, masters often reported that some of the features of other dances could be there, which suggests that

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<sup>18</sup> A more detailed analysis of the link between chhau dance and the Chaitra parab festival is left to Chapter 6 and 7 where more on chhau dance and its intersection with rural daily life is given.

adaptations were unconscious rather than staged<sup>19</sup>. Some of the informants suggested the use of chhau dance performances in both social and religious ceremonies<sup>20</sup>: used to worship the God of the nature, and later to worship Siva, for asking the rain for the crop during the dry season. but as is also performed during celebrations such as weddings, housewarmings, cultural and political events. This highlights that chhau dance is not only a religious practice and a dance today, but an integral part of the social life.



*9 Girls dancing the karam dance in a house courtyard in Chakra village, behind the girls on the wall a drawn of Hanuman God, picture by the author.*

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<sup>19</sup>More details on chhau dance are given in Chapter 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis.

<sup>20</sup> As reported in Chapter 1, the origin of chhau dance is confused and several characteristics of the dance suggest religious as well as martial connotation in origin.





*10 Chhau dance, Bamnia, picture by the author.*

Accessing most of the chhau dancers' village communities, both physically and linguistically, was somewhat challenging. For instance, to reach Chelyama, Sagarka and Chakra village, we travelled for several hours and slept overnights in Chelyama because the risk of traveling at night was a security issues, as highlighted above. Sometimes we (me and other field project staff) walked quite isolated dusty roads to reach villages.

As some of the villages were remote, as described above, we (me and the field project staff) also had to walk isolated and dusty roads. Linguistically, in Purulia people mostly communicate in Bengali and Santhali languages<sup>21</sup>, which comprises several specific dialects; a mix of different communities.

To create more communicative possibilities, I have also learnt some local words but it was with the assistance of local actors, involved in the project, Kabir, Prem and amid. This helped me understand more about these communities as well as increased my ability to follow these actors across the network.

As I will be shortly explaining in next section 2.2, they were also among those "key project staff" working to establishing Purulia local networks for the AL project. How the SE leading the project, based in Kolkata, and the AL project constitute its multiple networks of associations with human and non-human actors, built also on other local networks (Latour, 1986; Law and Urry, 2004; Routledge, 2008), serves to configure the project actions and power relations. Section 2.2 demonstrates that the village social structure is complex local

<sup>21</sup> Santhali languages are languages belonging to the Austric or Mundarian language family (Kumar, 2018).



network of human and non-human elements, a mix of lower and upper castes and tribe members, which were mobilised within AL network as well.

## **2.2 Field Project Networking Actors in Purulia**

The travel by train from Kolkata to Purulia city lasts almost six hours and half. I catch the eyes of many people staring at me curious to find a white woman in her thirties travelling towards north of West Bengal on a second-class non-ac train coach. The train is a usual old fashion light blue and white train. It has small benches with three by three seats and there is a strong smell of toilet but luckily for us the train has several broken windows, so any bad smell disappears quickly as the train makes its journey. The distance from Calcutta, where the head quarter of the SE and the project managements are<sup>22</sup>, is almost 320 km away but the train makes several stops during which passengers – and my fellowship too - have time to buy snacks from station street vendors.

I travel with two men of almost my age, Ray and Prem, both part of the staff employed by the SE within the AL project framework. The AL project, already briefly introduced in Chapter 1, was a project of cooperation and development implemented by the SE in rural areas of West Bengal and financed by European Commission. As I will be explaining better in Chapter 5 international development projects, such as the AL project, are subjected to specific timeframe, administrative rules, bureaucratic requirements, managerial negotiations, sustainability challenges and include a high number of actors to be implemented. The AL projects, because of its temporary nature (2009-2010) and unique feature of involving as beneficiaries of the project an intangible cultural heritage (chhau dance) and its creators (the dancers) - and several other groups of folk artists of rural West Bengal - necessarily involve local and potentially highly stable associations with folk artists' communities. Planning, execution and control of project activities required more than the staff of the SE based in Kolkata: it required the establishment of new local associations and of displaced human resource, such as the Ray, Prem and myself.

Ray and Prem are involved as AL project staff in various tasks including organising Purulia chhau dancers' groups for project activities, the next project festival at Bamnia and both are also interested to pursue a career in the creative industry sector. Ray is a young Indian boy, tall and well dress, who grew up in London, England. He says his family hometown is in

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<sup>22</sup> I will describe more the SE as one of the main complex collective actor in the AL project actor-network in Chapter 5, for now here I need to describe its field networking actors or those main actors contributing to the establishment of field networks that made up the AL project actor-network. As actor-network theorists suggest, the actor-network world is made of numerous networks of associations (Latour, 2005; Routledge, 2008) by the movements of human and non-human actors around the main actor-network (e.g. the AL project).

West Bengal but they moved to UK long ago. He wants to work in creative industries and arts, so during his studies he got involved with the SE for the promotion of the Bengali folk artists abroad, particularly in UK. He helps the SE network in UK and when groups of Indian artists (sent by the SE) reach UK to perform there. He came to Bengal to learn more about folk artists and their art and as he is involved in specific activities of promotion of folk artists planned within the AL project. Prem, on the other hand, is from the suburbs of Kolkata. He is short and athletic with a deep voice and a melancholy facial expression. He has been working with the SE for few months now and he has a contract with them till the end of the AL project. He has never travelled abroad and he is curious about Italy, Europe and my lifestyle. He is hoping to travel abroad to travel abroad, one day, but first he wants set up his own company making video and movies: he believes to have success he needs to follow the path of entrepreneurship in the creative sector. They both have the task to accompany me during my first visits, making sure everything runs smoothly, as they say. But still all the three of us are temporary visitors to Purulia. Consequently, when we arrived in Purulia District, we were received by another two local members of the SE, Amid and Kabir, who accompanied us to visit some of the villages of chhau dancers.

Some of the key networking tasks under the AL project, such as planning for meetings, events or trainings are designated by the SE to “field officers” and “key contacts”. Much of the organisational work at village level such as get in contact, talk, mediate, reach and organising chhau dancers, as well as being the first contact to get in touch with the SE leading the project in Kolkata for the artists is conducted by “field officers” and “key contacts” (usually local experts or village community members with strong relations with chhau artists’ groups and other skills). In other words, they help to organise and mobilise resources, human and non-human (such as logistic means, location, food and water, technical equipment, artists, etc.) and facilitate information flows between the SE in Kolkata and chhau artists and therefore to keep the AL project network.

These key contacts and field officers, employed by the SE, must possess more than language skills to be successful in enlisting, mobilising and aligning local actors into AL project network. As locals, Amid and Kabir are mediators between the social enterprise and local community groups, while Ray and Prem are also mediators explaining how AL project goals (what it is, what it is attempting to achieve) to the traditional bearers that were gathered by Amid and Kabir at the village level. These project staff working in Purulia, the field officer (Amid) and the SE local contact (Kabir) constitute “key project staff” of the AL project, who attempt to ground, mobilise and align local partners to AL project goals. They introduced me to each community and social structure of each village.

The villages in Purulia, as described above, have a mix of castes and tribe members which for me (a foreigner) was incomprehensible at first but for locals is clearly demarcated by signs such as architectures, house wall's colours and drawings, religious signs and house clusters, etc.

The next paragraph 2.2.1 reviews through ethnographic description the social structure characteristics of villages in the study area. A key characteristic includes the high incidence of a mix of caste and tribes' origin observed among chhau dancers and their village and a social structure on which the project interrelated staff relations where (someway consciously or unconsciously) based.

### **2.2.1 The Ladder of Local Social Structures**

“Most of the artists are simple and ingenuous people” says Kabir, “if someone comes from outside, from a higher position or is a literate person, they [the chhau] recognise this person as a chief or superior [...]” (Kabir, 2011, pers. comm.).

When Kabir says these words, it is almost dinner time in Purulia town and we are sitting at the table in the small dining hall of the Majur hotel. Coming from a caste-less society in Italy, at first, I had no idea that chhau dancers are associated with specific social stratifications. It was initially less relevant for me to know who was from which caste/class<sup>23</sup>/tribe among the AL project actors, so much how important it seemed instead for my informants to let me know chhau dancers' position in the social ladder of Bengali caste system.

The conversation with Kabir makes a substantial evidence of a social stratification at village level of upper or lower caste and class with a comparison between the world of chhau dancers and an "outsiders'" world, and where a high level of education is often associated with upper social positions and towards which the dancers feel (or are considered) certainly lower<sup>24</sup>. Emphasis in his words is put on distinctions of social status.

As introduced before, Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and also Other Backward Classes (OBC) are lists of the lowest and marginalised social groups strata of the Hindu society, according to Indian Constitution (as per Art. 341 and Art. 342<sup>25</sup>, Indian

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<sup>23</sup> In this Chapter (and in all this PhD thesis) I do not intend to do an analysis of the concepts of caste, class and tribe. Having already introduced at the beginning of this Chapter the meaning of caste and tribe according to Indian Constitution, I want to say that I adopt "class" in the Marxian sense of role in the production process.

<sup>24</sup> The emphasis of Kabir's words along with others SE's staff in the field and the recurrent reference in AL project documents and brochures to chhau dancers as “poor and marginalised rural and tribal communities” also highlighted that social status was important (see for instance, SE, 2010a, p. 5).

<sup>25</sup> These articles provide for specification of caste and tribal communities or parts of or groups within caste and tribes which are deemed to be for the purposes of the Constitution the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Government, 1950). SC, ST and OBC groups are listed by the census of the Indian Government with the explicit purpose of not being overlooked in the affairs of the state and to increase their welfare with specific governmental schemes<sup>26</sup>. The census authorities enumerate in West Bengal the 10.7% of SC and the 5.1% of ST of all country (Indian Census, 2011).

Purulia and the Chhotanagpur Plateau are commonly addressed as the “tribal belt” (see for instance Chatterjee Roma, 2004). The presence of SC and ST in many villages near the Ajodhya hills and on the border with Jharkhand is high: in village like Sagarka there is among the 11-20% of the total people from SC and in Baliagara and Balarampur there is among the 11-20% of population among the ST (Indian Census, 2011).

Despite assimilation of diverse cultures in the area of Purulia many local communities still retain their distinct identities in their traditional culture and practices (e.g. ceremonies, religious rites, languages, performing arts, village settlements, architectures, etc.).

### **2.2.2 Chhau Dance by Caste and Tribe**

*Mahato, Kumhar, Mura, Munda, Biswas, Laya, Sahish, Karmakar* to mention just a few are the most recurrent chhau family names across the visited villages. These names identify not only a family but a social position at village level and in the larger Bengoli caste system. I have attempted to reconstruct the association of some of the chhau members’ family names (mainly those of the team leaders) to caste, community and tribe based on the interviews with informants and secondary data (e.g. project documents, Indian Census, etc.). Thus, in the Table 1 below, I report an example of chhau communities tracing the link with the tribe/caste membership and to the place in the social hierarchy at village level and in the Bengoli caste system.

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<sup>26</sup> SC, ST and OBC governmental schemes are meant exclusively for people identified within these groups and should offer social and financial assistance in fields such as education or political representation. For instance, the West Bengal Government, through the Backward Classes Welfare Department, has taken up various welfare schemes for the educational advancement of ST with financial support for purchase of books, school maintenance grant, hostel or ashram grants, several merit scholarships, etc. Nonetheless, according to the last 2011 Census the literacy rate of ST of West Bengal was 57.93%, below the national average of literary rate among ST of 58.96 % (Indian Census, 2011).

Table 1 Caste, tribes and hierarchy at village level.

Family Names	Tribe	Caste or OBC	Hierarchy
<i>Kumhar</i> or <i>Kumar</i>		<i>Kumar</i> communities are considered a sub caste of shudra, said to be part of the <i>kirtan</i> caste or the group of devotional singers, musicians and dancers <sup>27</sup> . The name is scheduled among OBC communities of West Bengal (Indian Census, 2011).	Middle to lower groups. <i>Kumars</i> communities are traditionally pot makers. Speak mainly Kurmali and Bengoli.
<i>Mahato</i>		<i>Mahato</i> considered by many locals to be the oldest inhabitants of Purulia are from Kurmi community, referred as a shudra sub caste, scheduled officially among the OBC groups of West Bengal (Indian Census, 2011).	Upper in local hierarchy, they cover governmental positions and own majority of the land. Speak also English and manly Kurmali and Bengoli language.
<i>Laya</i>	<i>Laya</i> belongs to Santhal tribe, the largest ST of West Bengal (Indian Census, 2011).		The largest tribal group of the area, but lower groups. Originally nomads and forest dwellers, now settled as agrarian and cattle people. Speak mainly Santhali and Bengoli.
<i>Karmakar</i>		<i>Karmakars</i> , also known as <i>Kamars</i> , are a community scheduled among the OBC communities of West Bengal (Indian Census, 2011)	Low in hierarchy at village level, they usually work as blacksmiths, with metals and as carpenters. Many Karmakars are also poets. Speak Munda dialects and Bengoli.
<i>Mura</i>	<i>Mura</i> belongs to Santhal tribe, the largest ST of West Bengal (Indian Census, 2011).		The largest tribal groups of the area, but lower in the local hierarchy. Originally nomads and forest dwellers, now settled as agrarians and artisans. Speak Santhali and Bengoli. Most <i>Mura</i> families live in Charida, the chhau mask makers village.
<i>Sahish</i>	Community name referred as being a tribal community by informants and project documents <sup>28</sup> , like Santhal, but not listed in any scheduled list (ST) or groups of OBC of West Bengal.		Lower groups, now agrarian and artisan communities, settled down in the villages but originally sad to be migratory community.
<i>Ansari</i>		<i>Ansaris</i> are locally referred as a shudra sub caste group, like <i>Kumhar</i> and <i>Karmakar</i> , but not listed in official West Bengal SC or OBC (Indian Census, 2011).	Middle to lower groups, traditionally security men. Speak Munda dialects and Bengoli.
<i>Biswas</i>		<i>Biswas</i> belong to <i>Patni</i> caste, a shudra caste like Dom caste,	Middle to lower groups. <i>Patni</i> are traditionally ferrymen. Speak Munda dialects and Bengoli.

<sup>27</sup> See for instance, La Trobe (2010) and Thakur (2016).

<sup>28</sup> See for instance, SE, 2010a.

		scheduled among the SC of West Bengal <sup>29</sup> .	
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As seen in the table above, from a social stratification perspective chhau dance is performed by a broad spectrum of castes, classes (from the OBC) and tribe groups, from middle to lower groups, often related to shudra, sub shudra caste or outcaste groups<sup>30</sup>. This complexity and proximity among groups is also due to the fact that within a chhau team there are average of 20-30 members (see Chapter 7), coming from different villages, clans and communities.

At village level, being a chhau dancer shows its performative power on reconfiguring local social hierarchic relations. Being chhau steers the way for a reorganisation of lower groups and outcastes around the class thing. For instance, the fact that among chhau masters there were also some landlords and village administrators, as it will be discussed deeper in Chapter 7, demonstrates their relatively high class status, compared to other villagers. Some chhau masters were also panchayat<sup>31</sup> administrator (or *pradhan*). The *pradhan*, often an esteemed villager, represents the *panchayat* (or a group of 13 villages) at local government events of administration, reports to government bodies on behalf of the villagers, and tries to solve problems among villagers, such as inter-caste disputes, and decide on social, religious, economic and administrative questions.

Another example, is the most famous chhau dancer from Bamnia is also a landlord. As discussed before in this Chapter, land ownership in Purulia is still an important factor that decides the economic status of a family since agriculture is one of the main occupations of the district. His family, is from a OBC a lower group that in spite of being considered a very low caste clearly distanced themselves from the other lower castes of Bamnia, thanks to their current class position.

As a result, social and power relations among chhau masters and other villagers also exhibit the power of economic and social recognition. At chhau villages level, a very complex social fabric evolves also out of the intangible heritage practice, which comprises people like settled nomads, tribes, low castes, sub castes and, caste families and new local middle

<sup>29</sup> See also the *List of Scheduled Castes of West Bengal* from Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment of the Government of India website, <http://socialjustice.nic.in/UserView/index?mid=76750> (Accessed, April 2019).

<sup>30</sup> In the Hindu caste system “*Brahmins* (priests) are considered at the top, followed by *Kshatriyas* (soldiers) and *Vaishyas* (traders), who are all considered *Dwija*, or twice born. These upper castes are followed by *Shudras*, or low castes, and at the bottom of the hierarchy are *Dalits*, or outcastes, who were untouchables.” (Vikas et al., p. 479).

<sup>31</sup> The panchayat is a governing body that gathers close villages for their administration, how the panchayats really work at local level varies across all India.

classes groups now stooped from lower groups on which the AL project network of Purulia was built.

Yet again, it must be noted that lower castes and tribes due to historical and social conditions and cultural perception are unable to convert their social position when taken outside of their village level and when confronting a macro level (the “outsider” world of Kabir’s words), thereby remaining to be the lower groups.

### **2.2.3 Balancing Distance: Outsiders, Insiders and Social Distance**

If apparently, on the macro level of the EU funded AL project caste and tribe differences appears irrelevant, at the micro level of Purulia activities caste and class culture and norms continue slightly to guide behaviours, social distances among actors and power associations.

I will present and discuss the roles of the AL project main actors - SE, chhau dance and its artists, the research team and the UNESCO Delhi - in Chapter 6, but a look to their caste and class differences helps us understand how the project networking – its’ mobilisation of individuals - evolved. The analysis of actor-networks, such as the AL project, includes how connections among actors are fostered by an object of interest (see also Chapter 5), but also considerations of how their relations influence, and in turn are influenced by the weaving of contextual webs that every actor brings within the network with its culture and social background. For instance, among the AL project actors there were caste and class differences.

As showed in Table 1 the beneficiaries of the project were low caste and tribe groups; field key project staff were mainly from same groups, *Mahato* (OBC) community and from *Patni* (SC) community, therefore middle to lower caste groups predominantly rural based groups; project staff from Kolkata were from wealthier segments of caste society and founders of the SE were from the higher tier of the Bengali caste system, the *Brahmins*. Project partners instead, such as the research team from London Met University (in which I was part of) and UNESCO Delhi, were mainly foreign people, not considered within the hierarchy of the Hindu caste system.

As “project partner staff” my role and that of the research team from London Met was embedded and foreseen by the AL project text and it requires further discussion.

As researcher from London, with a scholarship from the AL project, I had the time and finances to enable me to travel to India, engage with project staff, follow the SE and chhau dancers, participate in conferences, meetings, events, produce written accounts, interacts with other project actors, act in the project network and then leave, having the privilege to

be at the same time an insider and an outsider, the last compared also to the social stratification of caste and communities. As being both project partner and researcher, I often felt the contradictory of being in that double position and the consequences to act within the network from that relational double perspective, with a degree of participation and observation that changed through all the research period.

In the initial phase of my fieldwork, I followed the SE and key project staff in Purulia, they were my gatekeepers to the chhau communities. This made access easier for me but to the villagers' eyes I was associated with the SE. Thus, almost all the initial month, I attended project events, informal discussions and project meetings and I was always regarded and treated as being staff of the SE by artists. So, for instance, when I used to talk to chhau dancers and field staff about their views on the project and on safeguarding local cultural heritage through its actions, the answers were always positive – that without the SE and the AL project everything was harder.

At the same time, I was not treated as an insider by the SE staff in Kolkata and its founders, with which my relations never really developed. My reluctance towards the SE's research requests<sup>32</sup> and the several frictions arising between the SE and all the research team components (who felt that their capacity of carrying independent research was being mined by imposed restrictions) brought to a divergence of interests, therefore somehow decreasing my direct acting relations with the SE. For instance, at a certain point I moved definitely to Purulia town, till the end of my fieldwork.

While my direct relation with the SE was slowly getting thinner, eventually, the chhau dancers and key project staff came to understand that my role and research objectives were independent from those of the SE in Kolkata and of the AL project goals. I became further entwined in the entangled of local relations, interactions, intimacies, discussions and arguments that made up the web of the project network at Purulia villages level. I became bound to some chhau group leaders from Bamnia, to Kabir and Amid, and I was able to disjoint from the embedded position described earlier. I took part in the social and informal settings of Purulia project activities: I attended informal discussions, roundtables, communal and private home invitation, teas and meals, helping in organising local festivals, attended dancers' rehearsals and activities. Festivals and cultural project events in Purulia provided spaces to fulfil many project actors' activities, roles and personal interests, such

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<sup>32</sup> As introduced in Chapter 1, the RT had specific research tasks for which had to submit research reports, produce also some guidelines and suggestions, etc., update and discuss with the SE staff in Kolkata about field researches. Initial research reports provided to the SE were often rejected and we were asked to remove any criticism related to possible negative impacts of tourism and commodification of folk arts, particularly as it was suggested by the SE this criticism could scare local communities. Later, they never asked for any PhD progress reports or outcomes (such this thesis, research conference papers, publications, etc.), either from me or from other doctoral student.



as planning, organising, researching, performing, learning, exhibiting, managing, financing, promoting, exchanging, meeting, etc. These moments were an important mechanism through which deeper social relations between actors were created. These experiences increased my familiarity with chhau dancers and key field project staff and strengthen my relations with them that continued after my research ended (e.g. through emails, calls and social media till today). My ‘foreignness’ to the local life gradually decreased, reducing also our social distance. At that point, these informants’ views on the project recorded in my notes had different stories to tell.

#### **2.2.4 Powerful Discourses, Social Distance and Points of Controversies**

A practical challenge in development context is to give opportunities and create the conditions in which those lower in the hierarchy, the poorest, are enabled to secure their decisions and rights to access the resources for their sustainability. Priorities, in the development context, are often set by conventional specialised and better-off actors and influenced by political forces which usually favour the strong (see Chambers, 1983, p.185).

As I will show in this thesis, the AL project actor-network with its structure and through its actors, their background, interests, social positions, actions, enacts a set of power relations and social realities, that link, or bind, the actors themselves - and thus also the intangible element of Purulia chhau - to roles, beliefs and other interlinking powerful networks.

In order to stabilise the project network, for instance, the SE mediated as the “project leader” (see Chapter 6) most of the relations and managed to create and legitimise a powerful discourse (see also Chapter 7, 8). The power relations within the AL project network are enacted, surrounded and dependent also by social hierarchical, managerial and material contextualisation.

For instance, a feature of the social distance among lower and higher caste groups was visible in the relations among actors such as chhau dancers, project field staff and the SE founders. The SE HQ staff and its founders, as previously highlighted, were from the top higher castes. Excluding for special events, during the time of my fieldwork, I never saw any of the SE founders and project management team in Purulia, trying to create proximity to the chhau dancers. Besides, when they were around the chhau dancers tended to act as low caste. For instance, at the opening of one of the main AL project activity in Purulia in 2011, the Chhau Utsav festival (see also Chapter 9), the SE vice-president came to giving the opening speech. Some of the most famous chhau masters were invited as special guests and once they arrived on the stage they greeted the SE vice-president bowing and touching his feet as a sign of respect. In India, the degree of bowing is correlated to the caste of the

persons: a low caste is expected to bow deeply to a person of high caste. This showed substantial evidence that caste and tribes classification was still very much a reality in some of the actors' minds, but also that the AL project also embedded a recognition of local social hierarchies where the most educated, high caste people are also in the highest position of managers/decision makers (see also Chapter 6). Right below the SE HQ project management team and founders, the AL project with its organisational structure owing to differential access to (financial, human) resources and network flows, granted some people from similar social strata at the village level, but with different skills, differentiated powers.

An example arises when looking at the role of the "key project staff" at field level in Purulia. As already stated before, these staff had to have specific skills, among these also the knowledge of English to speak also with project partners, international tourists and any potential international stakeholders.

Most all the communication with chhau dancers has been mediated by field key project staff (e.g. Amid, Prem, Kabir, etc.). On a side, these key human resources were "gatekeepers" for the SE HQ staff, for me as well as from every other actor not from Purulia. On the other hand, these key project staff - despite being from the same social strata of chhau – distanced themselves from chhau groups increasing their power and influence in AL project dynamics by virtue of their knowledge of local cultures and languages, relational links with chhau groups and village communities.

According to Routledge "power becomes the ability to enrol others on terms that allow key actors to represent the others" (Routledge, 2008, pp. 212). Key project staff had far more capacity to direct the course of relations than chhau dancers, having direct access to some AL project resource (e.g. when organising project workshops, festivals, etc.) and direct contact with the SE HQ and the project management team in Kolkata. Thus, they had more power to influence project networking events than others.

Project activities enabled exchanges among official actors and unofficial (or those not directly involved in the project) which in turn could shape/impact identities and power imaginaries, creating points of controversies – or tensions, that emerged from the hidden narratives collected throughout the fieldwork and challenged the project network stability (Latour, 2005). Those not directly involved in the project could potentially impact the project relations and either working alongside. For instance, the village communities (local audience) even if they were not technically involved in the project, impacted the choices of the chhau masters regarding what kind of chhau story they had to bring when exhibiting locally. Despite the fact that during the project, following project workshops, chhau groups

developed “new production” (e.g. Macbeth chhau, see Chapter 9) they (the artists) decided not to perform these new productions when dancing at local villages events because the audience disapproved (see Chapter 9, paragraph 9.4). This and other points of controversies among the SE and the artists showed how the artists re-established their role in the local cultural tradition and their power on the decisions made at village level. In fact, as I argue in Chapter 9, despite the fact the SE was the main project leader and managed to create and legitimate a powerful model and role, the artists were not passive, they used their power whenever they felt that representation of their intangible heritage was under threat.

Among some of these moments of project actor-network performance and points of controversies – described further in the following Chapters of this thesis – is indeed the reinforcement of pre-established local social structures and the creation of power asymmetries. The entire discourse on caste stratification as it is considered God-given in the Hindu cultural and religious context is that the lower castes accept their position of being governed by the higher groups. This is of great relevance to this research and the research of power relations and politics hidden behind the development project processes of fostering intangible heritage-based livelihoods. The AL project incorporated the local traditional social stratification with cultural predetermined relations, the caste/class differences with their social distance, way of communicate, prejudices and language ineffectiveness.

These differential social and power relations that frame the AL actor network are indeed also constitutive part of the project network actions. For instance, caste inequalities and social distances not only drive behaviours and relations among actors within the network but as they emerged in the official project narratives built by the SE (see for instance the project document, SE, 2010a) they were addressed by the AL project as part of its focus on promoting intangible heritage of chhau as social cohesion tool.

The use of intangible cultural heritage resources can also be seen as ways in which poor artists (the intangible heritage tradition bearers) can end up better off. There is however the great challenge to overcome that is to manage the intangible heritage-based resources in ways that its production and safeguarding will be maintained and that will increase ways which enable - first of all - the tradition bearers, practitioners, as well as their communities, to gain.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

This Chapter has presented an ethnographic reconstruction of the cultural, social and physical context at villages level, in Purulia and among the main actors of the AL project.

Each time we enter an actor network, such as the AL project, we encounter several actors, their relations and interactions, instruments, tools, such as natural, cultural and material resources and the cultural and social discourses that circulate in and around that network. As Bruno Latour (1996) argues in most of his work contexts are constantly constructed around/by specific projects out of human and material resources, people, relations, etc., available. Every network comprises other networks, a multiplicity of individuals who are part of families, communities, groups, interests, class/caste with all of their problematics, interactions and dynamics. The role of Ray, Prem, Kabir, chhau masters, SE vice-president, my role and other actors' roles, their voices, interests, connections to the AL project, their connection outside the project's network, their social status, their connections to the folk chhau artists - all form part of the 'flow' of relations that make up the AL project. Actor networks are in part held together by the connective flow of personal, cultural narratives, geographical and spatial spaces, material elements, social status that actors bring in with them (Latour, 2005; Law, 2009; Routledge, 2008). Thus, the social and cultural context of any human or non human actor becomes very important to enable a research to draw a complete picture of the actor-network he/she wishes to analyse.

More specifically, this Chapter has introduced the way chhau dancers live, the physical settings of the villages in Purulia, the rural lifestyle of the artists, the local social structures and orders, other actors' social positions/classes and origins, my role in the network and relation with the SE's work, and how actors' social positions appear interweaving with the AL project structures. This ethnographic description aimed to provide the reader with a descriptive account useful and crucial for painting the picture of the context where the AL project network worked for almost three years and understanding the analysis presented in the following Chapters of this research.

Every little detail about the lives of the artists is fundamental for me to explain how the AL project actor-network formed, why it worked in the way it did and not in another. The following chapter will ground the case study in a review of the literature in the fields of intangible heritage, culture, tourism and development action.

# Chapter 3

## 3. Researching Intangible Heritage Practice: From Safeguarding to Development Networks

The international debate, as much as the academic literature, that has been part of and interacted with this PhD investigation, and where the undertakings of this thesis are based, now needs to be situated. For the purpose of locating the case study (the AL project and Purulia chhau cultural heritage) and substantiating my own approach, I will introduce, hereafter, different research areas. This Thesis aims to examine the case study of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau included within a development project action. In addition, the thesis examines the extent to which key aspects of this collaborative network (power relations, frictions, actors' background, interests, project ideas or proposed solutions) reframes and enacts the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau into an alternative livelihood strategy, for creative tourism and entrepreneurship.

Therefore, this thesis investigates a set of human and material relations the AL project partakes in to bridge intangible heritage and rural livelihood strategy for development, thus, touching directly on questions of the relationship between four main research areas: intangible heritage safeguarding practice, rural livelihoods investigation, development projects implementation, and cultural commodification. Broadly speaking, this Thesis interrogates both the understanding of intangible heritage safeguarding and that of culture-based development action.

With this in mind, more than one area of literature has affected the PhD process, which I argue assists the investigation of intangible heritage in the development context namely heritage conservation and intangible heritage studies, folklore and museum studies, as well as the state of research on culture (and heritage) in sustainable development, rural livelihoods, tourism and international development project investigation.

In this Chapter, I chose to present an assembled version of the literature review and discuss the types of knowledge produced that relate to my case study and how they are interweaving (or conflicting) with my own analytical approach. The analysis of specific sub-themes arising from this literature review will be further discussed in the analytical Chapters (6, 7, 8 and 9) in a way that ensures that concepts related to safeguarding and development are not presented as black boxes.

In this Chapter, it is argued that the case study positions:

- the knowledge of intangible heritage (and its safeguarding) within the understanding of culture *for* development's practice;
- and, at the same time, development project actions into the discourse on politics and the practice of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

### **3.1 The Global Intangible Cultural Heritage Debate**

The current academic discourse on intangible heritage exists at different levels (political, practical, theoretical, etc.). This discourse is much more linked to definitions and to the politics of certifying traditional cultures as heritage within cultural institutions and museums (Harrison, 2013; Smith, 2006) as initial steps of safeguarding, rather than addressing the practice and uses of intangible heritage in the everyday realm of local communities. Beyond the discussion on definitions and recognitions, a major lack in research identified in this Chapter is on the critical investigation of the links between safeguarding intangible heritage and larger development actions, for instance, within culture-based tourism and creative livelihoods development.

Now, before moving into the debate surrounding intangible heritage, clarification is needed.

#### **Lack of conversation in academic research**

The discourse of the intangible heritage nomination and its safeguarding is global; however, the academic study of intangible heritage is relatively new and lacks conversation between regional approaches and fields. Once the 2003 Convention was proclaimed and entered into effect in 2005, UNESCO created three main lists that constituted the institutional inventories for intangible heritage<sup>33</sup> and intangible heritage became an official academic field of investigation and professional specialisation (Arizpe, 2007; Boylan, 2006; Kurin, 2004). The current popularity of intangible heritage studies is evident in Deacon and Bortolotto's (2012) bibliographic effort on intangible heritage publications, from 2003 to 2012. This bibliographic work on intangible heritage studies found diverse topics and a rapid increase in publications on the subject, but a lack of conversation between works of literature on intangible heritage in different languages and regions of the world. This deficiency was a limitation for this literature review, which was mainly informed by studies from international academic journals and peer-reviewed journals in English; however, this literature review attempts to be as multilingual as possible.

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<sup>33</sup> There are three main UNESCO lists related to intangible heritage: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity with 314 elements listed today; the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding with 38 elements inscribed, and the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices with 12 projects and activities (UNESCO, n.d., Available at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/purpose-of-the-lists-00807>, Accessed 20 February 2016)

As already pointed in the introductory Chapter (1), intangible heritage has also been increasingly placed on international cooperation and institutional political agendas, as this case study exemplifies. Therefore, this literature review also makes use of extensive literature from UNESCO and the UN, such as the Convention's reports, guidelines, operational directives, etc. Now, in order to lay the groundwork for the case study analysis, the next subsection contextualises the intangible heritage discussion in heritage and conservation studies pointing at previous literature that discusses the competing conceptions of cultural heritage as inherited versus human-constructed. The last is relevant to understand the basis from where this thesis has moved on in conceptualising the intangible heritage of Purulia as a complex dynamic and evolving process.

### **3.1.1 The Debate on Definition: Realist versus Constructed Heritage**

For years, heritage studies have debated how to define the word heritage<sup>34</sup>. The term is widely used with multiple meanings, associations, and roles. As of 2001, Harvey reported that “the academic debate is still without a common definition on what this concept of heritage identified” (Harvey, 2001, p. 321). The word heritage has been used to refer to something inherited from family and ancestors or inside a specifically delimited community (Kuutma, 2009). The French translation of heritage, the word *patrimoine* (in English, patrimony), currently the most common synonym of heritage in Europe, dominates the field of heritage conservation studies. The word *patrimoine* suggests the idea of a cultural form that is inherited, without changes, to a future generation that must continue to keep it safe (Smith, 2006). When looking for the epistemological discussions on the intangible heritage definition, much of the work is a continuation on the discourse on tangible cultural heritage and can be gathered into two competing theoretical paradigms: the objectivist (or realist) and the constructionist (or social). Departing from these definitions, I proceed by arguing that the conflicting approaches in these two paradigms can be reconciled by bringing intangible heritage knowledge to the field of the practice. Therefore, “turning away from the idea of heritage as universal and inherent” (Harrison, 2015, p. 26) to the analysis of the processes that enable its practice real life. Alternatively, the scholars Law and Latour would have explained this thesis approach as a shift of attention towards the intangible heritage's contingency, or to the place where the object of our attention circulates, in order to understand the intangible heritage realities and enactments (Latour, 2005; Law, 1994).

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<sup>34</sup> Heritage has been for years associated with monumental, historical and pleasing sites and places (Smith, 2006). Supported by the World Heritage Convention (1972) sites inscribed on the World Heritage List maintained by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) have represented the world patrimony for years as well as brought attention to the specific communities where the heritages are geographically and materially collocated.

### **3.1.1.1 The Objectivist (or Realist) Paradigm**

The first one, the objectivist<sup>35</sup> or realist, treats cultural heritage as comprising inherited and historical cultural objects, particularly tangible elements (e.g. monuments or buildings). This large body of literature recognises heritage as those historical monuments and glories that remain from a culture's ancestors (Graham, Ashworth and Tunbridge, 2000), as well as those objects representing power and historical relations from the past that people want to conserve for their identity in the present (Smith, 2006; Smith and Akagawa, 2009). In this view, heritage is defined as something that can be conserved through scientific measurements and predominantly investigated through technical analysis or methodologies (Smith, 2006). Still, the majority of heritage literature today addresses tangible heritage and participates in the debate over the need for the accurate scientific conservation of aspects of cultural objects (Harvey, 2001; Smith, 2006; Turtinen, 2000). This realist view is a predominant view in the field of heritage conservation studies (Smith and Akagawa, 2009), and it is the view that informed the approach of conservation and valorisation bestowed on monuments of the authorised heritage discourse (AHD). As suggested by Smith and Akagawa "the AHD is dominant in Western Europe where the majority of architectural and monuments are collocated and it has been dominant in UNESCO policy for years up to the formulation of the Convention for Safeguarding Intangible cultural heritage in 2003 which also served as an instrument to counterbalance the World Heritage Convention (1972) and the AHD" (2009, p. 3).

The AHD acts as a framework, which relies particularly on the materiality and historicity of cultural heritage (Smith and Akagawa, 2009).

### **3.1.1.2 The Constructionist (or Social) Paradigm**

On the other hand, the constructionist approach on heritage investigation suggests putting attention on the human role in creating, processing, interpreting and practising the cultural element as heritage (Bendix, 2009; Butler, 2006; Lowenthal, 1998; 2002; Smith, 2006). Accordingly, heritage becomes a space where people act to construct and engage with past and present history (Lowenthal, 1998). As Laurajane Smith points out in *Uses of Heritage* (2006), if we consider only the inherited point of cultural heritage, we could miss the important role of humans in constructing the heritage. Smith's work exemplifies the turn in

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<sup>35</sup> Usually objectivism asserts that social entities exist in reality and social phenomena and their meanings have an existence that is independent of social actors (Bryman, 2012).



the approach to heritage characterised by the introduction of the human component and by the rise in ethnographic studies in the field of cultural heritage (2006).

In this view, heritage is defined as: a *discourse* (Smith, 2006); “a static witness of the past, consisting of material remains that have innate (universal) value” (Kisić, 2013, p. 72); a *practice of meaning* (Kamel, 2011); a human *meta-cultural process* of selection to remember or celebrate something from the past (Bendix, 2009; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004); and as “holistic entities, part of a wider social and spatial context” (Labadi, 2013, p. 45).

It is within these social discourses from the critical heritage studies approach (Smith, 2006) that scholars (Arizpe, 2007; Bendix, 2009; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Kuutma, 2009; Kurin, 2004) discuss the meanings usually found in folklore, such as: knowledge, representations, values, uses and interpretations of cultural elements that groups or individuals have recognised as distinctive of their self-definition, therefore, as intangible cultural heritage.

The intangible heritage, however, is not only about the signs, values or non-material symbols. Materiality is significant in the social constructionist approach as well because, along with humans, it constitutes the network of knowledge (and the world itself) (Latour, 2005; Law, 1997). The 2003 Convention associates the specific status of intangible heritage with people’s customs and practices “as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith” (UNESCO, 2003, p. 2). Thus, the UNESCO definition already extends the heritage attributes from past to present human proprieties, as well as to material elements (namely the objects and artefacts), to their social value, environmental and political contexts (namely the cultural spaces).

This conceptualisation of heritage as a social construction challenged the approach of my thesis and raised questions about *what research approaches can be used to investigate a heritage such as the intangible heritage of chhau* that encompasses both the past and the present, the human, social and political contexts, the materiality and intangibility, the economic and policy, the local and global perspectives. Then, I should begin my analysis challenging the taken-for-granted definition of intangible heritage, to consider the idea that the ontological reality of the intangible heritage (and its epistemology) is not merely a theoretical construct or an institutional categorisation (Bendix, 2009) in the context of a changing concept of *heritage*. Instead, intangible heritage is a complex dynamic process produced with real people, things, cultural objects, ideas, money, policy and places, to mention just a few. If we consider intangible heritage as a constantly evolving process –

then the question of *how* to investigate, protect, transmit and use it becomes even more complex.

Based on the research analysis and the discussion above, the constructivism perspective is employed to guide this Investigation general research approach which will move forward into an “ontological perspectivism” on intangible heritage (Harrison, 2015, p. 27) that aims to put its attention to *how* central concerns and aspects of intangible heritage are articulated in practice, as a matter of doing ontological politics or bringing certain realities (of the intangible heritage) into being (Holbraad, Pedersen and Viveiros de Castro, 2014). As previous anthropologists have showed we must acknowledge that no ontology should be favoured over others (e.g. Holbraad, Pedersen and Viveiros de Castro, 2014; Viveiros de Castro, 2004) and try to open scholarly methodology also other ontological thinking and conditions (van der Duim, Ren and Jóhannesson, 2013, p. 12).

As I will explain further in Chapter 4 and 5, knowledge from this thesis, in terms of research findings and analysis, was assembled through the collection of empirical data, primary and secondary documents then analysed using interpretative techniques, with the aim to acknowledge the different ways in which the intangible heritage and its safeguarding are interpreted, represented and enacted in reality.

Next section reviews the literature dealing with the interviewed discourse of the recognition and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in order to shed light on the main knowledge and research perspectives on the topic.

### **3.1.2 Intangible Heritage Recognition and Safeguarding**

A nomination as heritage “entails obligations of preservation, on the one hand, and on the other hand, a spectrum of emotions from sentimental affection all the way to aggressively political collective (mis)appropriation, which are both consequence and cause of the heritage” status (Bendix, 2009, p. 253). Recognition of traditional cultures as a subject for protection is indeed one of the most significant recent developments of heritage conservation specialists (Blake, 2009). Intangible heritage is generally treated with a combination of measures and approaches (heritage lists, conventions, directives, documentations, exhibitions, promotional events, festivals, etc.) mainly advocated by UNESCO with the 2003 Convention and termed *safeguarding*<sup>36</sup> (UNESCO, 2003; 2014). However, the presence of intangible attributes, such as values, beliefs, skills or practices,

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<sup>36</sup> UNESCO uses the term 'safeguard' rather than the word 'preserve' or 'conserve' to describe how we should deal with intangible heritage in a way that keeps it safe from static conservation and keeps it alive for present and future communities (Brown, 2005; Kuutma, 2012; WTO, 2012).

that cannot be technically measured, conserved and restored has further complicated the approach to heritage safeguarding and it has given rise to a body of literature on the specific topic of how to deal with intangible heritage safeguarding (Bortolotto, 2013; Kurin, 2004; Kuutma, 2009; Pereiro, 2006; Smeets, 2008; Sousa, 2015).

On this topic, the literature has two main areas of study that I wish to introduce to show the gaps this thesis wants to fill. One area of study is researching the process of recognition of traditional cultures as heritage, also regarded as “heritagisation” (the practice of certifying heritage through lists and institutional actions); the other area is dealing with the practice of safeguarding that goes beyond listing (e.g. Bowers and Corsane, 2012; Kreps, 2009). Despite the fact that boundaries between these two strands of literature often blur and there are studies in other specific fields (such as intellectual property rights or the digital heritagisation process) these two are the predominant areas of research. I will summarise the role they have in terms of contribution and gaps. I seek to interrogate these predominant research perspectives and show what type of knowledge about intangible heritage safeguarding exists and from which perspective this knowledge has been produced.

### **3.1.2.1 Lists and Heritagisation of Intangible Heritage**

A growing body of academic literature discusses the UNESCO 2003 Convention<sup>37</sup> and its prescriptions as documenting, researching and listing intangible heritage (Blake, 2009; Bortolotto, 2013; Deacon and Bortolotto, 2014; Kurin, 2004; Kuutma, 2012; Smith and Agakawa, 2009). Lists and inventories are conventional ways of certifying tangible cultural elements (monuments, buildings, etc.) as heritage through scientific valorisation, policy and international community appropriation that, since 2003, have also been used to certify traditional cultures as heritage. A large amount of literature today investigates the process of listing/documenting, also named heritagisation or patrimonialisation<sup>38</sup> of tangible and intangible heritage (Bendix, 2009; Bortolotto, 2011; Deacon and Bortolotto, 2012). Heritagisation has been certainly considered a mechanism of heritage-making appropriate

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<sup>37</sup> The 2003 Convention is the first binding multilateral instrument “intended to raise the profile of this heritage” (UNESCO, 2011, p.13). Under the Convention’s aims, UNESCO adopts four main instruments: the Urgent Safeguarding List (List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding), Representative List (Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity), Register of Best Safeguarding Practices and International Assistance Fund.

<sup>38</sup> The inscription of cultural element in the international UNESCO lists is part of a complex official and institutional process of certifying elements, referred to in the literature as heritagisation or patrimonialisation (Kuutma, 2009; Sousa, 2015; Turtinen, 2000). This process, often also called the heritage-making process, makes heritage ‘real’ through: the knowledge produced from multiple actions of identification and exclusion (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004); the enactment of relations with cultural experts, official governments and UNESCO (Turtinen, 2000; Smith, 2006); and playing a role in changing the perception of the value of cultural elements at the government level (Khaznadar, 2013).

for objects or monuments but it is widely criticised by scholars when it comes to intangible heritage (Ahmand, 2006; Arantes, 2007; Arizpe, 2004; Bortolotto, 2011; Grenet, 2013; Isnart, 2015; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Kurin, 2014; Lira and Amoêda, 2009; Torggler, Sediakina-Rivière and Blake, 2013; Vecco, 2010). These studies question heritagisation, and, in general, listings, as an “instrumental” activity detaching the intangible heritage from its context, freezing and objectifying it in a meta-cultural inventory (e.g. Brown, 2005<sup>39</sup>). Despite the great contribution of this research on intangible heritage, this literature lacks in investigating how (and what) actors are using the nominated intangible heritage and for what purpose, therefore, also lacking in acknowledging and scrutinising the role of intangible heritage as an *actor* in larger processes (e.g. local development, livelihoods system, tourism, creative industries, human rights, social cohesion, etc.).

Next section shows how the complex ontology of intangible heritage and its safeguarding is only partially addressed by museum studies, considered the most appropriate cultural institutions in charge of safeguarding and researching intangible heritage (Boylan, 2006; Fromm, 2016; ICOM, 2007).

### **3.1.2.2 Museum Studies and Intangible Heritage Safeguarding**

The 2003 Convention ratifies safeguarding measures with general notions of “[...] identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.” (Art. 2.3 in UNESCO, 2003). Previous research shows that many of these actions are indeed well-known techniques (e.g. identification, research and documentation, listing, etc.) from the fields of museum and folklore (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004).

In 2004, UNESCO published the first series of papers about intangible heritage in its quarterly journal, *Museums International* (no. 221/1, May 2004). That same year, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) held its first international conference on the theme (and role) of museums and intangible heritage (ICOM, 2007) with the aim to foster academic interests of folklorists and anthropologists on the issues of safeguarding intangible heritage.

The growth of the subject, particularly under museum and folklore studies, is also signalled, in part, by the establishment of the *International Journal of Intangible Cultural Heritage*

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<sup>39</sup> As Brown (2005) states, a cultural element that has been institutionalised with the UNESCO nomination of “heritage” may lose much of the spontaneous creativity that gave it meaning in the first place.

(IJICH), born in 2006, and promoted by the National Folk Museum of Korea. Boylan, in the first volume of this IJICH journal, stressed the importance of the 2003 Convention for museums and eco-museums<sup>40</sup>, suggesting, once again, a strong epistemological and ontological link between museum practices and intangible heritage knowledge and research.

Consequently, a significant amount of research emerged on the intangible heritage to date explores negotiations of the safeguarding specifically in ethnographic accounts of the museological practice of collecting, documenting and exposing artefacts with reference to indigenous, folklife, local memories and territories with museum and eco-museum studies (Alivizatou, 2012; Bowers and Corsane, 2012; Bowers, 2013; Fromm, 2016; Harrison, 2013; Marrie, 2009).

A critique is that museum practice still seems to follow an archival approach, oriented towards descriptive essays about intangible heritage rather than towards developing methodological approaches to investigate and integrate the intangible heritage complexity, management practice and unpredictability for its knowledge<sup>41</sup> (Torggler, Sediakina-Rivière and Blake, 2013). To my knowledge, there have been occasional attempts to develop a critical viewpoint for theoretical and methodological paradigms on intangible heritage knowledge and practice. One of these attempts is Stefano, Davis, and Corsane's volume (2012) that gathered articles on the safeguarding of intangible heritage on the ground and within museum practices, focusing on the analysis of the paradoxical tension between preservation in museums and the living nature of intangible heritage. Stefano, in this volume, examines the problems of preserving while creating intangible heritage inventories in museums and posits a new approach (to heritage archival and lists) using the idea from ecology that safeguarding first has to respond to local needs and the community's interests (Hansen, 2013). Despite this seminal work, the approach from museum studies still "ultimately remain[s] focused on the action of collecting" (Kurin, 2007, p. 14) independent from the social and political context and uses of the intangible heritage and not enough to

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<sup>40</sup> According to Boylan, "the traditional museum and museology has a major emphasis on collections and objects; the *écomusée* (eco-museum or 'new' museum) and '*nouvelle muséologie*' (new museology) has their emphasis on the overall evidence, both tangible and intangible, of the cultural or natural environment of the location or territory served by the museum, whether or not this is represented by objects within the museum" (Boylan, 2006, p. 56). To this regard, a very recent definition of museum put forth by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2013 states that "museums are responsible for the tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage" (ICOM, 2013, p. 1). Therefore, it is not surprising that museums with an anthropological and ethnographic approach are still considered the most appropriate institutions to deal with intangible heritage knowledge (Fromm, 2016).

<sup>41</sup> Several research projects in the IJIH journal about intangible heritage (that at the time of writing this literature review reached its 12 volume) present fieldwork and case studies, often in the form of observations, pictures and interviews. While these projects usually produce excellent work, with brilliant discussions on innovative safeguarding approaches (see, for instance, Park's (2014) multimedia ICHPEDIA case study), some scholars criticised this one-dimensional approach coming from museum studies as it has a limited focus on documentation and listing (see for instance, Rodil and Rehm, 2010).

account the complexity of heritage within other sectors (e.g. International Development and Tourism) (UNESCO, 2010b; UNESCO, 2013c; WTO, 2012).

One element worth highlighting here that will be discussed in the subsection below is the lack of clarity in UNESCO's text on safeguarding practice has given rise to several interpretations, all around the world, often interlinking with other broader socio-economic aims and concepts, such as social cohesion, poverty eradication, and eco-sustainability.

### **3.1.3 What Does Safeguarding Intangible Heritage Entail?**

A recent study by Torggler, Sediakina-Rivière and Blake<sup>42</sup>, evaluated the UNESCO standard-setting work and several safeguarding actions in the field, reported that "understanding the concepts of the Convention also often remains a challenge, both at the government and community levels" (Torggler, Sediakina-Rivière and Blake, 2013, p. 7).

The 2003 Convention encourages state parties to work and cooperate to submit nominations (with intangible heritage lists) to national and international cultural institutions as safeguarding action. Then, it vaguely addresses what other initiatives might be regarded as safeguarding measures (Bendix, 2009; Kuutma, 2012; Smeets, 2015). To counterbalance the 2003 Convention elusiveness, since 2009, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee has published the Operational Directives along with the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices<sup>43</sup> (RGSP) (Kurin, 2014). As UNESCO (2009b, p.7) states:

"This register of best practices is expected to serve as a platform for sharing good practices as well as serve as a source of inspiration to States, communities and anyone interested in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Learning more about effective safeguarding measures with proven success across various types of intangible cultural heritage in different geographical regions will help the parties concerned develop their own appropriate safeguarding measures." (2009b, p.7)

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<sup>42</sup> The evaluation, commissioned by UNESCO, was published for the 10th anniversary of the 2003 Convention and it looked at the following three levels of safeguarding:

"Ratification (or the accession/acceptance/approval) of the Convention; integration of the provisions of the Convention into national/regional legislation, policy and strategy; and implementation of the legislation, policies and strategies at the national level" (Torggler, Sediakina-Rivière and Blake, 2013, p. 14). "The evaluation covers the standard-setting work undertaken within the framework of both the regular and extra budgetary programmes during the 34C/5 (2008-2009), 35C/5 (2010-2011) and 36C/5 (2012-2013) biennia up to the time of the evaluation" (Torggler, Sediakina-Rivière and Blake, 2013, p. 11).

<sup>43</sup> Article 18 in the 2003 Convention stipulates that the Intergovernmental Committee periodically selects good safeguarding programmes that can also take a more practical role and can be regarded as an example of safeguarding practice.

Between 2009 and 2017, more than 15 safeguarding practices were selected and shared under the UNESCO's RGSP, which is available online<sup>44</sup>.

It is beyond the scope of this Study to provide the reader with a review of UNESCO's RGSP. Rather, it is important to acknowledge that the online publication of UNESCO's RGSP shows that there is an increasing occurrence of intangible heritage safeguarding measures which reflect new local and managerial perspectives happening *off* the official cultural institutions channels (e.g. local centres, non-governmental institutions, associations, etc.). A rapid look at the RGSP<sup>45</sup> shows that some of measures of safeguarding are also linked to building centres for education and transmission of intangible heritage, to organising festivals (Hafstein, 2018) and promoting the revitalisation of techniques in craftsmanship. However, even research investigating un-official actions happening with non-expert stakeholders (such as locals and NGOs) still focuses on the process of inventorying and documenting (e.g. Kreps, 2009; Barbe, Chauliac and Tornatore, 2015; Isnart, 2015); rather, than investigating these heritage-related practices of revitalisation and promotion. As Kurin argues, the 2003 Convention's generalisation of safeguarding practice with the action of nomination and listing has strongly impacted (and limited) the understanding of what safeguarding means, therefore, missing the "larger, holistic aspect of culture—the very characteristic that makes culture intangible, the intricate and complex web of meaningful social actions undertaken by individuals, groups, and institutions" (Kurin, 2004, p. 74-75). This understanding was also argued at the first *Intangible Heritage Researchers Forum* (IHRF) held in Paris, in 2012, which I attended. At the IHRF, scholars acknowledged that actions involving intangible heritage are spreading but research is still behind and has not yet investigated enough social and empirical actions (Field notes, 2012). This is where this thesis wants to fit in. By responding to Kurin's and other researchers' call in the aforementioned articles and forum, this thesis aims to contribute to the knowledge gaps on the intricate and complex web of meaningful social actions surrounding intangible heritage practice and safeguarding off the official cultural institutional channels.

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<sup>44</sup> UNESCO, n.d., Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of good safeguarding practices, Available at <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&type%5b%5d=00005&multinational=3&display1=inscriptionID#tabs> (Accessed 15 November 2017)

<sup>45</sup> At the time of this writing, seven out of fifteen of the safeguarding practices have to do with the establishment of eco-museum practice and community centres for the promotion and transmission of the heritage; six have to do with the learning process, the education and transmission to young generation of the heritage; one has to do explicitly with festivals and one with inventorying and documenting the heritage by the community groups and two of them are linked explicitly with the revitalisation of craftsmanship and techniques linked to intangible heritage. Two out of fifteen are referred to as examples of 'best safeguarding practice': the "education and training in Indonesian batik intangible cultural heritage in Pekalongan, Indonesia" (2009) and "Fandango's Living Museum" from Brazil (2011) (UNESCO, n.d., *Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of good safeguarding practices*, accessed 15 November 2017).

Now, a thesis aimed to investigate social actions around intangible heritage must address issues and normative concepts connected so far to safeguarding, as it is the debate around the concept of ‘community’. In the subsection below, I briefly introduce how the concept of the community of intangible heritage by the 2003 Convention is controversial and how this Study situates its understanding in empirical exploration.

#### **3.1.4 The Issue of Defining the Intangible Heritage Community’**

According to previous research, the 2003 Convention sees a radical new direction in the rise of participatory approaches to intangible heritage practice, blurring the boundaries between heritage professionals and amateur participants<sup>46</sup>, while also highlighting the need for inquiries on *who* should be involved (Bortolotto, 2013; Adell et al., 2015; Kuutma, 2012). Unlike the approach used with tangible heritage, the aim of the 2003 Convention is to incorporate active participation of tradition bearers, individuals and marginalised people in the intangible heritage discourse and its representations<sup>47</sup>, relevant to ensure the largest participation possible (UNESCO, 2003).

The term community (further discussed in Chapter 6) in UNESCO’s text is vaguely defined as referring to the actors who should be involved in intangible heritage practice. Other than the tradition bearers and the group of people to whom the heritage belongs, the Convention’s definition of intangible heritage community is not clearly addressed (e.g. Adell et al., 2015; Bortolotto, 2011; 2013; Deacon, 2004; Kuutma, 2012; Munjeri, 2004; Ruggles and Silverman, 2009; Sousa, 2015; Tsai, 2014; Vecco, 2010).

For instance, in using community as a concept linked to the recognition of intangible heritage, therefore implying that the intangible heritage means the traditional practices, representations, knowledge etc., that communities recognise (Art. 2, UNESCO, 2003), while at the same time using community as a strategy in saying that “each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups [...]”, etc. (Art. 15, UNESCO, 2003). Hence, the concept of community is, at the same time, considered as something contained within the intangible heritage definition and as an entity subject to interpretation of those who implement the safeguarding. Hence, I suggest that the community (and its participation), is both seen as existing or as something to be created simultaneously in the process of safeguarding. This ambiguity challenges the taken-for-granted assumption that the intangible heritage community relies only within the boundaries

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<sup>46</sup> See for instance the Mexico’s project on “community consultations” recognised among the UNESCO good practice (UNESCO, 2013c, p.18)

<sup>47</sup> Apparently against the predominance of experts and institutions that is typical for tangible heritage sector (Kuutma, 2012).



of the original community of tradition bearers, where the intangible heritage was first born and manifested. The vague definitions in the 2003 Convention's texts establishes the need for a shift from focusing the investigation on theories to empirical case studies where the general notions – such as community, revitalisation or broadly speaking safeguarding - are translated into existence.

Understanding *how* the community of the intangible heritage is formed in the realm of actions, I suggest, also highlights the implications and agency that a given group has on the nature of the intangible heritage and its transmission. Therefore, moving forward with Adell et al.'s suggestion that future research needs to consider the question of the definition of community in the contemporary context of working with intangible heritage (Adell et al., 2015), rather than taking the discussion on issues identified in this literature review as a starting point, I propose to unpack these concepts and see how general notions of intangible heritage community, and heritage revitalisation for safeguarding are translated through the working relations between actors on the ground (e.g. the AL project actors). *How* the community of Purulia chhau is interpreted and practiced, and *who* is involved in its safeguarding is indeed inherently related to the investigation of initiatives in the field (Adell et al., 2015; Hampton, 2005).

Therefore, a discussion of how these notions are interpreted and enacted by project's actors is presented in the analytical Chapters (6 to 9) where there will be more contextualisation for them. Another reason to contextualise in Chapter 6,7,8 and 9 is the need to link the theoretical to the empirical analysis (Kurin, 2014; Mosse, 2005; Ren, 2010; Ren, Pritchard and Morgan, 2010; Sousa, 2015). These notions - of safeguarding, community, revitalisation, livelihood - are in fact stories and realities about a group of artists, a folk dance, development project negotiations, rural livelihood strategies, safeguarding strategies, cultural festivals, rural lives, cultural commodification, tourism trials, academic investigation, material objects, UNESCO texts, UNESCO experts, PhD students and villages of West Bengal. This thesis aims also to positioning *vis-à-vis* specific theoretical entities and existing knowledge on the entities with their interpretation and enactments by some actors in the real world.

As this literature review has shown so far, while the discourse on intangible heritage recognition is spreading, little investigation focuses on actions that go behind documenting and listing intangible heritage. On the contrary, significant intangible heritage management and also tourism-related work has happened across different regions in the world since the 2003 Convention, particularly in developing countries, that is not yet investigated. Traditional cultures, often translated into “the administrative category of ‘heritage’, which,

in turn, became a synecdoche of the social whole that had produced it” (García-García, 1998 cited in Nogués-Pedregal, Travé-Molero and Carmona-Zubiri, 2017, p. 94), have recently been regarded as a *resource* to reach sustainable development (Silberman, 2012; Soini and Dessein, 2016). Due to the nature of the case study that is situated between intangible cultural heritage safeguarding and development practice, the following section 3.2 investigates the complex debate on culture and sustainable development, looking particularly to the role of intangible heritage and traditional cultures as livelihood.

### **3.2 From Intangible Heritage Safeguarding to Development Actions**

A leitmotiv to international and institutional policy today is that culture is relevant to achieving development around the world (UNESCO, 2010b; UNESCO, 2013b; UNESCO and UNDP, 2013; UNESCO, 2015). As Soini and Birkeland show in their recent analysis of the concepts of culture and sustainability, the roles and meanings of culture for sustainable development are often “associated with and organised around a story line of cultural heritage” (Soini and Birkeland, 2014, p. 216). Nevertheless, this section 3.2 will outline, that the connections between intangible heritage safeguarding and development practice, are still under-researched and these connections are lacking theoretically and from empirical investigation.

First, section 3.2 of this Chapter contextualises intangible heritage and its parallels (e.g. traditional cultures) under research on culture for development and tourism, highlighting the links and gaps in research on intangible heritage in tourism and livelihoods. Then, a review of the critics of seeing heritage as a resource (or livelihood asset) and the debate on cultural commodification is undertaken. Finally, an approach to development project actions’ investigation confronting heritage and rural livelihoods will be introduced.

#### **3.2.1 The Cultural Turn of Development**

Development can be viewed as the parental paradigm to tourism that can be based on cultural heritage (Silberman, 2012). Yet, today’s role of intangible heritage in development actions builds firmly within the evolution of the idea of “development” and the role of culture within development.

In the 1950s, with modernisation theories, development was explicitly a process of economic growth (Jenkins, 2000). The first conceptualisation of culture-led development came to prominence in the late 1970s as a wide range of countries dealing with post war restructuring economies led to a search for alternatives jobs (Da Costa, 2010; De Beukelaer, 2015; Richards and Wilson, 2006; Sen, 2004). Later, an alternative paradigm, the

‘sustainable development’ paradigm, emerged with the Brundtland Commission in 1987 and the Rio Conference on Environment and Development, in 1992, supporting a conceptualisation of development that includes concerns such as equity, environment issues, social justice and is more people-centred and endogenous (Nurse, 2006; Sen, 2004). Sustainable development initially referred to concerns over the use of natural resources but has since expanded, at least theoretically, to include social and cultural resources. Recently, the concept of sustainable development was integrated into the Operational Directives for the implementation of the 2003 Convention in Chapter II concerning the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund<sup>48</sup> (UNESCO, 2015a).

The sustainable development concept “became part of the critique of neo-liberal development models [...] and part of the growth of new social movements” (Nurse, 2006, p. 34) directed to foster a more grassroots and participatory approach to the development process. With scholars, such as Sen, who articulate the idea that development needs to incorporate culture and human capabilities, the role of culture in sustainability and development processes was pushed forward (Da Costa, 2010; De Beukelaer, 2015). Throsby argues the widely accepted interpretation of sustainability that “the concept of sustainable development as defined in ecological terms can be extended to apply to culture by recognising parallels between the concepts of natural and cultural capital” (2005, p. 1). In this new view, cultural, natural and human capital present a significant variable, a resource, which “can influence the success of development interventions” (Rao & Walton, 2004 cited in Daskon and Binns, 2009, p. 495; see also Da Costa, 2010; Throsby, 2007).

The so-called “cultural turn of development” (Da Costa, 2010; Daskon and Binns, 2009; Daskon, 2010a; Radcliffe, 2006) suggests and celebrates that sustainable development takes “culture”, in whatever form it might possibly take, seriously. UNESCO’s work to include culture in the UN Post-2015 Millennium Development Goals arguably embodies a great potential for taking culture not only as aim to development but also as its basis (Freitas, 2016). As UNESCO recognises:

“[...] unless economic development has a cultural basis it can never lead to truly lasting development. Culture is ‘not’ something ‘to be taken into consideration’. It is fundamental [...]” (UNESCO, 1995, p. 1)

This statement has been very recently officially reinforced by the Intergovernmental Committee for The Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage stipulating that

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<sup>48</sup> “Paragraph 73, discussing contributions to the Fund, stipulates that “No contributions may be accepted from entities whose activities are not compatible [...] with the requirements of sustainable development” (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 2).

“the presence of sustainable development in the text of the Convention and gradual inclusion in the Operational Directives reflect UNESCO’s broader efforts to integrate culture into the international sustainable development agenda” (UNESCO, 2015a, p. 2)

Yet, ever since scholars have called for adequate regard for culture in the development context, (Radcliffe, 2006) research has struggled to understand if this so-called “cultural turn” really exists. More important, research has struggled to understand if the “incorporation of culture in development really goes beyond incorporation of culture into the logic and episteme of capital”<sup>49</sup> (Da Costa, 2010, p. 504), therefore, “questioning whether culture is an aspect or means of ‘development’ (in a sense of material progress)” (Daskon and Binns 2009, p. 496).

As the following subsections show, the conceptualisation of culture<sup>50</sup> in development context has undergone several reinterpretations and it has mirrored the growth of culture as a relevant resource in tourism for development.

### **3.2.1.1 Investigating Culture in the Development Context**

In the literature, there has yet to be much exploration into the definition and knowledge around intangible heritage in development and the tourism process. Most of the studies referring to culture in the development or tourism field consider tangible heritage (Labadi, 2013; Silberman, 2012) or products of cultural industries (music, movies, etc.) (Throsby, 2010; De Beukelaer, 2015).

According to Freitas, culture, in development perspectives, has two possible objectifications. One perspective is of utilitarian logic to reach a form of development and the other perspective is based on culture as an end in itself (Freitas, 2016). Cultural studies, investigating cultural industries and policy implications (e.g. the state’s involvement in the realm of culture, determinants of cultural public spending, etc.) elaborated a notion of culture as an ‘asset’ to economic development and as a product of cultural industries (Katz-Gerro, 2015; Throsby, 2010; Yúdice, 2003). Despite the fact that this area of investigation “lacks of research in non-Western perspective” (De Beukelaer, 2015, p. 25), it does not account for micro-level dynamics within different cultural domains (such as museums’ practice, cultural heritage management, literature, festivals, theatre, etc.) (Katz-Gerro,

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<sup>49</sup> Culture is often “deployed in development thinking and practice as a mode of re-embedding the market” and as a way “of maintaining the ideological security of the market economy” (Da Costa, 2010, p. 508-510).

<sup>50</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to define the term ‘culture’, as many scholars have already focused on the concept; however, it is necessary to have an overview of the concept in relation to development frameworks, tourism and the investigation of rural livelihoods.

2015). Cultural studies, indeed, remain largely focused on cultural industries and “cultural policy, allocation of funding, infra-structure planning, etc. [...] and those initiatives in terms of development [...]” (Freitas, 2016, p. 12). Moreover, beyond the example of cultural industries (music, theatre, movies, etc.) (Florida, 2012), it may be pertinent to investigate what forms of traditional cultures such as traditional and ritualistic dances, performing arts or indigenous knowledge, etc. (today also recognised and valorised under the label of intangible heritage) might contribute to local sustainability and development through being a livelihood in tourism and related cultural entrepreneurial activities.

### **3.2.1.2 From Traditional Culture as Opposing Development, to Heritage as Driver of Development**

In development studies, we usually find a notion of culture that corresponds to an idea of way of life with an anthropological sense (Roberts and Townsend, 2016). Culture is interpreted as ‘traditional culture’ or also as ‘indigenous knowledge’ (Bradley, Chakravarti and Rowan, 2013; Buzinde, Kalavar and Melubo, 2014; Da Costa, 2010; Daskon, 2015; Lewis, 2014; Mosse, 2005; Roberts and Townsend, 2016). Those values, meanings, customs, products and knowledge systems that affirm a specific cultural identity, today are also recognised under the label of intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2003). Yet, the concept (and role) of traditional culture in development context is confused (Daskon and Binns, 2009). Much of international development literature from the modernisation paradigm has assumed that traditional cultures inhibit the development process and retard development opportunities. In this view, traditional cultures potentially resist actions of development (Jenkins, 2000), subverting and reworking the development initiatives against their sustainability “local people in Africa and Asia are seen as slow to adopt new technology partly because of ‘cultural barriers’” (Crewe and Harrison, 2005, p. 232).

An interesting view on traditional cultures in the development context comes from the anthropology of development. This field of research provides a dynamic critique of development models and theories that created dualities such as 'traditional' as opposed to 'modern', and 'developed' versus 'undeveloped' (Lewis, 1996; Mosse, 2005). From the perspective of the anthropology of development, local cultures can be negatively impacted from international development initiatives and globalisation. Development, according to many social anthropologists, is “characterised as a Western cultural mind-set which imposed homogenising materialist values, idealised rational-scientific power [...]” to locals and their cultural tradition (Lewis, 2005, p. 5). According to this view, traditional cultures and their

products (e.g. monuments, craft, beliefs, traditions, etc.) are something valuable, to protect from the impact of development and modernisation.

In parallel ways, the field of heritage conservation studies was, until recently, against action of the development and modernisation happening through tourism. As Neil Silberman points out, “conservationists zealously protected the idea of exemplary monuments of historic cultures and did everything it could to prevent their destruction or alteration by the relentless forces of Modernity.” (Silberman, 2012, p. 6).

These conflicting knowledge productions about the role of culture in development (as opposing or as something to be preserved) apparently combine within the narrative of heritage as a *driver* for sustainable development fostered by international institutions (UNESCO, 2015a; UNESCO and UNDP, 2013; UNESCO, 2013b). In this view, intangible cultural heritage for tourism, the contribution of heritage to the cultural economy and entrepreneurship, as well as its commercialization (UNESCO, 2015a) enable local communities, and state parties, to accord importance to cultural heritage in development planning<sup>51</sup>. Consequently, governments’ investment in cultural and heritage tourism to yield economic returns has increased visibility in India and around the world as research has indicated (Scott, 2012; Tribe and Xiao, 2011).

Before discussing the state of research on intangible heritage in the tourism field, an overview of the significance of tourism for development is needed.

### **3.2.2 Tourism and Development**

Tourism events are receiving increasing attention, particularly in relation to sustainable development process and poverty alleviation (Bessière, 2013; Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Cole, 2007; Hampton, 2005; Lapeyre, 2011; Manwa and Manwa, 2014; Smith and Robinson, 2009). Boissevain (1977) began to study tourism as a factor of economic development in Malta, when the academic debate addressed mainly macroeconomic aspects of tourism. Since then, an increasing number of studies have been concerned with tourism-related challenges of fighting poverty in developing countries and rural areas of the world (Manwa and Manwa, 2014). The issue of tourism as a tool for development became central to the “pro-poor tourism” approach, which fosters a form of tourism activities intended to benefit especially poor people and local rural communities. This approach is particularly evident in the UN’s approach to tourism where it is stressed that tourism has the capacity to

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<sup>51</sup> As Neil Silberman points out with UNESCO and World Bank’s work “in agreeing to collaborate on a series of global initiatives, the two organizations officially endorsed the new narrative, [...] ‘Heritage as a Driver of Development’ (International Council on Monuments and Sites 2011)” (Silberman, 2012, p. 11).

create infrastructures, develop skills, modernise communities, fostering social change and revive traditional customs (OECD, 1994). The UN General Resolution (A/RES/56/212 UN Resolution, 2001) (and other official documents<sup>52</sup>) predicted tourism being particularly relevant in developing countries, such as India, rich in natural and cultural elements that can be advantageous in fostering tourism and other cultural entrepreneurial activities. According to research, when appropriately managed, tourism is seen as a sustainable activity that generates development and increases the livelihood portfolio of rural communities (Iorio and Corsale, 2010; Lapeyre, 2011; Manwa and Manwa, 2014). Richards and Wilson (2006) suggest that emphasis on the role of culture in tourism produced powerful arguments to preserve and redefine cultural elements as heritage and to maximise cultural potentiality to add economic value, if subjected to proper conservation and awareness generation (see also Freitas, 2016; UNESCO and UNDP, 2013). In this direction, research in tourism field showed that “social performances and intangible heritage increasingly play a role as tourist attractions by themselves” (Barrera-Fernández and Hernández-Escampa, 2017, p. 5), contributing to the uniqueness of a destination. Examples in Nogués-Pedregal, Travé-Molero and Carmona-Zubiri’s paper “*Thinking against ‘empty shells’ in tourism development projects*” stress that, in some parts of the world, “the strategy of tourism development focuses on the most intangible of cultural elements (i.e. values and meanings)” (2017, p.104).

Despite some seminal research work, a limited number of selected references in literature today investigate the links between intangible heritage and tourism and acknowledge the current role of intangible heritage valorisation.

### **3.2.2.1 Does Intangible Heritage Tourism Exist as a Field of Inquiry?**

Tourism as field of study has several research areas, according to the specific type of tourism activities and the object of tourists’ interests and experiences (Richards, 2011; Smith, 2006; Smith and Robinson, 2009). Intangible heritage’s role in tourism is often regarded as an aspect of cultural or heritage tourism<sup>53</sup>. However, for some scholars, a more modern creative and dynamic tourism lies particularly with intangible heritage that, more than monuments,

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<sup>52</sup> As the United Nations World Tourism Organisation recognises: “Fostering the responsible use of this living heritage for tourism purposes can provide new employment opportunities, help alleviate poverty, curb rural flight migration among the young and marginally-employed and nurture a sense of pride among communities. Tourism also offers a powerful incentive for preserving and enhancing intangible cultural heritage, as the revenue it generates can be channelled back into initiatives to aid its long-term survival.” (WTO, 2013, p. 2)

<sup>53</sup> For Rodzi, Zaki and Subli, the term, cultural tourism, is “used interchangeably with ‘heritage tourism’ or ‘ethnic tourism’” (2013, p. 413) in that it refers to different elements of culture. The predominant perspective seems to be that heritage tourism broadly contains both tangible and intangible cultural elements (monuments, folk traditions, festivals, rituals, etc.) as one aspect of cultural tourism, which is, therefore, based on places or traditional cultures (Smith, 2006).

can be translated into captivating packaged tourism “experiences” (Richards and Wilson, 2006; Nogués-Pedregal, Travé-Molero and Carmona-Zubiri, 2017; Barrera-Fernández and Hernández-Escampa, 2017). In fact, a growing group of scholars situate intangible heritage related tourism under creative tourism<sup>54</sup>, therefore, stressing aspects such as creativity and the experimental side of tourism activities (Richards, 2011; Richards and Wilson, 2006; Šmid Hribar, Bole and Pipan, 2015). Richards, among others, believes in the role of intangible heritage to connect with and involve the tourist audience in a more active and “creative” way than other forms of cultural activities (2011). For the purposes of this thesis, I will use Richards’s notion (2011) that places intangible heritage tourism activities under creative tourism. It is indeed beyond the scope of this thesis to define whether intangible heritage tourism should exist as a field of study or remain an aspect of larger tourism research categories. The gap in research and definitions around intangible heritage and tourism is no surprise, since the recognition of intangible heritage’s role, in both tourism and sustainable development is very new, as this literature review attempts to demonstrate (UNESCO, 2015b).

Over the last 10 years, the focus of research on heritage-related tourism was mainly on tangible and natural heritage (Bessière, 2013; Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Hampton, 2005; Iorio and Corsale, 2010; Labadi, 2008; Lapeyre, 2011; Manwa and Manwa, 2014; Silberman, 2012). This literature is rich in empirical analysis and critiques on the use of heritage-based tourism for development but falls short in linking with the specific case of intangible heritage. In addition, almost none of these studies investigate the relation between cultural heritage and livelihood strategies.

The most controversial issue arising from the conflict between the approach to tangible heritage preservation and its promotion for tourism and development that fosters direct investment and encourages heritage product differentiation, is that of the commodification of cultural resources, which often combines traditional and modern aspects of cultural heritage in commercial (heritage) products (Yúdice, 2003). As the next sub-section shows, the issue of commodification is almost unexplored with regard to intangible heritage.

### **3.2.3 Intangible Heritage and the Cultural Commodification Debate**

As stated above, a review of both sociological and anthropological accounts on tourism and development actions show several critiques on the use of cultures and heritage for tourism and development (Cohen, 1988; Cole, 2007; Greenwood, 1989; Park, 2010; Richards, 2011;

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<sup>54</sup> Richards and Marques define creative tourism as “a means of involving tourists in the creative life of the destination, a creative means of using existing resources, a means of strengthening identity and distinctiveness, [...], a source for recreating and reviving places” (Richards and Marques, 2012 cited in Sasu and Epuran, 2016, p. 121).



Scott, 2012). Several research studies demonstrate that, although expected to enhance people's livelihoods, tourism, in many cases, has several impacts, such as reducing culture to "items to be bought and sold in the market place" of the tourism industry (Selwyn, 1990, p. 173), and sometimes also fails to produce additional livelihood activities to local people. Besides, anthropologists' concerns of tourism's impacts have particularly focused on the never-ending debate of cultural commodification<sup>55</sup>.

Since Greenwood's work (1989) with "*Culture by a Pound*", a common position in literature is that culture, when in tourism and development context, is packaged as a "commodity over which tourists have rights" (Greenwood, 1989, p. 136) consequently threatening the authentic value<sup>56</sup> once belonging to the original community (Cohen, 1988; MacCannell, 2001). By implication, cultural tourism is also seen as "a straitjacket for communities" (Cole, 2007, p. 945-46).

In similar way, studies on heritage tourism raised the tension between the idea of economic reorganisation of community around the cultural heritage valorisation for tourism and development strategies (e.g. Throsby, 2016) and the heritage protection perspective, against its utilitarian perspective (e.g. Silberman, 2012). This debate may stem, in part, from an inherent ambiguity in the relationship between the idea of protecting cultural heritage and that of building development on its creativity, or against everyday use of cultural heritage; in other words, the idea of preserving some of the most significant resources for future generations and disclosing them to the current users and audiences (Silberman, 2012). In addition, critics, such as Labadi (2013), emphasised also that the use of tangible heritage as a development resource remains rather vague, empirically unverified and lacking a qualitative research approach<sup>57</sup>. In very similar ways, the relation between intangible heritage and its revitalisation in tourism and development perspective lacks analysis.

From the intangible heritage perspective, some scholars have already argued that intangible heritage "represents a developmental potential" (Bole et al., 2013 cited in Šmid Hribar, Bole and Pipan, 2015, p. 103); but, in reality, the approach of intangible heritage as a *driver* for tourism and development, presents, as a matter of fact (or black box), the assumption that

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<sup>55</sup> Cohen (1988) defines the process of commodification (or commoditization) as the "process by which things (and activities) come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value, in a context of trade, thereby becoming goods (and services)" (Cohen, 1988, p. 360).

<sup>56</sup> Cohen, for instance, argues that, in most developing countries, performances and local folk arts become commoditised and often oriented towards tourists (1988).

<sup>57</sup> There is indeed a lack of evidence regarding the development success of heritage in tourism and also to the lack enough qualitative research investigating the factors/impacts of heritage tourism development on communities, such as social cohesion (Labadi, 2008; 2013; Silberman, 2012). As Labadi shows in her analysis of four case studies linking tangible heritage revitalisation to development outcomes, there is a non-existent economic regeneration of heritage sites that diverged sharply from the widely accepted narrative of success from heritage development (Labadi, 2008; 2013).

cultural heritage (whether tangible or intangible) is a ‘resource’, therefore, missing the social and material process hidden behind the transformation of heritage in resource or capital asset. In other words, the processes that constitute the transition from intangible heritage as a cultural end of itself to actual livelihood assets and strategies for development is still taken as a given, therefore, missing the *where*, *when* and *how* intangible heritage and development interact (see also Da Costa, 2010; Radcliffe, 2006<sup>58</sup>) and to shed light on the cultural commodification process of the intangible heritage.

The lack of analysis raises, indeed, the question of intangible heritage commodification, yet an unexplored issue in the field of intangible heritage investigation (Su, 2018a; 2018b<sup>59</sup>), and what challenges are associated with intangible heritage valorisation and revitalisation for livelihood development. In addition, it also raises the question on the relation between intangible heritage and livelihoods. Su’s work, published in January 2018, is the only research (to my knowledge) on the topic of intangible heritage valorisation and commodification for tourism development (Su, 2018a; 2018b). His research on the intangible heritage of China reports how China encourages the use of intangible heritage for tourism commodification; it discusses the commodification issue also in relation to the concept of authenticity and integrity, and finally suggests transcending the discussion of authenticity of intangible heritage due to its changing nature. His findings are very relevant to this Research, as they show how commodification should be regarded as an indispensable way of the intangible heritage making process, therefore emphasising not only the need of more research into *the actors of this process*, in order to shed light on power relations and actors impacting the heritage, but also on the process of commodification itself: on *how* the intangible heritage is constantly commodified and de-commodified, for and in different contexts and purposes. In fact, in Su’s work, as well as in other research so far, the relation between the intangible heritage and its commodification, for livelihood and development, is yet unexplored, as the next sub-section outlines.

### **3.2.4 Lack of research on Culture-Based Alternative Livelihood Strategies**

The most widely used definition of livelihood comes from Chambers and Conway and describes livelihood as the capabilities, assets and activities required for ‘means of living’ pursued in order to find long-term solutions to institutional problems, contextual and external (to the household) vulnerabilities and stress (Chambers and Conway, 1991, cited

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<sup>58</sup> Although both Da Costa (2010) and Radcliffe (2006) do not investigate intangible heritages, they do suggest with their research that the processes on how local culture gets translated into a development strategy need further investigation.

<sup>59</sup> In his recent work, Su acknowledges that “study of the changing ICH in tourism commodification beyond the discussion of authenticity and integrity is still rare” (Su, 2018a, p. 2).

in Daskon, 2015, p. 32). Research defines a ‘livelihood strategy’ as the combination of activities that people undertake in order to achieve their livelihood goals (e.g. Ellis, 2000). In reality, people combine different activities and sources of livelihood in their daily lives, which means that there is no single way of using resources and no single way of combining the livelihoods of a group or a household that can also be based on different resources (Scoones, 2009). Few studies investigate the relationship between tourism and livelihood strategies<sup>60</sup> (Daskon, 2010; Dragouni, 2017; Iorio and Corsale, 2010; Manwa and Manwa, 2014; Tao and Wall, 2009;). Even fewer of them investigate the relations and impacts of specific heritage tourism processes<sup>61</sup> with people’s livelihoods. Academic research seems to still keep rural livelihood investigation (Scoones, 2009) separate from that of culture, cultural heritage and emerging fields, such as intangible heritage practice.

Research looking at the role of rural livelihoods in the development context still focuses on agriculture and fishing practices or wage labour (Scoones, 2009). The research has consistently asked questions related to the link between livelihood assets or capitals<sup>62</sup> (Scoones, 1998, p. 3), and economic outcomes, inquiring especially into the material aspects, through quantitative analysis (Scoones, 2009). Scholars such as Scoones (2009) or Bebbington (1999) have recognised this as a disciplinary bias in development literature which has failed to give attention to global decision-making processes and emerging fields and to include the long-term shift of local economies based on new strategies, such as strategies based on local cultural heritage.

Chandima Daskon, with the investigation of rural villages in Sri Lanka, demonstrates that livelihood “is necessarily a dynamic and holistic concept that encompasses both material and non-material fulfilment of human lives” (Daskon, 2015, p. 33)<sup>63</sup>. According to Daskon and Binns (2009), the livelihoods of a community - or “the ways how different people in different places live” (Scoones, 2009, p. 172) - are not exclusively about fulfilling basic needs, such as food and shelter (Scoones, 1998). To them, a livelihood also involves

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<sup>60</sup> Tao and Wall (2009) highlighted the role of tourism as one among many rural livelihood strategies. Their study demonstrates that the Shanmei villagers of Taiwan “have changed their lifestyle from traditional, predominantly subsistence hunting and gathering, slash and burn agriculture and fishing, to current mixed livelihood activities that commonly incorporate tourism” (Tao and Wall, 2009, p. 93). In Tao and Wall’s study, the concept of “livelihood” is practical and offers a way to understand tourism processes within the local economic and cultural context in which they are embedded.

<sup>61</sup> Su, Wall and Xu’s study documented the effects of tangible heritage site conservation and tourism impacts on a rural community’s livelihoods. The study shows that “tourism involvement does not automatically lead to improved living standards and enhanced livelihood sustainability” (2015, p. 755).

<sup>62</sup> The literature mostly uses the term *asset* or *capital* to indicate material and social resources, which can be stored, accumulated, exchanged, and put to work to generate a flow of income (Scoones, 1998; 2009; Tao and Wall, 2009).

<sup>63</sup> Based on fieldwork in Sri Lanka, Daskon seeks to explain that a livelihood strategy - and therefore the choice of resources as livelihood assets and capabilities to be and to act (Bebbington, 1999) - is strictly driven by, and dependent on, the variable of local traditional culture (Daskon, 2015).

achieving other objectives, such as ensuring the continuity of traditional customs and knowledge across generations<sup>64</sup> (Daskon and Binns, 2009; Daskon and McGregor, 2012). Despite the study conducted by Daskon (2010a-2010b-2010c; 2015), whose fieldwork data are also published in Daskon and Binns (2009) and Daskon and McGregor (2012), research rarely accounts for the traditional culture and intangible heritage of a society in relation to livelihood investigation and development practice.

Depending on the perspective of investigation and on the proponents (academic, development practitioners or donors), rural livelihood analysis usually accounts for traditional cultures as a liability that has to change, or as a unique asset to be protected and preserved (Daskon, 2010a; Daskon and Binns, 2009). Most of the studies on livelihoods and development often positioned traditional culture as a critical part of a complex set of background constraints (or opportunities) in which the livelihood resources and choices of a given community are embedded (Daskon and Binns, 2009; Tao, Wall and Wismer, 2010). For instance, to Shen, Hughey and Simmons the majority of research on rural livelihoods and tourism accounts for traditional cultures as “background tourism elements (i.e., landscapes, cultures and public attractions)” (2008, p. 23). However, what happens when intangible heritage is one of the important factors overriding actors’ negotiations around access to livelihood assets, such as money, partnerships and alternative activities, also how do local and global scale actions impact intangible cultural heritage assets?

If we think of intangible heritage as a livelihood strategy, or as a means of living (Scoones, 1998), then the notion and conceptualisation of intangible heritage become strictly linked to its translation and trading in different assets for pursuing a livelihood strategy and outcomes. Certainly, developing intangible heritage-based livelihoods requires and presupposes the possibility of manipulating and controlling not only of material elements, but also of the intangible aspects of the cultural element and their creation process as a material resource. A contradictory relation that of manipulating and controlling intangible heritage and its aspects that is more typical of the rural livelihoods approach (Scoones, 2009). This idea of intangible heritage as a resource or capital seems indeed contrasting with that of safeguarding (or preserving) that is against any form of exploitation and manipulation (UNESCO, 2003); it also poses some risks in terms of impacts and control over the intangible heritage creation and transmission process. Already Kuutma warned that the manipulation of intangible heritage for any kind of consumption and valorisation, particularly in museum practice, is an inherently conflictual process with that of

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<sup>64</sup> To Daskon and McGregor, people’s values, customs and traditional knowledge systems are used to build and strengthen the livelihoods, and improve their accessibility (Daskon and McGregor, 2012).

safeguarding, requiring a high degree of negotiation, as well as cooperation in which different power relationships are played out between actors (Kuutma, 2009).

Rather than taking sides in this debate, this dissertation contextualises these discussions (e.g. on revitalisation of intangible heritage as a livelihood and development driver, on safeguarding and cultural commodification) to a specific matter and field of study (Ren, 2009; Scoones, 2009). Therefore, this PhD study will let actors respond, in the analytical Chapters, with their own experience to this dilemma of culture for development, of commodification versus safeguarding. The use of the concept of livelihood and its framework, as an analytical approach (Daskon, 2015; De Haan, 2012; Marschke, 2005; Scoones, 2009), will help further the understanding of the intangible heritage concept, its functionality and also shed light on the process of cultural commodification for the intangible heritage, how it is explained in the following subsections.

#### **3.2.4.1 Sustainable Livelihood Framework and Development Project Investigation**

Investigation into “how different strategies affect livelihood pathways or trajectories is an important concern for livelihoods analysis” (Scoones, 2009, p. 173) in that it helps to understand how livelihoods can be made sustainable. To this regard, different analytical frameworks, such as the sustainable livelihood (SL) framework elaborated by Scoones (1998) have proven their usefulness in capturing and analysing the livelihoods of a community or in analysing the approach of a development action in pushing the livelihood strategies of a community (Scoones, 2009). This framework, further discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis, has been applied recently to a variety of research areas including tourism studies (Su, Wall and Xu, 2015; Tao and Wall, 2009) to acknowledge “the multi-sectoral character of real life” (Su, Wall and Xu, 2015, p. 6). However, to my knowledge, it has never been applied to investigate intangible heritage practice.

The SL framework has proven its usefulness to explore case studies of low-income communities in developing countries and in the empirical investigation of development action “by acting as a simple checklist of issues to explore, prompting investigators to pursue key connections and linkages between the various elements” (Scoones, 1998, p. 13). This framework helps highlight “key connections” as those organisations or institutions mediating the livelihood strategies and outcomes of a specific community or development action (Scoones, 2009). Therefore, those institutional processes and organisations (for instance, the AL project) explain *how* and *by whom* diverse resources and inputs are chosen as strategies (and outcomes) in a given community.

Based on the above reasoning, the SL framework from Scoones is relevant for this Study when assessing weather and in what form the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau is or might be integrated by “key connections” such as a development project action into the livelihood strategies. Yet, the SL framework has been criticised for not being able to account for power relations and local-global dynamics when assessing the livelihoods or development actions (Scoones, 2009). Therefore, to give a clarifying angle also on these aspects of power relations and dynamics, it requires the unpacking of the processes involved, with in-depth qualitative understanding of power relations and actors’ roles that may go underneath the development action implementation (Scoones, 2009; Jacob, 2015). This suggests that the SL livelihood framework is able to provide a common understanding of a rural livelihood system of a community; therefore, it can be chosen to shed light on the role played by the development project in the livelihood choices (see Chapter 7). However, to further the empirical investigation and clarify the perspectives on the intangible heritage-led development initiative there is the need to combine SL framework with actor-network theory (ANT), as will be further outlined in Chapter 5. Research on rural livelihoods has been central to development thinking providing “numerous insights and lessons (not all positive by any means)” (Scoones, 2009, p. 82). However, rural livelihoods research through the SL framework has also shown limitations, including the lack of questioning the role of local knowledge and culture, power or scale dynamics and a lack of linking livelihood investigation to different fields (Scoones, 2009), such as tourism or culture as it will be demonstrated in Chapter 7.

### 3.3 Conclusion

The aim of this Chapter has been, first, to ground the case study in a review of the literature in the fields of intangible heritage, culture, tourism and development action. Second, the Chapter aimed to account for the need of empirical investigation of both material and relational aspects of intangible heritage in order to investigate such a complex object of study in the context of development actions, particularly its link with the process of developing the tourism livelihood strategy.

As section 3.1 demonstrated, an increasing number of researchers are engaging in analysing the 2003 UNESCO Convention, and the intangible heritage documentation and nomination process. This Chapter discussed the continuation of the debate on providing a fixed definition of heritage, as a past or present human act (Harvey, 2001), as a tangible or intangible discourse (Smith, 2006), or as a human *meta-cultural process* (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004). Rather than taking the intangible heritage definition as a starting point or as something granted, I propose, in this thesis, to see intangible heritage as an effect

deployed and recreated through the working relations of the networks it establishes. This is another way to investigate intangible heritage actors and their practices, also *off* the official channels of cultural institutions safeguarding (Isnart, 2015). As shown, little work has been done to safeguard actions interlinking with local actors and larger aims (poverty reduction, tourism, development, social cohesion, environment, etc.) by which the intangible heritage is re-produced, revitalised, promoted and made viable. To this regard, section 3.2 served to contextualise intangible heritage knowledge in the networks of tourism and development research and to establish the link with the investigation on rural livelihoods.

As the literature review demonstrated, the connection between intangible heritage (or traditional cultures) and livelihoods is much less widespread (or non-existent) in the academic research than other uses of the term ‘livelihood’ in literature. The research gaps identified in this section on knowledge of intangible heritage in the livelihood and development context then provided a basis for this thesis to further analyse the underlying processes and issues of the links between intangible heritage, rural livelihood frameworks and the role of development projects, in order to answer the research questions of this research (Chapter 1 of this thesis). If the links between intangible heritage and development implementation are not adequately investigated, and if the contexts in which intangible heritage and its understanding in different valorisations (e.g. as a resource for development and livelihood) are disregarded, then a clarification on the real meaning of intangible heritage, as well as the definition of development for today’s cultural communities, is likely to be partial.

Overall, this literature review pushed further the analysis of intangible heritage and the context through which it is promoted, the AL development project practice, as a new, theoretical framework for insight into intangible heritage knowledge. The analysis of the case study of the Purulia chhau dancers under the AL project from this thesis will provide further insights into the opportunities and challenges of using and safeguarding intangible heritage as a livelihood resource in the tourism and development context.

Perhaps, it is possible to use the new concept of intangible heritage livelihoods as a vehicle for local development and to explain the culture-development nexus. Furthermore, undertaking a detailed study where intangible heritage is explicitly treated in a development project in strengthening the livelihood strategies emphasises the significance of a cultural perspective in sustainable development and livelihood diversification and it highlights the role of intangible heritage in a given rural community of India.

The significance of this investigation is also that it will empirically unpack and analyse the process of cultural commodification of intangible heritage linked to a livelihoods

development action — an evaluative factor that is very insufficiently emphasised and theorised in current critical studies on intangible heritage, tourism and development.



# Chapter 4

## 4. Research Methodology and Methods

“The argument is open-ended. I don’t know where it will lead. I don’t know what kind of social science it implies. What social science inquiry might look like, methodologically or indeed institutionally. Here then, too, I find that I am at odds with method as this is usually understood. This, it seems to me, is mostly about guarantees. Sometimes I think of it as a form of hygiene. Do your methods properly. Eat your epistemological greens. Wash your hands after mixing with the real world. Then you will lead the good research life. Your data will be clean. Your findings warrantable. The product you will produce will be pure. Guaranteed to have a long shelf-life [...]” (Law, 2003, p. 5).

As the quotation above from John Law suggests, this Chapter is about the research paradigm and methodology chosen and applied in my thesis. Research methodology and methods in this study are inextricably integrated with the research process and the questions raised under this study. According to Pereiro, “we must consider the specific social research tools that are most adequate to the problem and to the field being investigated” (Pereiro, 2010, p. 173) in a way to identify and construct the scientific investigation, which provides the interpretative basis for understanding a phenomenon (Dann, Nash and Pearce, 1988). International projects of cooperation and development, such as the AL development project, produce models that have the primary social function of bringing diverse people, interests and viewpoints together to cooperate (Mosse, 2005, p. 46) for a main goal. The convergence of those heterogeneous elements makes a development project successful and, in some cases, also sustainable (Golini and Landoni, 2014; Heeks and Stanforth, 2014; Lewis and Mosse, 2006b; Mosse, 2005). I should research the social reality among these heterogeneous elements in order to increase our knowledge of the intangible heritage practice. Since the beginning, the research process was open to a holistic approach and the research process itself became a part of my learning experience.

This Chapter attempts to explain the rationale behind the research strategy chosen and the theoretical (and philosophical) foundations of this research, which gave rise to the methodology. In the first part, I start by describing the research process and how I came into it. I then highlight the points of connection between the case study of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau and a complex social reality, emphasizing how ambiguity and reflexivity allow for the cultural expression of chhau to become a sort of transformative object inside

the AL development project. Then, I briefly introduce the key concepts guiding the actor-network theory analytical approach for this study, which is further discussed in Chapter 5. I will conclude by discussing the research methods adopted and limitations of this study. Qualitative methods dominated this investigation: unstructured interviews, participant observation notes, document reviews, field notes and visual documentation.

## **4.1 Research Path**

My personal background and experience before starting the research fieldwork are worth mentioning in order to understand how the research journey began. As already mentioned in the abstract, I was coming from a development aid professional background, in Africa and other countries, when, at the end of 2010, I joined the research programme at London Metropolitan University. I was enthusiastically approaching this research work thinking that I would be involved actively in a European Union funded development project working with intangible heritage, traditional cultures and tourism.

My intentions were to investigate the relationship between international development actions and cultural expressions; thus, the AL development project was, for me, the chance to accomplish this goal. As a matter of fact, the AL project aimed to safeguard local cultural expressions and give artists tools to strive amidst crisis and deal with poverty. In very simple words, in this kind of development action, traditions and folklore or listed intangible heritage would have become the engine to boost local development processes.

Initial questions guiding this research came from my previous experience working in the development and humanitarian field. Therefore, my research proposal to London Metropolitan University was to investigate the development project's success and the impacts of project success (or failure) on local communities, on households for instance. Which communities, and what kind of impacts (economic, social, cultural, etc.), were inquiries I was not yet ready to answer, as I only had those general questions in my mind. In my previous work, I experienced directly that international development and aid projects commonly impact rural communities (Diallo and Thuillier, 2004; Lewis and Mosse, 2006a; 2006b; Mosse, 2005) and produce some sort of change: cultural and social changes generated by new incomes, tension between members of the community who benefit and those who do not, discarding of old tradition in the name of a new, more global way of living, often part of a Western imposition. I was expecting the AL development project to overcome vested and partisan interests and positions, somehow, in order to fulfil its goals and succeed (Mosse, 2005).

However, beyond the evaluation of the project's success and impacts, researching development project actions may require an investigation of the project's working relations

and processes (Heeks and Stanforth, 2014; Mosse, 2005; Scott-Smith, 2013). It has already been suggested that, “within the critical deconstructionist framework established by development anthropologists, researchers began to understand the managerial discourse of development itself as an instrument of cognitive control, social regulation or exploitation” (Lewis and Mosse, 2006a, p. 3) that needed to be unpacked.

Before embarking on a description of the complex reality of the AL development project, let me outline more about the research steps and how they have led the research questions and my research process.

#### **4.1.1 Me as a Researcher, Ethnographer and Project Partner**

As part of the AL development project, I was positioned as both an internal part of the AL project staff conducting research, and as an external visitor to the cultural tourism (events and festival), which the project produced and promoted. The RT roles, and my role, oscillated between observation and participation. I interacted as a researcher doing my fieldwork with a mix of humans and objects (Purulia chhau dance, artists, masks and costumes, musicians, project activities, social enterprise’s (SE’s) staff, villagers, UNESCO files and experts, research papers, communication material, etc.) all along, in a process of mutual definition between the subject and object. I contributed to the creation of a specific social reality for the intangible heritage of chhau being investigated as a research topic, between the field of intangible heritage and development with this research. I deconstructed the analysis of the narrative of Purulia chhau under the development project assemblages producing different forms of knowledge: academic material, reported speeches, stories, field notes, video and photos; I published and presented at four international conferences shaping and transmitting the representation of the project, the cultural expression of chhau dance and its revitalisation towards a livelihood strategy, reporting and communicating to outsiders. This simultaneous transformation of the research and the object investigated is an effect of the networking relations (Ren, 2009) also built under the AL development project actor-network<sup>65</sup>.

This thesis, which is also fieldwork description, offers also a view of *how* project partnerships turn into projects of research, and then into a thesis and articles, further discussed in the analytical Chapters of this thesis. The fieldwork’s productions in this perspective are the enacted objectification of a professional culture of researcher, such as ethnographer, and of the object investigated.

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<sup>65</sup> Further discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 of this thesis.

My involvement in the AL development project gave rise to a need for an insider perspective (and adequate methodologies and analytical framework) for a critical understanding of the AL project processes; a perspective, which gradually became more central to my own work over the closing stages of fieldwork, and later, during the period out of the field, while writing this thesis. Yet, a research path that sees the primary research instrument, the researcher, as involved in creating with interpretative work a social reality, cannot be a straightforward research approach that separates theory from phenomenon and methods (Law, 2004). Thus, the contingency and contextualisation of my fieldwork is relevant to this analysis. Hence, in the following subsections, I will describe the story of my research path and how research questions were formulated.

#### **4.1.2 From Working Field Mission to Research Fieldwork**

From the beginning, I did not have a “healthy research life” as defined by Law (2004, p. 11), referring to those steps during the research process that fall into a more regular and classical research path. The reality of my research path was particularly odd; firstly, because, immediately before the research fieldwork, I had a field mission in Haiti for post-emergency reconstruction humanitarian fieldwork, which was emotionally challenging and tiring. Secondly, the path was odd because I did not follow a traditional research path in conducting this study that would normally first require a study of the literature in the field, coursework on methods and how to carry on research. Similar to grounded theory that already moves in a reverse way from deductive research designs (Dann, Nash and Pearce, 1988), my first step was the *fieldwork*. Besides, I began neither with a literature review nor with the study of a definite set of theoretical and methodological norms, which are also a pre-requisite of grounded theory fieldwork. This PhD does not come from a conventional anthropological - ethnographic route – but from a research and development project. Thus, my unconventional research path was since the beginning very empirical and also driven by research deadlines and development project dynamics.

The London Metropolitan University was a research partner to the AL project and my study was funded by the AL project (see also Chapter 3 and 7). As a RT from the London Metropolitan University, we were asked to investigate the project implementation but, in reality, it was not clear what the AL project manager and implementing organisation, the social enterprise (SE), was expecting to find from our analysis. Perhaps they had their interests in having researchers from London enrolled in the project as well as getting international guests, exposure and new international collaborations. The SE wanted the gravitas of academic research and a channel for disseminating their work abroad. The

multidisciplinary London Metropolitan RT, comprised of anthropologists, tourism and cultural heritage specialists, architects, and post-graduate students, was involved at many different project stages (see a further discussion on this actor in Chapter 6).

However, due to AL development project deadlines, bureaucracy and personal work commitments, I was literally thrown in to the realm of the project to start my fieldwork in Purulia - January to May 2011 - and it was not easy to pin down the object of study and “make it unambiguous and clear” (Law, 2004). Arriving in India in January, I spent almost four months between the Purulia region and Calcutta, collecting data and information about the development project and artists, their cultural expression, the SE staff, project related events, partners, and other activities. The fieldwork in Purulia mostly went smoothly, but, in due course, a few problems began to take shape.

At first, it proved difficult to work with all the Purulia chhau artists and other folk artists (3,200 artists) involved in the AL development project. I was finding it impossible to map and investigate all six forms the AL project encompassed as they are reported: first because of their distance one from another (SE, 2010b) and second because of the different level of involvement into the project activities:

“The project covered six folk forms namely Chau dance of Purulia, Jhumur song and dance of Bankura and Purulia, folk drama Gambhira and Domni of Malda, Baul & Fakiri songs of Nadia and Patachitra of Purba and Paschim Medinipur. 3200 folk singers, dancers, musicians, painters, dramatists, lyricists and makers of costumes, instruments, masks and accessories have been covered by the project” (SE, 2010b, p. 1).

Therefore, a choice of a specific case group of artists was done particularly according to my personal interests of investigating intangible heritage recognised under UNESCO schemes, with Purulia chhau dance the only one among the six that was nominated (in 2010) (UNESCO, 2010a). Then, I had to delimit the number of informants because of time and project deadlines. Very soon, I discovered that the SE’s staff had already done something in this direction, based on their classification of artists’ skills. In reality, not all Purulia chhau groups in Purulia Region were actively involved and benefitting in the same way from the development project. Those more involved were those classed as high and medium skilled, and available, in terms of time and distance, to be fully engaged in project’s activities; they became my main informants.

As I was considered also as a ‘project worker’ (see also Chapter 2) the SE scheduled my travels and meetings according to AL project activities and, therefore both the SE and the project constrictions played an important role in the selection of my informants. I quite often felt that I was missing something and failing in relevant aspects of my fieldwork. Certainly, this choice also made my investigation more centred around a specific cultural expression

and a sample of beneficiaries of the AL project. The SE's staff became my main *gatekeepers* to access the villages, but this also meant that my research process was conditioned by one of the main actors in the development project (the SE).

Another problem was linked to the socio-political context of my fieldwork location, that is, the political and social circumstances of rural West Bengal. The Maoist presence in the Purulia region (see also the background Chapter 1) was creating social instability and tensions among people; this had repercussions on my fieldwork. Since the elections were approaching (April, 2011), those tensions were growing. I had to deal with the frustration of asking permission of the SE's project manager<sup>66</sup> to visit villages in specific areas and I was never left alone. Many chhau villages were within a day's journey from my location, which enabled me to meet different artists and participate in rehearsals sometimes in two villages in one day. Despite the short distance, the poor state of some of the roads made the travel time longer and, most of the time, project officers did not allow me to travel at night-time for security reasons (adducing the risks from Maoist insurgents). To my great regret, I did not manage to visit the main chhau mask makers' village, Charida, which was in an area under frequent Maoist attacks (Field notes, 2011).

On the other hand, I must acknowledge that, thanks to the AL project and SE, approaching informants was relatively easy. Artists were very interested to give me their opinion and feedback on the project activities and tell me about their life as artists, show me their houses, tell me about the glories of being chhau and what being a chhau really means. Feelings of pride and interest to be part of a research emerged during our conversations: they used to tell me that they were happy having someone do research on them, that this fact made them proud of being chhau dancers (Field notes, 2011).

#### **4.1.3 The Subject Positioning and the Questions**

When friends ask me about my research in India, I always tell them one or two particular events. I cannot help but think of a conversation that I stumbled into shortly after I had begun my research, in 2011, in Purulia town. In the course of this conversation, Kabir expressed great interest in my arrival and research. He actually came to the hotel where I was staying in Purulia Township and introduced himself saying that he would follow me during my visits, if I wanted, and that he was available to give any help I needed (Field notes, 2011). He provided me with some good information and a lot of things to think about. Sometimes, he turned our conversation to question traditional chhau dance, classical and

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<sup>66</sup> This decision was made for my security and safety.

modern aspects of the dance and on what meaning chhau dance has for the contemporary society of Purulia. In fact, he seemed to be substituting the word ‘classical’ with the word ‘traditional’, as if they were interchangeable, and addressing ‘modern chhau’ as much more than only a cultural practice. He had challenged me to think about my topic in new and different ways. My original assumptions that impacts on the tradition bearers and community were coming from the AL project and should have been clearly visible in the change of life or social behaviours were something I needed to detach from in order to focus on real happenings in the social events investigated. Unconsciously, reporting this story of initial conversations with Kabir to friends, I had already identified important moments or experiences that helped me communicate something essential about this research study to an interested audience, such as how the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau is created in the contemporary everyday life of Purulia and how the AL project was taking part in it.

Similarly, the first time I observed Purulia chhau artists performing and attended a project cultural event, it was a very formative experience. Those particular experiences presented me with a whole set of ideas and questions that I encountered during the course of my research and led me to rethink the relationship between interpretations and representation of the cultural element and of its revitalisation among the different actors. In addition, how I had to approach the AL development project as a process, in which all the actors were bringing in different interpretations and interests impacting the cultural element for artists and onlookers ended up becoming a significant focus of my research project. All these encounters shaped the way that I shaped my research project and set the stage for nodes of research that I had not yet pinned down before my arrival in Purulia. If, originally, the main research question was on the impacts (economic, social, etc.) of the AL project on the communities of artists, slowly the final questions were narrowing to how intangible heritage practice works out in the realm of a development project and what this says about the intangible heritage (as well as on developmental initiative), for instance on its safeguarding as a livelihood. I realized that, in order to properly safeguard intangible heritage, we first need to re-conceptualise it. Instead of regarding each instance of intangible heritage as a static artefact, we must see it as an on-going, evolving, relational process that arises from the interplay among global and local actors, and human and non-human elements. However, this shift would present a real challenge, as, then, the question of *how* to preserve and safeguard intangible heritage becomes very complex.

## **4.2 Justification of Methodology Adopted**

After a few encounters in Bamnia village, I came to realize that the AL project dealt with Purulia chhau; however, in reality, chhau dance was a much more complex entity

encompassing, for instance, already three different local ways of being chhau: Shearkeila chhau, Orissa and Purulia chhau. All of these three differences in style, communities or artists and lifestyle form part of the officially nominated chhau dance in the Representative List of Intangible Heritage of the World (December, 2010) (UNESCO, 2010a). In the attempt to secure the viability of this cultural element, or *intangible heritage* as called since UNESCO nomination, the AL development project was also taking part in shaping its contemporary representation and creation, thus, further complicating the definition of chhau dance and *how* it is represented. The relevant point here is that the development project, in its complexity, also showed some sort of agency on the cultural element, creating confusion with regard to the object of my study, which resulted in constant change. Law suggests that, to approach an evolving target or a shape-shifting object, methodologies need to be capable of catching this complexity and adapt to a world that includes “tide, flux, and general unpredictability” (Law, 2004, p. 7).

This study deals mainly with the cultural practice originated in Purulia region; therefore, classical anthropological theories would suggest approaching this intangible heritage by first studying the specific group of people with their traditions and contextualisation. However, the cultural practice interrelated with multiple actors, namely those coming from academia, the SE, UNESCO, tourism, local authorities, international audiences, performing stages etc., physical spaces and policies, and the international cooperation and development AL project. Its ontological reality already existed within a set of relations with other fields, groups, objects and spaces. As the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau is not an isolated entity, it should be explored through a close examination of the interactions of which it makes and is part. This approach can be closely associated with interactionism and ethnomethodology (Law, 2004).

Assuming that social processes can be described and understood (Geertz, 1973), the most appropriate way of enhancing our knowledge about the reality of the intangible heritage of chhau and its safeguarding through an alternative livelihood strategy, is by making enquiries of practitioners: knowledge of this translation process should be explored through the unique ways actors reflect, with their actions, the social events they live in.

Thus, interpretive paradigms will inform this study, analysing behaviours from the perspective of the phenomenon being researched, which allows the emic position to emerge, enabling the identification of different social realities (Jennings, 2001). That is, I studied and described this cultural phenomenon and the development project in terms of its internal elements and how they function, rather than in terms of external schemas.

According to Cohen and Cohen (2012) interpretivists believe in multiple complex realities constantly in relation: they embrace a subjective epistemology, understanding of the



researched phenomena from the point of view of the people involved and the phenomena being researched. An inductive approach, through socio-material actors, implies certain epistemological choices starting from the observation of social and empirical events and gradually constructing interpretation and theories. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) associate the interpretivist approach with the qualitative research methods, such as ethnography, participant observation, thick description and study of phenomena in situ. Therefore, the next section will describe my role as ethnographer.

### **4.3 Playing the Role of the Ethnographer**

I have heard and experienced almost all the information contained in this study and my notes<sup>67</sup>. I have been writing in my notebooks, videotaping and photographing living information from a variety of sources, and, until today, I have been analysing field notes and texts: organising, sorting, and analysing the fieldwork notes, while trying to sort out their role in this research process. I usually went out in the villages with a pen, notebook and a small video camera. I photographed all the villages or houses visited, sometimes even made a short video of the villages, and took notes during meetings or events in my notebooks. I have also found along the way that I had “too much” mixed information for my final research project, such that I sometimes completely lost my way or went off topic. As a way of inquiring about, writing and recording the reality of people, behaviours and places in a specific historical period or specific event, ethnographic fieldwork helped this research process to approach and collect information. As already recognized by scholars, ethnography, as a holistic method, is equipped to deal with the complexity of the project practice, with development initiatives and cultural tourism events (Cohen and Cohen, 2012; Mosse, 2005; Pereiro, 2010; Ren, Pritchard and Morgan, 2010). Lewis and Mosse argued that “ethnographic work has the unique potential to show how change is brought about, not through the logic of official policy intentions, or even through its hidden operation as a discourse of power, but through processes of compromise and contingent action of various kinds” (2006a, p. 4). Since intangible heritage is emerging in the fieldwork as a complex activity, ethnography, as the principle tool of anthropology, gives the theoretical and methodological instrument to unfold the social and material changes. Ethnography provides a means to intimately connect with internal perspectives and all the actors in our process.

Additionally, an actor-network analytical framework helped to describe and analyse what was collected with ethnographic methods; thus, the progressive constitution of the AL

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<sup>67</sup> A part where clearly stated that I used secondary resources, this study is an ethnographic research therefore I have reported facts, events, places and their descriptions and conversations in which I have been participating, both as ‘observer’ and also as project partner.

project actor-network, the actors and the actions. “To study how actor-networks are composed and maintained, actor-network theorists suggest that social scientists should ethnographically follow the actors” (Toennesen, Molloy and Jacobs, 2006, p. 6), which is what I did during my fieldwork in West Bengal and Europe. As with anthropology, the ANT focuses on the relationships between the local and global dynamics of a social event, even though it is contextualised in the case of a very localised community.

ANT builds bridges across different qualitative methods and contemporary social analysis. To understand how ANT’s approach can provide the appropriate analytical framework for this research study, I need to go through its main significance and guide its application to this case study, in the next sections. In words already used by Law, “this research project is an attempt at responding creatively to a world that is taken to be composed of an excess of generative forces and relations” (Law, 2004, p. 9 cited in Ren, 2009, p. 50).

#### **4.4 The Analytical Framework of ANT Applied to Intangible Heritage Study**

The ANT approach, developed in the sociology of scientific knowledge (Callon, 1986; Latour, 1986; 1999; Law, 2003; 2004; Law and Hassard, 1999; Law and Urry, 2004), considers scientific knowledge also as social product (Rodger, Moore and Newsome, 2009), which can be explained by constructionism. Thus, a work of science, and any kind of work, in Latour’s approach (2005), exists as a juxtaposition of heterogeneous elements that can be human (for instance: assistants, researchers, donors, etc.) and non-human (articles, grants, any technological means, natural elements, handmade elements, artefacts, masks, etc.).

Latour goes further in suggesting that actions in social reality should not be seen as primarily human but “as an association of actants” (Latour, 1999, p. 182). In other words, any action is not accomplished per se by only human actors; rather it requires a wide range of surrounding elements and derives from the engagement with other actors, in turn, creating a certain effect. All of these influencing elements should be considered together with the act and constitute an actor-network. This theoretical suggestion allows me to consider factors and actors during the AL project within a network of relationships, simultaneously reconstructing a social context of which they form a single part, as I will further discuss in Chapter 5. For instance, in the specific case of Purulia chhau and the AL project, the actors simultaneously rebuilt and linked local and international social contexts around the element of chhau dance upon which they act through conferences and international progress reports, organizing cultural products, festivals and trainings where artists played their role as chhau dancers.

According to ANT, in a specific period of time, heterogeneous elements (human and non-human) work together producing and “translating” an element that other actors in the network will take, interpret and re-use. For example, the AL project developed six new and innovative productions of chhau dance (Field notes, 2011; SE, 2010a)). These modern versions of Purulia chhau were presented as final cultural products (successful outcomes of the project), promoted also through cultural tourism events and festivals, thereby helping to increase the livelihoods of the artists (Field notes, 2011).

However, Latour (2005) argues that ANT is not a real theory because it does not explain *why* social phenomena happen. He maintains that ANT is more an analytical framework to explore the relational ties within a network (Latour, 1999; Latour, 2005) and it is in these terms that I understood and applied actor-network theory to this study: to explore the relational ties within the AL project network and around the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau<sup>68</sup>.

As Dann, Nash and Pearce suggest, “a body of logically interconnected complex propositions which provides an interpretative basis for understanding phenomena” (1988, p. 4) is, of course, a theory, which is exactly, as far as I understand, Latour’s approach and the components of this “how to” research model, the case of ANT propositions. In ANT, there are methodological principles to guide the understanding phenomena, such as the principle of *generalised symmetry*. An example of this principle is the rejection of all a priori distinctions between natural and social events, and human and non-human, material and non-material distinctions among actors (Latour, 2005; Law, 2009). According to this principle of generalized symmetry, any researcher applying ANT should not “impose asymmetry between human intentional action and material world of causation” (Latour, 2005, p. 76) and should follow the interactions of both human and non-human actors.

Another implication of ANT is the interpretation of action as an association of actants or *translation* (Callon and Law, 1982; Callon, 1986; Law, 1997). The translation is the most important of actor-network negotiations: a relation that does not move causality but induces two or more actors into coexisting work and associations (Latour, 2005).

Translation, therefore, is a negotiation process in which actors:

(1) construct common meanings around a major issue (for instance, the poor living condition of tradition bearers in West Bengal, endangering the perpetuation of the intangible cultural heritage of chhau and other local folk arts; or the role of intangible heritage in development process);

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<sup>68</sup> I will expand on the description on how ANT is used in this thesis and discuss the use of ANT for the investigation of development project in Chapter 5.

- (2) recruit and position other stakeholders, as actors, under the AL project network, and make them representatives for collectives or groups (For instance, the SE leading and implementing the AL development project selects the heritage expressions, the tradition bearers and chhau groups, etc.); and
- (3) pursue individual and collective aims and enrol actors to the AL development project goals.

ANT is a story of networks in transformation and of a new syntax made of meanings and uses attributed to translated elements by the actors in a specific network (Law, 2009). In the ANT theory, the translation process is seen as a change, and, according to Law, it brings with it the establishment of new relationships (2009). ANT is a study of the way an element – such as the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau - has passed from hand to hand and how it has been translated and constantly associated with other entities (Latour, 2005; Law, 2004). A change happens in what is transferred; in our case study, a change is happening with the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau when it is translated in a livelihood strategy under the AL project. In this PhD, therefore, ‘translation’ simply means that the intangible heritage is transferred and necessarily starts to change during the AL project actor-network into something else (see Chapter 7, 8 and 9). Project actions of revitalisation, marketing promotion and other cultural tourism activities established the terms for this translation of the intangible heritage in a livelihood, as this thesis aims to demonstrate.

In addition, actors in the AL project are also part of other sub-networks. For instance, in this research investigation, once again, the intangible cultural element is transformed into a new form of knowledge for heritage practitioners and other stakeholders through the sub-network of relations established between the RT and the AL project network (see Chapter 6).

In this research, I refer to ANT theory and the model of representation elaborated in a four-phase translation model of network construction (Callon, 1986; Callon and Law, 1982). In my interpretation, this model applies to the case reconstruction of the AL development project (see Chapter 5). I can draw attention to how negotiations and relations happened and what they produced, as well as trace the use of the cultural expression in the livelihood transformation process.

To summarise, these are some of the reasons why the combination of ethnography and ANT offers a methodological route into relevant theoretical and analytical frameworks for this study:

1. Both approach reality as a social construct;
2. ANT focuses on the formation of new elements (objects and their social realities) through a translation process that simply is a relational process (Callon, 1986; Latour, 2005; Law, 2004; Ren, Pritchard and Morgan, 2010);
3. Both share a methodological orientation towards investigating new associations and the production, through a fieldwork description, of events and behaviours.

According to actor-network theorists' point of view, the only way to discover and trace the intangible heritage practice and the social event investigated (the development project) is to first "abandon any distinction between material and immaterial, human and non-human, and the significance of these distinctions for the local–global interactions in which they are embedded" (Latour, 2005). In these perspectives, we can only understand intangible heritage if we see it as an evolving process, and we can only analyse these evolving processes if we understand them as networks, in which both humans and non-human objects participate as *actants*; therefore, having an agency on the process and on the other elements involved. Hence, rather than taking Purulia chhau dance for granted, this study analyses it as a heritage-in the making or "living"; and rather than viewing the heritage-making process from an etic (outside-in) perspective, I consider it from an emic (inside-out) perspective.

In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I will begin to describe the AL assemblages and actors, respectively, and interrogate the community of the project, but first, let me turn to a consideration of the data methods that I employed.

#### **4.5 Research Methods and Data**

Sandra Harding (1987) in *Feminism and Methodology* defines data-gathering methods in the following way: "[a] research method is a technique for [...] gathering evidence. One could reasonably argue that all evidence-gathering techniques fall into one of the three categories: listening to (or interrogating) informants, observing behaviour, or examining historical traces and records" (Harding, 1987, p. 2).

The choice of qualitative methods was based on the nature of the study and the social dimension of the questions raised at the beginning. Qualitative methods were considered appropriate to investigate the deployment of associations of the practice of safeguarding the intangible heritage of chhau in the realm of a development project and to capture the different visions of the actors involved. Divergent knowledge and views could better be captured by qualitative methods, which are useful when the interest is to display the multiplicity of viewpoints, meanings, orderings, representations and practices of the object

investigated (Holbraad, Pedersen and Viveiros de Castro, 2014; Latour, 2005; Law, 2004; Ren, 2011; Viveiros de Castro, 2004). In particular, stories of ethnographic fieldwork can draw our attention and offer illustrative examples of particularly important moments or experiences. “In methodological terms, fieldwork makes the researcher describe, translate, explain and interpret the culture and the studied social relationships, what people say, what people do, what people think should be done, and the confrontation between what people claim they do and what they really do” (Pereiro, 2010, p. 176). Thus, data in this thesis is in qualitative form and is derived from conversations, informal interviews, meetings, descriptions, declarations, and personal observations. According to the principle of generalised symmetry (Latour, 2005; Law, 2004), I have also made use of data such as written documents (project reports, press articles on the AL project, project schedules, research reports, previous research on chhau from Purulia) photos and video, UNESCO documents and the nomination file of Purulia chhau in UNESCO’s list (UNESCO, 2010a). In terms of ANT, the Purulia chhau nomination file from UNESCO (UNESCO, 2010a) plays a particularly important role as actant in the representation of traditional chhau at the international level. Therefore, I do not consider these written and other material accounts on chhau dance as secondary data in my analysis but as non-human actants. I address the role of some of these non-human actants in the AL project network in Chapter 6, 7 and also in Chapter 8.

Data is presented constantly throughout the thesis and is not relegated to a specific Chapter. However, I devote Chapters 2, 6, 7, and 8, in particular, to the ethnographic description of the project actor-network reconstruction, its translations and controversies.

Participant observation and field notes were my main research tools, along with a small hand-held camera, and my capacity for interaction with artists and the SE’s staff. Key informants were used to seek factual information about the AL project activities and the state of the Purulia chhau dance tradition. The entry into the field and the negotiation of relationships, however, passed through the main gatekeeper, comprised by the SE staff. Once arrived in Calcutta, the SE director invited me to stay at the SE’s guesthouse. There, foreign students, researchers and other guests visiting the AL project and participating in the project’s events were offered a temporary place to stay. It was supposed to be a few days’ arrangement before leaving Calcutta to visit the rural areas and move to Purulia. In reality, I stayed in that guesthouse more than I wanted to stay due to the political and social condition in Purulia (see also Chapter 1) and due to my position in terms of the power dynamics amongst the SE’s staff. Due to the fact that my research played a role in the project activities and that I was also seen as a “project worker”, although very temporary in that

context, I was scheduled trips and visits to the village by the SE's staff. Initially, I viewed my extended stay in Calcutta as a disadvantage because I wanted to spend time among Purulia chhau artists. However, I realised later that those days spent in Calcutta reinforced information about the SE, their day-to-day work, international events and festivals organised under the AL project, and project's partnerships. Field observations in Calcutta, at the SE office, were useful to observe and to trace power relations among actors. Besides, these field observations were revealed as very relevant to the reconstruction of the AL network shape and phases.

#### **4.6 Selection of Informants**

According to Creswell (2009), the qualitative research approach requires a purposive selection of participants, sites, video and document material that better helps to understand the problem investigated and answer research questions. Once arrived in the Purulia region, in approaching the artists, the presence of two project field workers was essential to my integration into the project activities. Having these points of contact within the town of Purulia helped me to rapidly gain access to the community, get in touch with the main chhau groups in Bamnia and a few other villages, and start to follow artists' and project workers' activities. Engaging effectively with the research settings can be helped by the researcher's approach - being sensitive, open, patient and flexible, having interview skills - but also requiring the help of others, who act as gatekeepers (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 62). I was introduced in the artists' villages by local field project staff and often accompanied by another project worker. Purulia chhau *ustads* (masters in chhau dance) from Bamnia, four men, were key informants of this study, along with a passionate local researcher, Kabir, from Purulia Township, who was also involved in project activities due to his relationship of trust and established knowledge with Bamnia chhau dancers. My main respondents were middle-aged men (from 40 years old to 70 years old) with long, well established careers as dancers, and the acquisition of social status as masters (*ustads*) in chhau dance, each one leading a chhau group of 20-25 younger members.

As already mentioned in this study, key informants and other respondents were selected based on their involvement with the AL project and the project skills classification. Other informants (such as mask makers, jhumur singers, chhau artists not involved in the AL project, a UNESCO programme specialist, and villagers) were selected both purposively and on the basis of accessibility to their role and villages.

#### 4.7 Informal Conversation and Direct Observation

Field notes emerged from informal conversations, unstructured interviews and observations about artists' daily activities, villages, dance trainings, shows and the project's activities. The latter was particularly part of that "following actors" role I had in the AL project when I went to attend chhau performances in Calcutta, in Gaurbhanga village and in Bamnia village, just to mention a few. As outlined by Ritchie and Lewis (2003), participant observation and conversation can be useful in a complex social context:

"If the subject of the research is a particularly complex process or interaction, if aspects of it are less obvious or may escape awareness, or if important elements of it are likely to be instinctive, then the participant's own account will be partial. Similarly, if people are unlikely to be willing to talk frankly about something, or if it is so bound up with social rules and expectations that they cannot be expected to give a truthful account, then naturally occurring data will be more useful" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003, p. 57).

The social reality in rural Purulia was quite complex. Due to the fact that this dance art is traditionally considered a men-only art, a family tradition passed from father to son, from *guru* to *shisha*; hence, the conveyance of tradition and information belongs to men and has almost completely omitted women, from this role, in chhau dance art. The SE's staff in the field working with chhau artists consisted only of men. It was impossible for me, at the village level, to gain that intimacy with women and have them speak with me about their partners, fathers or sons doing chhau dance. Women were always unreachable for me; therefore, information on women's positions never emerged in the course of my interviews and conversations.

To shed more light on the status of issues around chhau, women's role and the study area, I made use of direct observations, which helped me to verify and compare information gathered from artists and project workers. For instance, I learned from informants that cultural resource centres were built by the project in Bamnia and in Chelyama (Sagarka village area) for the use of chhau dancers and jhumur artists and in Gaurbhanga for Bauls and Fakirs. I learned that chhau dance is considered a purely masculine dance in rural areas and that, traditionally, women are not involved in chhau dance. Feminine chhau groups are a new contemporary evolution of the dance.

Further observations were applied to assess what kind of use artists made of those centres (how much they were used, for what purpose, how the community related to them, level of ownership, participation, etc.). Again, key informants reported how the locals traditionally



behaved when attending a Purulia chhau performance, and observations, particularly during the *Chhau Utsav*<sup>69</sup>, helped in the assessment of participation and the level of involvement of chhau artists behind the production of chhau stories. In addition, observation during the group field visits to Gaurbhanga and Nadia district, to attend festivals organised by the project, provided a better understanding of the locals' level of participation<sup>70</sup>.

A total of 10 chhau *ustads* (or masters), all men, from different villages, were followed and engaged with in conversation and unstructured interviews. The project field project staff assisted with translation issues and simplifying questions to ensure that they were understood. Data was also gathered with their help, as they were with me during visits and interviews and helped with language difficulties, since many artists spoke local dialects Santhali or Bengoli and did not have any other language resources. Thus, I relied mostly on field key officers for interpretation and translations. We used English and Hindi as main languages in our conversations and I took my notes in English. I graduated with a master's degree from the School of Oriental Studies and Languages of the University La Sapienza in Rome, in 2006, and my main studies were on Indian languages and cultures; I studied Hindi for 4 years and Sanskrit for 2 years. My knowledge of Hindi was often not sufficient to understand their words because locals spoke a mixture of dialects I could not follow. Informal conversations and unstructured interviews were carried out bearing in mind the weaknesses and strengths that surround these qualitative methods, which are really dependent on the interviewer's capacity for interaction, on language issues and other socially and culturally circumscribed skills, particularly when there is also need to rely on an interpreters when the conversations become more complex.

Visits to private houses, local schools and academies to interview artists were also part of the data collection. Site visits of proposed areas for cultural tourism trails at Kashipur Palace (near Purulia Township) and chhau dance local academies in Baliagara were among the observations made. Photographs were taken of chhau artists performing, areas visited and income generating activities, such as the *bidi* business. (See more details on this account in Chapter 7)

Many photographs were taken during the *Chhau Utsav* (festival) in February to document the differences among the chhau groups and performances and to complement what already emerged during conversations about the existence of different styles, of modern/traditional chhau dance. In the latter event, I have made more use of video-recorded materials, since,

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<sup>69</sup> The *Chhau Utsav* is a chhau festival held in Bamnia organised for the first time by the AL project, and further discussed in Chapter 9.

<sup>70</sup> See Chapter 8 for a discussion on the events in Gaurbhanga.

with 30 chhau groups performing over five days, the video helped me to capture much that I could not describe in my notes.

#### **4.8 Textual Analysis and Non-Human Agencies**

Field notes from observation, informal conversations and unstructured interviews were supplemented by material including documentation from UNESCO Nomination file, relevant research articles, AL project reports and press papers about chhau published by the local and national newspapers collected both during and after the fieldwork. These sources of information also constitute the non-human actants of the AL actors-network; therefore, I considered them primary data and discuss them further in the analytical Chapters. The analysis of these written documents was also required as soon as I realised that they shed light on the extent of actors' collaborations and participation in the AL project, as well as the positions of the actors. Further analysis of press articles gave me insight into the SE's position as a new cultural entrepreneur and main mediator for the translation of folk arts such as chhau dance in livelihood assets further discussed through all this thesis.

Aspects of representational and promotional uses of the intangible heritage of chhau emerged from the analysis of instruments of communication (web, articles, press declarations and research papers from the SE researchers, the UNESCO website, project events brochures). These communication materials, along with other primary data from personal conversations with artists and SE staff, brought to light arguments put across by intangible heritage experts on implementation of the 2003 Convention, such as the artists involvement in decision making processes, interpretations on how to revitalise the intangible heritage and conflicts over actors' interpretations and use of the cultural expression.

Document analysis from secondary sources, mainly collected after the fieldwork in India ended, has also contributed to the production of ethnographic data and helped to contextualize the case study of Purulia chhau under the AL project and in West Bengal. I gained background knowledge on the history of Purulia chhau art, its traditional and modern aspects, issues of poverty and the commencement of the SE's work within the area encompassed by the project.

The analysis of data from documents had to be further carried out after the fieldwork finished, in order to consolidate field data for the research interpretation process.

#### **4.9 Data Analysis and Interpretation: The Meaning Behind the Action**

The analysis of data was guided by themes emerging from the ethnographic data and guided by the main research questions. When I was doing my fieldwork, I found that people

repeatedly made reference to different representations of chhau, particularly to “classical” or “traditional” and “modern” chhau. This phrase, or idea, became an organizing theme that helped me both to understand and represent my informants’ experiences with, and understandings of, the differences between aspects of the cultural expression: the process of production, transmission, revitalisation and the role of chhau dance for artists and for the project. I was able to re-examine the ethnographic notes I had made to analyse how and when artists talked about the modern chhau and the classical chhau and how this contrasted with the innovations brought in by the project. (See Chapter 9 for a further discussion on this theme.) This theme became an organizing metaphor for my study and has driven the topic towards analysis and its conclusion. Along with this main theme, innovation versus modernisation, other themes emerged from the field notes and other texts at the very beginning of the analysis of whether chhau is a family tradition, a tourism destination, a livelihood, a cultural heritage to be safeguarded, or religious practice. These themes were: safeguarding versus development, participation in safeguarding actions, significance of community, intangible heritage driven development, revitalisation process. Those themes provided the basis for further data analysis. The data was mainly analysed using the ANT analytical framework and with the help of a previous sustainable livelihood framework (Scoones, 1998), as I will explain in further detail in Chapter 5.

Conversations, field note observations, and photo and video data were transcribed and coded into themes in relation to theoretical concepts, and participants’ and personal observations. The process of assigning codes enabled me to sort through records in a systematic manner. I have made use of NVivo qualitative software to store, transcribe, organize and code all the data of this research study.

#### **4.9.1 Positionality and Reflexivity**

If someone or something acts within a network, it must be part of the description itself. Latour had in mind a relativist sociology (Latour, 2009) in which the researcher, participated in the creation of knowledge. I was officially part of the project and this positioned me and my research as a piece within the mosaic of the same social event investigated. There was a process of mutual definition, in the course of which I stepped in voluntarily, was associated with and obliged through power relations, and stayed faithful to my role in the project process. As a researcher, I had to constantly negotiate my position and bear in mind the power relations to ensure that the data collected was valid and reliable. Through a constructive role and through engaging in project activities, I acquired knowledge of the discourses and relationships involved with the project management. As an actor along with

others (artists, local staff, other researchers, etc.), I had to operate within the net of the development project structure, and, therefore, within scheduled trips and visits, attend project events and fairs. I often forgot to observe myself when I was in the field. I only began to do this retrospectively, when back in Europe. Studying data and writing this thesis have been extensions of that role in the field and helped to put some distance between the events investigated and my role within them.

However, in reality, when I draw from the stories of the development project or chhau artists, it is, again, my story, my judgement, and my interpretation, as ANT theorists suggest (Latour, 2005; Law, 2004; Mosse, 2005).

#### **4.10 Limitations of This Study**

Though I made stringent efforts to ensure the reliability of the data, I cannot dispute the fact that not all the information was completely perfect. I went through different limitations during my odd research path, and challenges described at the beginning of this Chapter contributed to the difficulties of data collection. I had many limitations during the fieldwork research: limited time, funds, limited information access by the SE, inaccessibility to some of the project areas, absence of the preliminary library research phase, and sometimes even limited independence (often for security reasons).

Later, I also recognised that, despite my presence and my double role as project worker and researcher, my actual participation had been very limited. I realised that, during the first stay in Purulia, I had become closely associated with the groups of chhau artists in Bamnia and initially with the SE (see also Chapter 2) by spending most of my time in that village. This connotation has precluded associations with other Purulia chhau groups. In reality, other groups were (and are still) there. In the government's list at the time of my field work, there were almost 250 chhau groups regularly registered as 'folk dance groups'; although, only 34 were officially involved in the AL project (Field notes, 2011). In order to address the limit of having informants all coming from the nearest village of Bamnia, I also reached other villages: Tunta, Baliagara, Sagarka, Jhalda, Chakra, Chelyama, Kachahatu and some not included in the AL project, such as Balarampur in Purulia Sadar West, a subdivision of the Purulia District. As a result, individual unstructured interviews and conversations were conducted apart from Bamnia and Purulia Town. For instance, as suggested by the same chhau artists, some jhumur singers, and a mask maker family were also visited, interviewed and asked to participate in informal conversations.

Limitations of this study are also linked to the gender bias, which produces particular kinds of data with male-only perspectives and interpretations of chhau dance and the AL project.

First of all, being a woman and a stranger to chhau communities was certainly a challenge. For example, for many villagers I was a distraction to them as I looked and dressed differently. I was very careful about what I was wearing and tried to be as simple as possible. However, I cannot dispute the fact that being the only women among my informants was difficult. The fact of having gained confidence with the key project staff, Kabir, Prem, Amid and Ray and who were with me during my meetings with the artists, helped me to create, from the beginning, a friendly relationship with the artists. Some, like Kabir and some of the chhau masters, Jay and Pandit for example, behaved with me as some foster “uncles” showing attention and care of me. For example, Jay the chhau master cooked for me more than once and he cooked fish, which is not so common in the arid land of Purulia.

Second of all, I was able to capture women’s role only through observation of their daily life and not through direct interviews or conversations. Initially, I was not aware of the level of participation of women in the six folk arts touched by the project. Quite soon, I realised that women were not involved directly in the heritage practice of chhau dance and very few were direct beneficiaries of the project. Those involved in project activities were coming from bauls and fakirs music, from jhumur music and dance or from dolmi and gambhira theatre but not from chhau dance. As already stated, chhau dance is considered a purely masculine expression in rural areas. Male dancers play the role of women when stories require a female role. Women have never been explicitly part of this tradition because, according to dancers, chhau dance requires physical strength and resistance, capacity to jump and perform acrobatic steps, to play and dance for long hours by night and having the time to rehearse and train during the year (Field notes, 2011). Besides, chhau dance traditionally is a form of contest between two or three groups, which can last all night beginning from the late evening, during a festival or a local event. Artists play for at least three hours and sometimes drink alcohol in order to keep going or to celebrate the end of the contest. Even helpers (those helping the dancers get dressed with make-up and masks before a show) have to be men. Kabir reported to me that it is not considered appropriate for a woman to stay up all night and go along with all those men: a chhau group can reach 30/35 members (Shuba, 2011), including musicians, dancers, helpers, masters and drivers, and all of them are men (Field notes, 2011).

Women were always absent during my field visits and my meetings with chhau artists because they do not participate directly to chhau dance rehearsal or shows. Against this backdrop, I was able to capture women’s role in chhau life through observation. Women are usually not part of chhau dancers’ and musicians’ groups, but they have a strong supportive role within the household division of labour of chhau artists’ communities. Men involved in chhau dancing are only free to participate because women are running (with the help of

other family members) most of the household activities (Chapter 7). Their absence in my field notes, in some cases, reveals the main resource that allowed chhau artists to dedicate their time and be fully engaged in chhau art, which is the women (and other family members) reliance at household level.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

As this Chapter showed, the methodology adopted in this thesis builds on a very personal and empirical research path. In order to understand the intangible heritage of chhau dance in the contemporary world of a development project, not only does the society that constructs and uses it need to be studied and analysed, but also the research process and the written accounts produced need to be studied and analysed as well. In this thesis, it is argued that not only is intangible heritage, in the development project perspective, a continuous process or a “way of cutting the different parts of the cultural tradition in a certain way, but so is the research and knowledge, which enables or coproduces this construct” (Ren, 2009, p. 11).

Firstly, the research methods approach was established as being situated in ethnography as a form of qualitative research aiming at obtaining a thick description of the social events investigated (Geertz, 1973). In a second step, specific research strategies for analysis were outlined and individual elements of these strategies were explained. While a general strategy aimed at identifying an appropriate research method, a specific strategy was adopted to answer the research questions (raised in Chapter 1) that were slowly emerging during the fieldwork in 2011. The specific analytical strategy introduced in this Chapter, and more deeply discussed in Chapter 5, involved the development of an analytical methodology drawing on actor-network theory (ANT) (Callon, 1986) to reconstruct and investigate the AL development project and the assemblages in which the intangible heritage is constantly connected under the project process. The ANT description is established as the essential means to analyse data and obtain research findings.

Thirdly, this Chapter also presented my research path and described it as created by the different elements, such as the researcher’s background, the social relations established in the fieldwork, the particular event investigated and the application of different knowledge-generating methods and techniques (ethno methodologies, actor-network theory, interpretivism and inductive research methods). In this perspective, the enactment of intangible heritage knowledge in this piece of research, academic papers, conferences, and so on, are seen as generated through, and inseparable from, the research practices, the researcher and the social event investigated (Ren, 2011; Ren, Pritchard and Morgan, 2010).

The results of the research methods and strategy are presented in the following analytical Chapters where information is introduced according to the main themes emerging from literature and data analysis, and that are important for understanding, and subsequently theorising the intangible heritage's link with livelihood development and its safeguarding through a livelihood strategy approach.

# Chapter 5

## 5. Drawing an Actor-Network Reconstruction of Intangible Heritage Based Development

In this Chapter I account for the approach that forms the analytical framework of this thesis which I have chosen to apply to the case study of intangible heritage of Purulia chhau in the development action context of the AL project. I will explain the socio-material approach inspired by the actor-network theory (ANT) (Latour, 2005; Law and Singleton, 2005) and adopted as a way to link the theoretical initial questions about intangible heritage, livelihoods and development actions to the empirical analysis of data collected in the field, in India.

I will do so by accounting first of all for the ontology and methodology of ANT approach in the context of international development actions and tourism studies (4.1). I will then discuss how it offers a new way of recognising intangible heritage as a socio-material construct at the stake of international (and local) development interests and actors (4.1.1). Particularly *how* the analytical frameworks deducted by actor-network theory can be specifically applied to this case study that places an intangible heritage element (Purulia chhau dance) at the stake of a development networks. I wish to show that speaking of the intangible heritage in development context pushes our understanding of intangible heritage from a simple cultural element towards a multifaceted socio-material object existing also in the complex arena of livelihood and development strategies. As will be outlined within this thesis, Purulia chhau dance can be described as a traditional culture, a heritage to be protected, a tourism attraction, a research subject or an alternative livelihood strategy depends on how the heritage is enacted, interpreted and valorised by actors in the field (Mol, 2002; Ren, 2010) which does not imply a complete cultural sharing across meanings. This thesis itself is another product of the heterogeneous networking (Ren, 2010) established by some actors around the intangible heritage of chhau (such as me, my supervisors, the project funds, some chhau artists, academic deadlines, conferences topics and academic trends, etc.).

Finally, I will present how this thesis reconstructs the development project life cycle (Scott-Smith, 2013) around the object of interest (the intangible heritage of chhau), using the four phases translations model from Callon (1986) (5.2). This Chapter therefore introduces the phases and discourses that act to stabilise the AL project actor-network, which will be further analysed in Chapter 6 to 9. I will start with the section below by accounting for ANT



approaches to study development practice by which my own socio-material approach is informed.

### **5.1 International Development Actions as Arena for Intangible Heritage**

Development projects are the implementing tools and mechanisms by which international development assistance is delivered around the world (Diallo and Thuillier, 2004; 2005) therefore their practice become central (Heeks and Stanforth, 2014) when asking questions related to development, livelihoods and their actors. Theory and practice regarding various approaches to development have experienced a great deal of evolution and debate, particularly when applied to rural context and livelihoods investigation (see for instance, Delville, 2017; Scoones, 2009; Scott-Smith, 2013). Heeks and Stanforth identified as one of the main lacunae in development studies is the “lack of insight into practice and performance: the real rich detail of what occurs during the implementation of a project, and how that relates to the delivery or otherwise of project outputs” (2014, p. 15).

As pointed out by some scholars, such as Scoones (2009), Scott-Smith (2013), Diallo and Thuillier (2004) or Golini and Landoni (2014), development studies tend to be adherent to economic analysis of development action, with quantitative perspectives on livelihoods investigation (Scoones, 2009), on project performance and on project management tools (e.g. Diallo and Thuillier, 2004; Golini and Landoni, 2014). This analysis too often misses to account for the processes, actors, interactions and alliances, that in reality produce development, which is the project as a generic entity (Heeks and Stanforth, 2014; Mosse, 2005). For instance, livelihood research examines how rural people build their means of living predominantly focusing on material well-being; however, the process of building livelihood strategies barely takes into account the analysis of non-material well-being and cultural elements (Daskon, 2015), power relations and how policies or other institutional processes affect people’s livelihood choices (Sakdapolrak, 2014; Scoones, 2009). As Scoones and Wolmer point out, “livelihoods emerge out of past actions and decisions are made within specific historical and agro-ecological conditions and are constantly shaped by institutions and social arrangements” (Scoones and Wolmer, 2002; cited in Sakdapolrak, 2014, p. 21). Therefore, if we wish to understand the impacts of the development action by which intangible cultural heritage is also being safeguarded through being considered a livelihood, we should not limit ourselves to investigate the project performance or one particular livelihood perspective (economics, politics, social, etc.). But rather we should attempt to understand how development action, actors and elements combine during the project to create and frame the intangible heritage livelihood strategy in the realm of the practice. Such perspectives push us to consider the social arrangements created by and

within a development action - such as the AL project - as parts of analysis, as the next subsection will explain further.

### **5.1.1 Applying ANT to the Ontology of Development targeting Intangible Heritage**

According to Jean-Pierre Jacob from the APAD - *Association pour l'anthropologie du changement social et du développement* - “development projects should be analysed as arenas sharing a common language<sup>71</sup> [...]” (2015, p. 89), since projects establish a world where actors move, interact and use the same register. According to Heeks and Stanforth

“[o]ne defining feature of many such projects is that they represent an intersection of the local and the global, bringing together a network of multiple actors working at different scales (Bebbington, 2007; Struyk, 2007). On that basis, it therefore seemed appropriate to make use of the local/global networks approach offered by Law and Callon (1988, 1992) in their analysis of an individual project. [...] Their premise is that a project can be seen as a function of the interaction of heterogeneous elements [...]” (Heeks and Stanforth, 2014, p. 7)

Thus, an ANT approach - building also on what outlined in Chapter 5 - provides a methodological means to view the processes involved in building and maintaining any project as an actor-network, as projects cannot be reduced to either one actor alone or a single network (van der Duim, 2007).

As Scott-Smith suggests

“[...] such an approach [ANT] is particularly welcome in development studies, which tends to be divided between the adherents of an economic approach that reduces the world to rational choice, and a post development approach that reduces everything to discourse and culture. Actor-Network Theory offers a fresh way of understanding development, which transcends these divisions and interprets development success in an original way [...]” (2013, p. 7-8).

Exploring the discourses around a development project, such as the AL project, opens a window to analyse spaces within the development project actions, where the workings relations are prescribed and taken for granted, constantly re-negotiated and stabilised and where meaning is also contested as relationships between actors are fluid and dynamic

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<sup>71</sup> “Les projets de développement doivent être analysés comme arènes [...]” (Jacob, 2015, p. 89) translation by the author.

(Mosse, 2005; Scott-Smith, 2013). ANT grounds in the commitment to develop theory and understanding social events through qualitative empirical case studies (Latour, 1996; Law, 2004). Ethnography, with an ‘actor-lead approach’, which is typical for ANT, is used to describing internal development project related issues and the peculiar movement of re-association of project actors’ perspectives (Mosse, 2005; van der Duim, 2007).

Ethnographic accounts of development projects however, are not new in literature (see for instance, Delville, 2017; Ferguson, 1990; Jacob, 2015; Lewis and Mosse, 2006b; Mosse, 2005). Some of the best known empirical works investigating development are probably ethnographic accounts, such as James Ferguson's PhD ethnography about a rural development project implemented in Lesotho (Africa) during the 80's (Ferguson, 1990); or David Mosse's book *Cultivating Development* on the long term bilateral cooperation action of the Indo-British Rainfed Farming Project (IBRFP) (Mosse, 2005). Ethnographies, it is believed, can help explain the complexity of development (policy and practice) as the ‘social life of projects’ as complex actor-networks that development policy legitimises as social processes (Mosse, 2005). This approach enables the researcher to identify the actors and map interactions or in other words “to bringing out the net work” (Goguen, 1999 cited in Heeks and Stanforth, 2014, p. 25).

Thus, my attempt is to frame the ethnographic fieldwork data collected during the AL project through the analytical actor-network-spectrum, following the four phases model proposed by Callon (1986), and further explained in the subsection below. Ethnographic description of the AL project networking relations and actors makes it possible to understand (and explain) the development project as production of reality where the intangible heritage-based livelihood strategy is developed. As argued by previous ANT theorists, the practices of development project make relations, but “as they make relations they also make realities” (Law, 2004, p. 29).

Aligned to the approach to investigate development initiatives using ANT, is also an approach to investigate tourism as actor-networks (van der Duim, 2007). Recently, scholars not only from tourism research but also from heritage studies (see for instance, Adell et al., 2015; Harrison, 2015; Jóhannesson, 2005; Paget, Dimanche and Mounet, 2010; Ren, 2011; Rodger, Moore and Newsome, 2009; van der Duim, 2007; van der Duim, Ren and Jóhannesson, 2013) are becoming more and more sensitive towards the radical ontology ANT endorses (Law and Singleton, 2005; Mol, 1999). This ontology confronts a simplistic understanding of the object of study, its authenticity and identity, with the idea that objects and social realities investigated are “manipulated by means of various tools in the course of a diversity of practices. [...]. Instead of attributes or aspects, they are different versions of

the object, versions that the tools help to enact. They are different and yet related objects. They are multiple forms of reality itself.” (Mol, 1999, p. 77).

This flexibility, when we think about what the intangible heritage is (or its ontology), challenges both researchers and practitioners in the heritage field to reflect on the consequences of heritage practice, uses and management (Harrison, 2015) on the reality/ies of the intangible heritage. Many studies, indeed, deal with the question of how a particular view of the intangible heritage is represented and used in museums, on world lists or in tourism events (see specifically Chapter 3). However, the question is not only how the intangible heritage is represented, but how a representation of the intangible heritage is produced through many stages of translation and inscription (Latour, 2005). The ANT approach allows me more space for understanding the negotiations by actors involved in intangible heritage and its safeguarding than typically exists in theoretical discussions around safeguarding<sup>72</sup> (see also Adell et al, 2015; Harrison, 2015). Researchers using ANT pay attention to all ‘actors’ within a given network, since actors, to maintain generalised symmetry (see Chapter 4), can be human or non-human (Callon, 1986) and their relations. Intangible heritage and its safeguarding can be influenced by several actors, as a result of a range of activities that are performed by people, localities, things, policies or artefacts (Harrison, 2015).

In employing such approach as analytical perspective, the analysis of the development action targeting an intangible heritage is able to capture, in a more realistic way, the dynamic and multi-dimensional nature of intangible heritage and its links with the way in which people make their living and development strategies. An ANT approach allows us to say something about the ontological nature of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, and that is how the intangible heritage is enacted in different realities.

Thus, an ANT project reconstruction become an analytical and ontological frame to grasp project constrictions as socio-material and relational impacts around the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, which in ANT perspectives becomes the object of competing modes of ordering or translation of the AL project (van der Duim, 2007). Latour (1999), before Mosse (2005), noted the necessity for actors to make an actor-network stable and durable to engage in multiple negotiations around a specific object of interest through a series of processes and actions of cooperation also called translations (Callon, 1986) or mode of ordering (Law, 1997; Law and Hassard, 1999). The term translation underlines the fact that there is a

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<sup>72</sup> An in-depth discussion on intangible heritage and safeguarding investigation in previous literature is carried on in Chapter 3, section 3.1.

constant work of interpretation, conviction, material change and consensus around a specific object and topic of interest that depends on and involve all the human and non-human actors. However, even if ANT has been used in some studies to analyse development projects (see for instance Mosse, 2005; Scott-Smith, 2013), it has been mainly used to shed light on management, performance and interactions between policy and practical level (e.g. Delville, 2017; Faik, Thompson and Walsham, 2013). As far as I know, it has never been used to shed light on the relations and impacts of development project associations on its main object of interest. The next section will explain how this process of translation can be reconstructed following the actor-network four phases conceptual model by Callon (1986).

## **5.2 Project Phases and Modes of Ordering of Intangible Heritage**

As argued so far, this thesis assumes that development projects can be investigated as complex actor-networks (Jacob, 2005; Scott-Smith, 2013). This assumption is reinforced by Callon's stance that an actor-network is "any entity able to associate texts, humans, non-humans and money" (Callon, 1991, p. 140 cited Toennesen, Molloy and Jacobs, 2006, p. 7) whose fundamental quality is that of acting on something, resulting in some sort of transformation of something into something else (Latour, 1999). Generally speaking, ANT theorists, such as Latour, Callon or Law, employ the term 'actor' and 'actor-network' when referring to entities that demonstrate the capacity to associate other human/non-human entities (Latour, 2005). As suggested by Pollack, Costello and Snakaran "from an ANT perspective, the world is full of actors, both human and non-human, any of which could be intermediaries or mediators<sup>73</sup> [...] depending on the role they take in the networks in which they play a part" (2013, p. 1020). This is exactly what international development projects do by definition (and practice), establishing problems to solve (Escobar, 1995), mobilising resources (technical, material, human, donors, NGOs, natural, policy, etc.) and effecting social, economic and human change, poverty alleviation, social actions, environment and basic human rights protection, education, health or capacity building, in relation to the 'recipient' of the project, a target group of people and things (Golini and Landoni, 2014; Lewis and Mosse, 2006b). To apply the concept of 'actor' seen in Callon (1986) and Latour (2005) to this case study, I assume that the various elements of the AL project are all able to act upon one another, allowing for their main object of interest - the intangible heritage and its safeguarding - to be transformed into something - an alternative livelihood strategy - thus, moving within a complex net of relationships.

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<sup>73</sup> Actors in ANT perspectives can be 'intermediaries' or 'mediators': intermediaries are "what transports meaning or force without transformation" while mediators "transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry" (Latour 2005, p. 39).

Following Michael Callon's (1986b) four phases (or moments) of translation, which he calls *problematization*, *interessement*, *enrolment* and *mobilisation*, this thesis structures an account of the project life. The aim of ANT analysis in all this thesis is not the forensic reconstruction of the project life cycle (Scott-Smith, 2013) but an examination of how interactions were formed, useful to understand the internal dynamics and agency that development projects with their actors poses on their object of interests; such an approach is useful to query the underlying networks and to learn more about what makes safeguarding through development happen in particular places.

Let then start identifying the first point of transition of the ANT reconstruction, or the *problematization* in Callon's terms (1986) when the Social Enterprises (SE) - as the primary actor leading the AL project - became concerned with the issues related to the poverty of chhau artists' communities, and consequently the idea of the revitalisation of their heritage through a livelihood approach. This is another way to officially enter the analysis of the case study and present some fieldwork data that will frame a more in-depth analysis of the actors and translation processes in the following Chapter 6 to 9.

### **5.2.1 Opening the Black-box of Culture as Livelihood**

Youker (1999) highlighted as characteristics of development projects that projects go through a typical lifecycle with planning, implementation and closing phases. This is very instructive for purposes of analysis the AL project (lifecycle) translations and to illustrate the applied use of Callon's four phases to the unpacking of the AL project.

As pointed out by development studies many development projects begin with a phase of "pre-identification, identification, preparation, and approval" (Ika, Diallo and Thuillier, 2010, p. 70). In this initial phase, where usually a project manager is selected as in charge of the actual implementation of the project, there is a work of preparation, appraisal and constant work of negotiation around a problem that the project identifies and wants to tackle with a proposed solution (Ika, Diallo and Thuillier, 2010). In parallel, the first main negotiation in the AL project actor-network reconstruction, the *problematization* step, begins when the AL project actor network, through its main actor - the Social Enterprises leading the project - develops concerns with the poor economic and social conditions of folk artists in the countryside of West Bengal, India. The following statement from an interview with the SE's leader by a local newspaper brings us to that moment:

"In 2004 we [the SE] did a baseline survey and identified six folk art genres from five districts: Patachitra (painting on paper or cloth scrolls of a story) from West Midnapore, Baul/Fakiri (spiritual folk songs) from Nadia, Gambhira (a form of

folk drama) and Domni (a comic folk drama) from Malda, Jhumur (a combination of folk song and dance) from Purulia and Bankura and Chhau (a vigorous martial dance with masks and costumes) from Purulia. We initially conducted workshops for artists across these districts and we realised that development comes only with economic freedom. Hence the focus shifted to culture as livelihood” (Das, 2010).

In the excerpt above the SE’s leader identified the main problem which the AL project aims to address, which is the lack of “economic freedom” and consequently, the lack of “development” (Das, 2010). The problem and the solution proposed involves a particular formulation of “culture as livelihood” road map (SEVP, 2011d, p. 100) (based on introducing the intangible heritage of chhau dance (and the other five folk arts involved in the AL project) as main resource for rural households to invest in, alongside traditional agricultural and household incomes, in the absence of other structural intervention to fight poverty at local level (Field notes, 2011). Revenue extracted from the heritage based-livelihood strategy, presented in fig. 11 below, through several activities such as paid performances, promotional material, cultural events, teaching sessions, and other forms of collaborations for the intangible heritage and its bearers, should had helped artists to sustain their families and thus, fight rural poverty and isolation. As the artists perpetuated their art, it was expected that they would invest money at the village level, allowing economic benefits to trickle down to the community of origin (Field note, 2010).

The AL project actor-network foundations were built on a series of “black boxes” (Latour, 2005), or crucial ideas that were treated as closed and taken as matter of consensus by other actors (Scott-Smith, 2013) during the intersement and enrolment phase of the network.

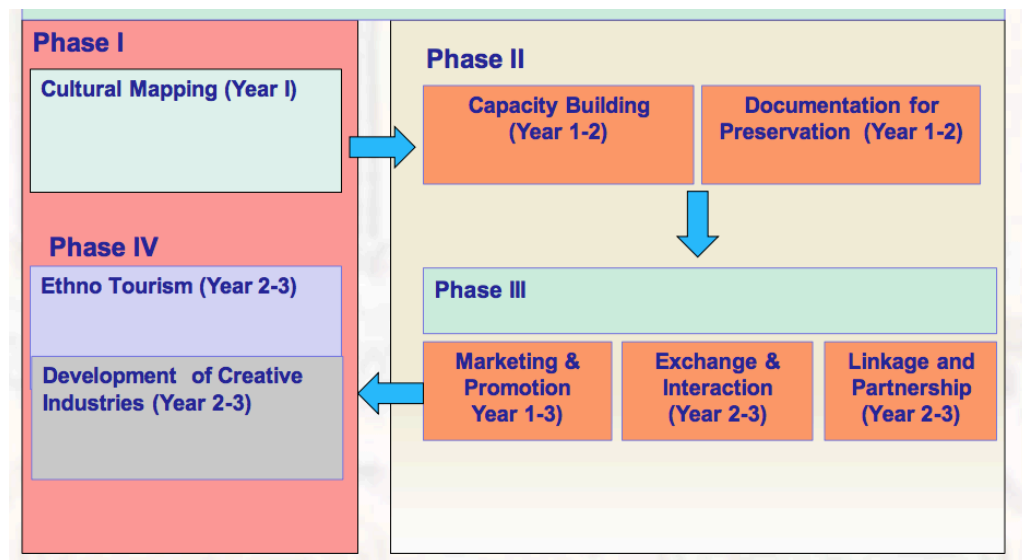
The problems of economic freedom of artists, that of boosting their socio-economic status, that of safeguarding the local intangible heritage and the proposed solution, of including intangible heritage as alternative livelihood in the rural Indian livelihood system, are all crucial ideas (or black boxes) on which the project actors during the AL project have built their interests, actions, identity and established activities and other actor-networks. These crucial ideas placed in this situation of agreement within the AL project “are indeed politically viable, widely circulated, and generally acknowledged as being important” by the actors (Scott-Smith, 2013, p. 11).

The moment the AL project actor-network shifts its attention to intangible heritage as livelihood is when the *problematization* is completed and the main aim of the AL project is set. However, for the survival of any actor-networks, all the actors involved need to be held together to work together towards the same aims (Callon, 1986); which involves to align other actors’ interests to that of the AL project (Latour, 2005). That is the moment actors move through an *obligatory passage point* into the *intersement* phase, as will be presented in the subsection below.

### 5.2.2 The Obligatory Passage Point and the Alignment of other Actors

In order for the AL project to succeed and the community of the project working around the intangible heritage to stabilise, both the problem and the solution needed to be widely understood and shared by other actors (Scott-Smith, 2013). After having set the main questions, the AL project through the work of the SE interest, enrol and mobilise other actors.

Through the SE, once the problematisation is completed, funds arrive from the donor agency to the field, and the path of project's activities is established and carried on according to a specific road map aimed at implement the 'culture as livelihood' model, as it is exemplified in the specific table below:



11 AL Project Road Map, by the Social Enterprise (SE, 2012)

By establishing the project road map and as the 'project manager', the SE effectively speaks for the entities that it seeks to *enrol* in the project network (Scott-Smith, 2013; Golini and Landoni, 2014), assigns problems and goals and finally distributes roles and responsibilities among actors. In such a way the SE established as what Callon (1986) calls an *obligatory passage point* (OPP) in the project actor-network.

*Interessement* is a prolonged process of negotiations (Callon, 1986) in which actors are persuaded to find their roles and are convinced to share the project's interests. To establish any actor-network there must be what Callon calls 'device of interessement' (1986) to allow the interest from actors and to strengthening the links between actors and the object of interest of the network. In the realm of the AL project translations, several elements contributed to the *interessement* of the actors and the establishment of their relations around the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, as description in Chapter 6 will further clarify. For instance, the textual content of the project papers, which materialise the establishment of a



development initiative around the intangible heritage and its bearers, the nomination of Purulia chhau dance among UNESCO cultural elements (UNESCO, 2010a) or the financial support received from the European Commission, are already valid movements to interest almost all the actors in the AL project actor-network around the intangible heritage (Scott-Smith, 2013; Mosse, 2005). However, as will also be discussed in Chapter 6 the AL project structure is working as a device of interest since it shows the capacity to attract all the attention of the actors, showing a strong capacity of empowerment in moving human and economic resources toward the area of Purulia and towards the communities of artists.

During the *enrolment* phase actors simply act in the AL project actor-network. Acting in ANT terminology is not as just being given the power to act by someone or something, but it is the description of what actors do with that power, what they perform with it (Latour, 2005; Ren, 2010; Scott-Smith 2013). As Ren points out investigating tourism destinations “the different roles which an actor may play are seen as effects of associations” (2010, p. 32). Following the associations that the AL actor-network produces we can see the process of entities becoming actors (Callon, 1986; Jóhannesson, 2005) or, in other words, we can trace how the object of interest (the intangible heritage) affects and is affected by the project actors through a number of translations and enactments. Chapter 8 and 9 will deal particularly with the operational transformations of the object of interest of the AL project, the intangible heritage of chhau. During its second year of implementation (Phase II and III according to the AL project roadmap), every time actors engaged within the AL project actor-network a new translation of the element of Purulia chhau occurs and starts to circulate in and outside the main project actor-network.

The *mobilisation* phase of this actor-network reconstruction focuses on securing continued support from the enrolled actors, thereby institutionalising its underling ideas ‘culture as livelihood’ with the support of partnerships in and outside the AL project network, such as that from UNESCO New Delhi. In order to prevent resistance among actors and to stabilise the AL actor-network, the translated objects (the intangible heritage as livelihood) need to be continually circulated. Circulation of translations from the AL project, indeed, is accomplished through formal events, seminars, ad hoc fair and festivals, written reports, trainings, communication material, photos, meetings, cultural exchanges and the majority of all the moments of the final phases of the project roadmap (fig. 11).

The parallels between the AL project model and Callon’s phases of translation process will become increasingly obvious throughout the discussion in Chapters 6 through 9 of this thesis.

### 5.3 Conclusion

The aim of this Chapter has been that to account for the approach that forms the analytical framework of this thesis and how it will be used to explore the intersection between development projects, livelihoods transformation and intangible heritage safeguarding.

Section 5.1 discussed the methodology of ANT approach in the context of international development actions and recent tourism research. Like any other project (van der Duim, 2007) the development project can be seen as a heterogeneous actor-network, formed over a period of time through different phases (or movements) of problematisation, interessement, enrolment and mobilisation (Callon, 1986) that cannot exist separate to the actors within it (Heeks and Stanforth, 2014; Jacobs, 2015; Mosse, 2005; van der Duim, 2007). As this section showed ANT has been used in some studies to analyse development practice and projects (for instance in Mosse, 2005; Scott-Smith, 2013). However, this approach has been mainly used to shed light on project management, performance and interaction between policy and practical level, and it has been rarely used to shed light and discuss the impacts that an actor-network could have on its object of interest.

As subsection 5.1.1 discussed, the understanding of the intangible heritage as the (translation) object of an actor-network not only helps to understand how the intangible heritage is represented in a given network of actors/things, but how its representation is produced through many stages of translation. Seeing the intangible heritage as the (translation) object of a development initiative challenges a number of other ways of studying and defining intangible heritage within current trends of investigation on 2003 Convention implementation (Harrison, 2015) and those on culture and development nexus. In order to understand the complexities associated with the implementation of intangible heritage as a livelihood strategy for development, it is important to pay attention to how the intangible heritage moves at various levels and scales within the development project actor-network and get translated within the project network. Such a focus may reveal complexities associated with the everyday practices of the intangible heritage, with its making process and safeguarding through livelihood approaches, such as the impacts on the cultural elements of project's power relations and management choices, to name a few. Hence, in the context of intangible heritage driven development initiatives, it is worthwhile to question who does the development initiative empowers, and what are the repercussions on actors, and, therefore, on the cultural element.

Finally, section 5.2 presented how this thesis reconstructs the development project life cycle (Scott-Smith, 2013) around the object of interest of the intangible heritage of chhau, using Callon's model (1986). The unpacking of the processes of translation according to Callon's

model of the AL project, therefore, served to present the reader with the AL project actor-network, further discussed in the rest of this thesis.

As section 5.2 showed that the SE problematised the issues, established themselves as the main mediator and effectively enrolled and mobilised other allies around the intangible heritage as a livelihood translation process. The strategy of enrolling other actors was rooted in the same AL project and, in part, also in the development though safeguarding problem-solution promoted by the AL project.

Overall, this Chapter attempted to demonstrate that the use of Callon's phases of translation as an analytical approach to frame ethnographic data helps us to avoid the risk of characterising development action as some simple dichotomies, among project's roles and constraints (Heeks and Stanforth, 2014). In fact, as I will be explaining in next Chapter 6, development projects have some specific structural characteristics that impose on actors. We should avoid taking them for granted and making assumptions on their characteristics and focus instead on their description to see how the project actor-network established and attributed roles to different actors and how the actors make sense of those roles. This is particularly relevant when investigating any action of heritage safeguarding in order to see who are the actors that make the intangible heritage safeguarding and how their work toward and around the cultural element impact on its nature.

This is why next Chapter will start by describing the main actors and then discusses their roles within the project community boundaries. In tracing their roles and translations, the discussion in Chapter 6 attempts to show which actors try to shape the conduct of others, therefore highlighting the power relations and their agency on the safeguarding and the intangible heritage.

The AL project is connected to and engaged with the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau in an attempt to define, revitalise and communicate its translation as a livelihood strategy. It is this work of purifying, ordering and hence of constructing the intangible heritage which this thesis seeks to render visible. Through this endeavour, the ambition of this thesis is to address the questions of what makes up the intangible heritage and how such cultural element is done and done over and over in the strategy of "culture as livelihood" (SE, 2010a).

The analysis in the following Chapters serves to unfold the connections that actors establish to make the AL development project stable and the intangible-heritage based livelihood strategy translated, providing new understandings to inform intangible heritage ontology linked to safeguarding measures and development practice. With the use of ANT approaches in intangible heritage studies still in its infancy (Adell et al., 2015), all this thesis also participates in an ongoing research discourse, contributing an additional empirical

study not only to intangible heritage but also to that of culture for development. Next Chapter starts by presenting and discussing the main actors within the AL development project's structure and their roles also as a new heterogeneous community of practice of intangible heritage (Adell et al, 2015).

# Chapter 6

## 6. Locating the Community of Intangible Heritage in the Development Action



*12 Our tents during a project event in a village, picture by the author.*

This Chapter examines the positions of the actors and contextualises them to illustrate and support the theoretical arguments around the community of intangible heritage as an effect of socio-material relations prompted by the AL development project structure and its practice. It does so by initially addressing the theoretical notions of community and its participation as stressed in the 2003 Convention, which is also relevant in terms of development project performance (Golini and Landoni, 2014; Golini, Kalchschmidt and Landoni, 2015; Scott-Smith, 2013). Then, through the ANT lens, the actors playing the community within the AL project actor-network are introduced and *how* the development project structure enacts a large, transnational and heterogeneous intangible heritage community of practitioners/actors will be shown. Therefore, this Chapter explains *who* implemented the AL project and made the intangible heritage revitalisation for livelihood a

strategy for local development and cultural heritage safeguarding. Examining the actors (human and material) that constitute the relations of the development project, this Chapter highlights their engagement with the intangible heritage of chhau, rooted in interests, personal experiences and the reciprocal associations actors had according to the managerial structure of the project. Through understanding how various actors make sense of their role under the AL project structure, we can then begin to understand the processes of negotiation and representation that actors use in attempt to control the ordering of the intangible heritage for project purposes, which will be analysed further in Chapters 7 through 9.

## **6.1 Where is the Community of the Intangible Heritage of Purulia chhau?**

A camp with tents for hosting national and international guests (the majority are students and senior researchers from the research team, a partner of the project) is being set up in Gaurbhanga not far from [Bauls and Fakirs] artists' houses, in a camp [adapted for the occasional camping and the cultural event organised by the AL project]. In addition, a temporary larger tent- a sort of hall - for serving food is placed close to the Resource Centre,<sup>74</sup> next to the Bauls' ashram: here some of the artists I knew already (I can recognise some chhau artists from Purulia among them.) are employed as general staff. Some artists, in fact, are working with the social enterprise's staff on the organization of the event and others are exhibiting, others are doing both. Those I see working behind the scenes are preparing shelters (tents) for guests, setting up lights around the village, arranging toilet facilities (which are otherwise not available in the village) and preparing food and water resources for our delicate international stomachs. I am sure there are also other people cleaning and following activities that I did not notice. (Field notes, 2011).

The excerpt above is from my notebook from field observations during an AL project event in Gaurbhanga, in the Nadia district of West Bengal, organised soon after my arrival in January 2011. I travelled there with some of the staff of the AL project management team (PM) that is the implementing organisation - the social enterprise (SE<sup>75</sup>) - my supervisors, another PhD student, a group of master's students from the London Met doing their fieldwork visit for their course on Tourism and few other guests invited by the SE to join the trip. Some of us, as students and researchers, were expected visitors in the village of Gaurbhanga, because we were part of the research team (RT) that were to conduct research, plan, run workshops and collect and document the cultural forms as part of the AL project activities. Even though we were researchers under AL project actions, we were also tourists

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<sup>74</sup> One of the activities the AL project planned was to build six resource centres at different locations linked to local folk arts, such as one in Gaurbhanga for Bauls and Fakirs, one in Bamnia for chhau artists, and a Jhumur centre at Chelyama, in Purulia. These centres should serve as 'cultural hubs' and a place to help in the preservation, promotion and dissemination of local traditional cultures (SE, 2010a). The activity of the resource centres and intangible heritage tourism will be addressed in further detail in Chapter 8.

<sup>75</sup> As already pointed out in the preface of this thesis, according to university rules, the real names of the informants, the social enterprise, the staff, as well as the original documents, online web links or web sources will remain hidden. When these sources are published or available online, all documents are referred as anonymous even in the bibliography of this thesis.

at this inaugural event organised by the SE which was inscribed into written reports to display the AL project's success of intangible heritage led tourism activities (e.g. SE, 2010a). However, it was unexpected to me that some of chhau artists were also employed in the AL project events, not only as performers but also as general staff (cooks, cleaners, etc.). This was surprising not because I was expecting that some of the artists I had met would be only chhau performers, but because it caused me to rethink the fluidity of the roles – and, the nature of their livelihoods - and how the AL project actor-network worked to shape perspectives, roles and alliances for the current intangible heritage of Purulia chhau dance and its community. In fact, in the context of intangible heritage safeguarding, an interrogation of *who* is the community working around intangible heritage becomes important in the way it is seen to impact *how* the intangible heritage is enacted, promoted and represented – hence, how the heritage is currently being (re)constructed and safeguarded (Harrison, 2015). As this Chapter demonstrates, the intangible heritage literature articulates an idea of the community of intangible heritage as something contained within the intangible heritage definition and as something to be built simultaneously with the process of heritage safeguarding practice; therefore, raising the problem of identifying the boundaries of the community impacting the intangible heritage (Jacobs, 2014). Conversely, when in the field, I realised the shifting roles of the artists, the agency of the project's structure and actors, and that I was partially involved in that community too. I have also realised that, in reality, the practice of intangible heritage calls for researchers to look beyond scalar dichotomies of global-local community and to reach for a more fluid and fibrous interpretation of the term community.

It is certainly not only a matter of defining the boundaries of the community of the intangible heritage as a departing point, since boundaries can be constantly shifting from case to case study. However, it is much more important to focus on *what* kind of relations shape (and bring or enact) the community to work together, around, and for the intangible heritage. This approach will definitely highlight the nature and the agency of these connections over the intangible cultural element, as well as the agency of the project on the actors of the community.

Thus, by analytically intermingling usually disassociated fields of inquiry that is intangible heritage and international development practice (analysis), into this Chapter, I seek to point to the connectivity between intangible heritage management and development project management, thereby conveying the complexity of the intangible heritage making process. I argue the community of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau (and the intangible heritage itself) is an effect of the development project structure and that, with regard to the

safeguarding practice and participation, there is limited scope for self-determination given to tradition bearers when they are inscribed into any action as beneficiaries and they are subject to the management structure of the AL development project (Golini and Landoni, 2014) used in many international cooperation and development projects (as in the AL project).

As such, this Chapter, as a whole, pin points the contradiction between the aims and what the 2003 Convention suggests with regards to the role of the tradition bearers with the wildest possible participation and what the AL project performs in reality.

## **6.2 The Issues of Defining the Intangible Heritage Community**

The debate over the meaning and interpretation of the word community and the extent of participation in safeguarding are hot topics of the intangible heritage discourse (Adell et al., 2015; Bortolotto, 2011; 2013; Brown, 2005; Jacobs, Neyrinck and Van der Zeijden, 2014). First of all, the debate occurs at the level of definition of intangible heritage in the 2003 Convention texts in which UNESCO refers to the community as something intrinsic to the meaning of intangible heritage (UNESCO, 2003). According to Brown (2005), UNESCO's interpretation of the concept of community has to do, particularly, with the group of people who originate and transmit the cultural expression. As Brown argues, "[the] Convention portrays intangible heritage as something that properly belongs to, and should remain controlled by, communities of origin" (2005, p. 49).

In order to be recognised as *heritage* and listed among UNESCO intangible heritage lists, the cultural expression has to be significant for a group of individuals and it has to show its social functions for the group's members (UNESCO, 2003; van Zanten, 2012). To this regard, Kristin Kuutma (2012) suggests that community, for the intangible heritage category, has to do with a group forged and identified by social and cultural experiences, by objective criteria, such as language, and by subjective criteria, such as shared values and self-identification.

However, recent investigations in the field of applying the 2003 Convention and safeguarding the listed intangible heritage show how the intangible heritage recognition and nomination process (heritagisation<sup>76</sup>) is, in itself, a mechanism of community creation and legitimisation<sup>77</sup> (Adell et al., 2015; Pereiro, 2006). Pereiro's (2006) assumption that the

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<sup>76</sup> A discussion of the heritagisation process and its role in safeguarding is given in Chapter 3 (section 3.1).

<sup>77</sup> Negotiations among the actors involved in the nomination of intangible heritages, according to Pereiro, can empower Indigenous groups, strengthen the boundaries of a community as well as the boundaries among the community of artists and the community they live in, while also strengthening the cultural identity at a local and national level (2006).



community of the intangible heritage is legitimised through the process of documentation and nomination leads us to the second point of the debate on how also the community of intangible heritage is being constantly enlarged, recreated by agreements and initiatives of those involved in the practice of keeping alive or safeguarding the intangible heritage and implementing the 2003 Convention.

### **6.2.1 Who Makes the Intangible Heritage Community?**

The debate on the intangible heritage community also occurs at the practical level of determining *who* is the community to be involved in intangible heritage safeguarding<sup>78</sup> (from recognition to other actions) and *who* are the decision makers in this process (Bortolotto, 2011; Cang, 2007; Kuutma, 2012). Part of the confusion in defining the community of reference for intangible heritage comes from UNESCO's ambition to broaden the safeguarding process with the "widest possible participation" (Art. 15, UNESCO, 2003) "not bound to a single geographical area or country" but open also to include society and multinational<sup>79</sup> groups (Cang, 2007, p. 50). These vague statements lead scholars to question the boundaries of the intangible heritage related community/ies outside the group of tradition bearers, Indigenous groups or heritage experts (Jacobs, 2014) and to argue that the level of participation in safeguarding is free to interpretation (Bortolotto, 2011; 2013). In this context, the community must be understood as a 'community of practice'<sup>80</sup> or "a group of diverse actors linked together by working for a shared goal" (Wenger, 1998 and cited in Adell et al., 2015, p. 7).

In fact, the ambiguity of the UNESCO texts also opens the way for larger communities made of heterogeneous actors such as international institutions and international project actions based on agreements of international cooperation, such as the AL project in West Bengal,

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<sup>78</sup> UNESCO stipulates that 'communities' should be involved in inventorying (Art. 11, UNESCO, 2003), in specific educational and training programmes (Art. 14, UNESCO, 2003), and in any 'functional and complementary cooperation' action (UNESCO, 2014, p. 43). The 2003 Convention stated that "communities, in particular Indigenous communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, play an important role in the production, safeguarding, maintenance and recreation of intangible cultural heritage, thus helping to enrich cultural diversity and human creativity" (UNESCO, 2003, p. 1).

<sup>79</sup> From the forum of the Intangible Heritage Section of UNESCO and the Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO, as cited in Cang, "(1) Communities are networks of people whose sense of identity or connectedness emerges from a shared historical relationship that is rooted in the practice and transmission of, or engagement with, their ICH. (2). Groups comprise people within or across communities who share characteristics such as skills, experience and special knowledge, and thus perform specific roles in the present and future practice, re-creation and/or transmission of their intangible cultural heritage as, for example, cultural custodians, practitioners or apprentices. (3) Individuals are those within or across communities who have distinct skills, knowledge, experience or other characteristics, and thus perform specific roles in the present and future practices, re-creation and/or transmission of their intangible cultural heritage as, for example, cultural custodians, practitioners and, where appropriate, apprentices" (Cang, 2007, p. 49).

<sup>80</sup> In 2015, Nicolas Adell, Regina F. Bendix, Chiara Bortolotto and Markus Tauschek published the outcomes of three trilateral conferences (2009-2012) and suggested to adopting the concept of 'community of practice' as applicable to the complex case of intangible heritage practice to address individuals from diverse backgrounds work together productively on joint goals. (Adell et al., 2015, p. 6).

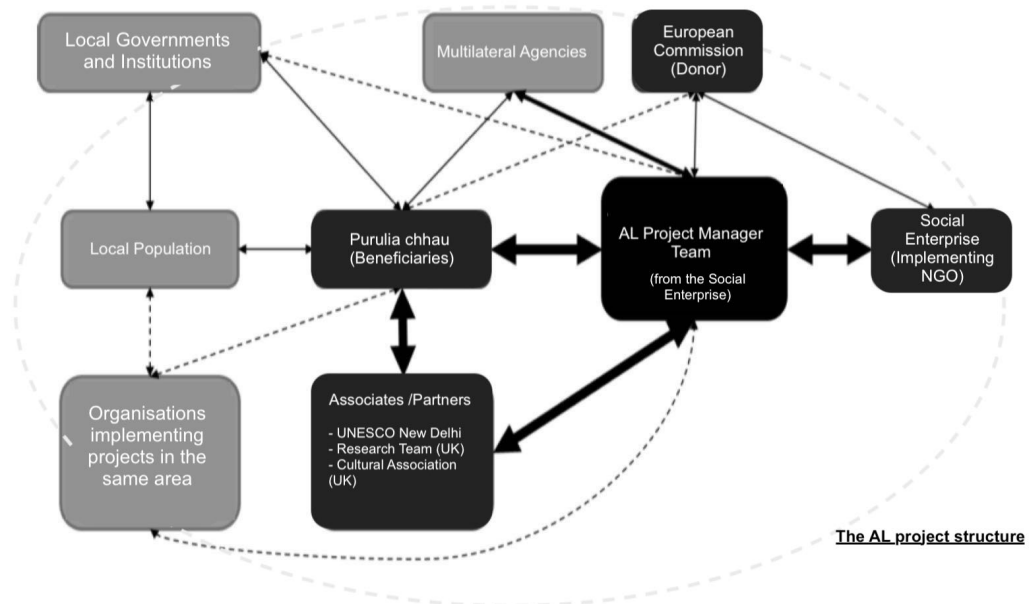
to be included in the intangible heritage safeguarding discourse. To this regard, Markus Tauschek's suggestion "to empirically observe and analyse the shaping of community in the heritage field through the instruments and vocabulary of the actor-network theory" (Adell et al., 2015, p. 20) is appropriate as he argues that "'community' comes about and succeeds or fails through different modes of assembling and discursively representing that which is to be turned into heritage" (Tauschek, 2015 in Adell et al., 2015, p. 18). Tauschek sees this approach as an opportunity to overcome the generally constructivist critical heritage approach and to integrate the roles of scholars in the shaping of community in heritage field (Tauschek, 2015). However, as this Chapter (and all this thesis) aims to demonstrate, an investigation from an actor-network perspective does not only illustrate how multiple actors build an intangible heritage community, but also how predetermined managerial structure and concepts (project manager, beneficiaries, etc.) have agency on the contemporary construction, uses and representations of the intangible cultural heritage.

### **6.3 Identifying the Actors of the AL Project Actor-Network**

From an analytical perspective, the first question we should address when beginning the analysis of a heterogeneous group networking around a specific object of interest (for instance around the heritage of chhau) in actor-network perspectives is *who* and *what* makes that network up (Latour, 2005, p. 125). Needless to say, international development projects, such as the AL project, face several challenges, including the requirements of the high number of actors such as donors' models, policy frameworks, partners' interests, scheduled actions, beneficiaries' participation and ownership of the initiatives or project coordinator's management choices (Golini, Kalchschmidt and Landoni, 2015; Mosse, 2005). Pollack, Costello and Snakaran point out that, in a project context, "there are no shortages of non-human actors that influence a project. [...]. Project plans *inform* and schedules may *dictate*. A budget may *constrain*, while a new organisational strategic plan may *provide an opportunity* for a budget increase [...]" (2013, p. 1120). Diallo and Thuillier's (2004) analysis shows that there are a number of common actors in any international development project that "make up" the project community. Similarly, Golini and Landoni (2014) exemplified the development project community in a relational model where they identified the project manager, the NGO implementing the project, the beneficiaries and the implementing partners as key actors, relevant in the project's stability and success (see Appendix B with Golini and Landoni's original model).

Thus, in the following analysis, I must consider not only the project management team (PM) who is part of the implementing NGO, the social enterprise (SE), whose constituents wrote, presented, and realised the activities in the first instance, but also other human and material

elements who worked under the managerial structure of the AL project. Actors in the AL project are collectivities: they are all, in themselves, complex heterogeneous networks as seen in the following diagrammatic representation of the actors in the AL project actor-network.



13 AL project structure diagram by the author of this thesis adapted from the project network diagram by Golini and Landoni (2014)

As fig. 13 above shows, the AL project actor-network is a network of multiple actors and collectivities. The dark boxes identify the main actors working within the AL project network, according to Golini and Landoni's diagram and the project papers (e.g. SE, 2010a), namely the social enterprise, leading the project, the heritage of chhau, the donor, two main partners. The beneficiaries of the AL project are the target groups of Purulia chhau heritage, a hybrid actor consisting of a group of individuals (for example the dancers), as well as the material elements of the chhau tradition (for example the masks, costumes, the dossier of the inscription in UNESCO lists, etc.). These human and non-human elements that converge to make up Purulia chhau heritage, as will be discussed further below, all act in the AL project actor-network.

Under the AL project structure, the SE, with its project management staff, is the principal actor leading and implementing the project action. The RT and UNESCO New Delhi are respectively one implementing partner and a project associate and the European Commission (EU) is the donor. According to Golini and Landoni (2014) the solid black

arrows represent direct and the regular communication and the dotted arrows represent expected communication between parties.

So far this section 6.3 has introduced the AL project as a collectivity of heterogeneous actors that have come together around the intangible heritage of chhau. In the following sub-sections, descriptions of the four main human and non-human actors<sup>81</sup> (illustrated in black in fig. 13 above) and their connections to the intangible heritage of chhau is discussed. Each of these sub-sections discuss how these actors linked themselves to the intangible heritage through human and non-human connections to constitute the AL project network and to pursue its aims. How this complex network acts in the project will be further discussed throughout the analytical Chapters 7, 8 and 9. Although the description of the four main actors are not exhaustive, due to limitations of the field research as described in Chapter 4 in this thesis, these descriptions are the result of following these actors and their interactions throughout the PhD fieldwork.

### **6.3.1 The Social Enterprise (SE) and the Project Manager**

The ‘the principal actor implementing the action’ (EU, 2008) in the AL network is certainly the SE, whose constituents wrote, managed, and implemented the project. This implementing organisation, the SE, is the entity that directs all AL project activities, employs staff to work toward the project’s outcomes, selects the beneficiaries as intangible heritage bearers with their traditions, and coordinates all the partnerships with other stakeholders. The SE reminds all the other actors, artists, project workers, international partners, researchers, donors, the public sector, government officials, UNESCO experts and tourists of the importance of the intangible heritage of chhau and other folk arts in creating and producing development, and the possibility of using culture as a means of livelihood. In ANT terminology, the SE acts as the main “mediator” (Callon, 1986) as, through its actions, it reinterprets the intangible heritage of chhau and influences the actions of other actors within the project network (Latour, 2005; Pollack, Costello and Snakaran, 2013).

A specific set of relations links the SE, the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, the global UNESCO approach, and the livelihood transformation, all of which are summarised and

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<sup>81</sup> Despite the fact that other researches (e.g. Mosse, 2005) also describe the ‘donor’, with its regulations and policy texts, among the main actors in a project actor-network, since it is with donors that projects originate (Mosse, 2005, p. 21), the European Commission will not be part of descriptions in this thesis, primarily for a matter of words limit imposed by the University rules. Another reason to do this, is that as Golini and Landoni (2014) suggest any donor is often solely involved at the beginning of the process of project, therefore in the identification phase. Hence, more length in the ethnographic description of this thesis is given to those actors who actually implemented the AL actions, between 2009 and 2011.

described below. As I will try to show in all this research, the SE constantly reshapes and finally finds its current identity from the relations with the intangible heritage of chhau and other folk arts. Initially, positioning itself as an intermediary and cultural entrepreneur, in promoting the intangible heritage of chhau groups (and also other folk artists). Later, and thanks to the AL project outputs, as an expert SE creating a safeguarding model, the “art for livelihood model” (Field notes, 2011). That is, (at the time of writing) the model that the SE is implementing also in other rural areas of India (SE, 2015).

This SE, which is registered as a for-profit company, is “a social business, which works in partnership under the trading style of the SE’s name” (SE, 2011a, p. 2). As highlighted by the Asian Development Bank (2012), a recent growth in the amount of capital available to SEs in India indicates great optimism about the role of social enterprises in alleviating poverty and promoting development in the market. The Asian Development Bank, in 2012, also observed the transformation of many not-for-profit models into for-profit models, as the latter are in a better position to secure financing and scale up over time (ADB, 2012).

The structure of the SE is worth mentioning in order to illustrate the entrepreneurial approach they bring to the AL project and the community of intangible heritage. The SE is directed by a group of seven individuals who, after working in journalism or management positions for multinational corporations (e.g., IBM and Microsoft) in the USA and other countries, returned to India and applied their skills to social entrepreneurship. As reported by one of the founders in a written presentation, the SE’s mission is:

“[...] to foster pro-poor growth using culture based approaches. The organisation’s vision is to synergise cultural and economic development leading not only to preservation of cultural heritage and diversity but also facilitating sustainable development of people.” (SE Vice President, 2011c, p. 698).

The SE has a pyramidal organizational structure<sup>82</sup>, with the small group of directors, based in Calcutta at the top, and below them the employees (over 65 as of 2011), some of whom are based in project areas, as field and key officers (Purulia, Nadia, etc.). The enterprise has been very effective in establishing branches in the rural areas, such as Purulia, with the presence of one or two field project staff and various field staff (sometimes chosen from among folk artists employed for the specific duration of the project activities). Even before the AL project, the SE had already positioned itself as a social institution in the rural and marginalised areas of India, working to fight poverty and discrimination. Since 2004, the SE has been working in rural West Bengal, establishing relationships with local

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<sup>82</sup> A detailed description of who are some of the field project staff, founders and key project staff of the SE between working between Kolkata and Purulia has been presented and discussed in Chapter 2.

communities and folk artists. For example, it created self-help groups (SHGs) and used folk theatre and dance as tools for “grass-roots communication” on social issues (e.g., HIV prevention, gender-based violence, health hygiene, school non-completion). Over time, due to the growth of its social-related activities and the richness of folk arts in the area of West Bengal, the SE has slowly shifted its focus to more heritage-related activities, such as events, promotions, art workshops, folk art documentation, exchanges and displays at national and international events.

At the time of writing, the SE still works in community engagement, social theatre for communication, child nutrition, education, and HIV/AIDS prevention (Field notes, 2011). However, it is in the area of arts and culture that the organisation is receiving the most international recognition; it has achieved this especially by promoting the AL project’s activities, attending conferences, leading international events, and being recognised by UNESCO as the ‘expert’ among the NGOs working in the intangible heritage field. The SE became officially an UNESCO-accredited NGO for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (Field notes, 2013) in 2010, during the work in the AL project actor-network (SE, 2015). The “art for livelihood” became a banner of their work and current identity as can be seen in the following report:

“Our flagship initiative XXX has established innovative and substantive model of development of eco systems for nurturing community owned and managed grass root creative enterprise. Our work has led to revival of 15+ dying art forms. Inclusive development has resulted from strengthened identity and pride of marginalised communities. Income and quality of life has improved manifold leading to poverty alleviation and reduction of migration. [...]” (SE, 2015, p. 4)

The *Intangible Cultural Heritage NGO Forum* website presents the SE as part of the steering committee for Asia and Pacific Countries as:

“SE works with a mission of fostering equitable development and synergizing cultural and economic development. The organisation’s flagship initiative for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is called Art for Livelihood (AL)”. (Intangible Cultural Heritage NGO Forum website, 2015).

Thus, the SE has essentially re-conceptualised its identity and its work as a “cultural broker” (Jacobs, Neyrinck and Van der Zeijden, 2014) for intangible heritage safeguarding and local development. To this end, the AL project experience has worked as a base for this professional reconceptualisation. In fact, at the completion of the AL project, in late 2011, the SE transferred the model to other geographical areas of India that had similar conditions—such as Maharashtra, Bihar, other villages in West Bengal, and Karnataka—in

pursuit of its work of cultural entrepreneurship for local folk arts (Bradley, Chakravarti and Rowan, 2013), as can be read in the following report.

“We are involved in information consolidation, database creation, reporting and dissemination at multiple levels in the country. In a heterogeneous and large country like India there are several agencies at national and state levels contributing to the country's periodic reporting. We regularly share our programmes and experiences with Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA) the designated nodal institution for ICH in India and have been involved in their efforts for capacity building and dissemination for working towards the goals of 2003 Convention. We also work closely with [the] Department of Culture in several states of India (West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Goa, Punjab) and with [the] ICCR (Indian Council for Cultural Relations) India's nodal institution for external cultural relations.” (SE, 2015, p. 3).

Much of the interest in traditional cultures and entrepreneurship for development of the SE also stems from the personal interests of the staff who founded it. It is commonly accepted that “leaders, especially in a systemic project management context, behave on the basis of their own perceptions more than on the basis of facts” (Diallo and Thuillier, 2004, p. 5). As the SE leader, the Project Manager in the AL project, reported in an interview with a local newspaper in 2012:

“[...] entrepreneurship was an irresistible dream for me. Besides, I had always nurtured a passion for theatre and arts. I've simply turned my passion into a profession” (Chakraborty, 2012).

A mix of personal aspirations and contextual needs seems to guide and structure the project manager's and SE's approach to development efforts. In the Schumpeterian perspective<sup>83</sup>, the entrepreneur is the actor who, in investing in the innovation and revitalisation of West Bengal's intangible heritage, somehow anticipates and knows how to bring different universes together: that of culture and development, rural livelihoods and intangible heritage, UNESCO safeguarding policies and international funds. The entrepreneur, with the SE, is a mediator or translator who, thanks to the AL project actor-network, established numerous connections with the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau and other relevant actors to sustain the project's goals, fulfil personal interests, make international partnerships, increase visibility, and build leadership in the culture and development sector.

Actor-networks involve a set of actors translating, that is, also reinterpreting and displacing, the interests (goals, problems, solutions) or even identities of other actors, so as to align

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<sup>83</sup> The Schumpeterian model introduces and acknowledges the central role of the ‘entrepreneur’ in the economy as an agent of change. Schumpeter described entrepreneurs as those able to “reform the production [...] by exploiting an invention or, more generally, an untried technological possibility for producing a new commodity or producing an old one in a new way [...]” (Schumpeter, 1942, p. 132, as cited in Mahdjoubi, 1997, p. 4).

those actors' interests around a specific object (Law, 2004). In the case of the AL project actor-network, the complex actor of Purulia chhau dance is, at the same time, the recipient of the AL development project and the "object of aligned actors' interests" (Latour, 2005). The AL project is a hybrid (i.e., a combination of heterogeneous actors, both human and non-human) (Callon, 2004) with a common objective (the revitalisation of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, and other folk forms for alternative rural livelihood strategy for development): each of the involved actors described below, therefore, finds its interest through the intangible heritage element, as I will outline in the following sub-sections.

### **6.3.2 The Dance and the Dancers as Beneficiaries of the Development Project**

In international development projects, the client or beneficiary is usually a group of individuals in an emerging country. The project's boundaries and power are not always clearly defined (Golini and Landoni, 2014). The AL project included six different traditional folk culture expressions with their artists as beneficiaries of the project; 3233 folk artists is the total number officially acknowledged by the AL project (SE, 2011a, p. 5). As a matter of delimitation for this study, and personal interest, this research investigates only the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau with artists from Purulia district, particularly in the villages of Bamnia, Kotcha Hatu, Baliagara, Maldi, Balarampur and Tunta village (see also fig. 1 in Chapter 1).

As a complex actor, the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau plays an important and explicit role in the AL project actor-network, being both the final recipient for the project outcomes, and an active player in connecting each of the other relevant actors (the project manager, the SE, the RT, UNESCO and the artists). Chhau dance deploys more types of agency in the field than the roles as intangible heritage given to them by the SE's accounts or UNESCO. In order to understand the full complexity of the interaction of the cultural element and artists within the AL actor-network, we need to introduce both the cultural element itself, and the individuals who transmit it.

#### **6.3.2.1 Features of the Dance**

Purulia chhau dance, as actor in the AL project network, is highly complex. It is composed of many human and material elements: local literature, arts, masks and costumes, music, steps and postures, trainings, dancers, sacred stage/platforms for performance, gurus' teaching and religious iconography, mainly from India and rural West Bengal. All of these elements, when well developed, "help spectators to experience the emotions of characters



and the inner essence of mind through the art” as is typical for sacred Indian dance (Ganpule, 2014, p. 406).

Indeed, a key to understanding and enjoying a Purulia chhau show is to possess some knowledge about classical Indian literature, religious myths and oral tribal stories of West Bengal. Familiarity with whom the chhau masks or the costumes represent can help the observer recognise the character and follow the dance and its story<sup>84</sup>. In my own observation of the dance, I found that, despite the fact that I have knowledge of classical Indian literature and epics, I experienced a lack of understanding, in some cases, watching a Purulia chhau dance. I could not follow all of the stories performed, or distinguish the characters playing, or catch the final message. The dance, as it appeared in 2011 at village level, had several striking elements, such as the sacredness and symbolism, steps and story, masks and costumes that might also appear unclear to an audience lacking that familiarity (see also Chapter 9 for a discussion on some specific elements of the dance). The dance has developed a distinct aesthetic and athleticism, with traits and meanings transmitted from one generation of men to the next through the role of the *guru* or *ustad* (also known as the masters of this dance).

As explained in the introduction of this thesis, Chapter 1, the origin of this folk dance as narrated in old, written scientific sources, where the dance was (uncertainly) ascribed to groups of soldiers as a mock combat technique (Bhattacharya, 1989; Chatterjee, 2004; Mukunda, 2012; Reck, 1972), with possible religious and outcaste connotations. , I will now move on to discuss the complexity of chhau dance in AL project as explained by the Purulia guru's, from the in-depth field communications. This will complement the analysis of the heritage of chhau through all this thesis: its role in the lifestyle of people in Chapter 7, where the actor-world (Callon, 1986) of the intangible heritage is analysed in relation to the rural livelihood system; and the analysis in Chapter 9 of how chhau dance is presented and how its revitalisation is interpreted by the AL project actor-network.

### 6.3.2.2 The Dancers

According to local artists of Purulia, chhau is a martial art-inspired and acrobatic folk dance, with performers wearing huge masks and plots often centred on fights and battles between demons and heroes (Field notes, 2011). Dancers become *ustad* once they are highly skilled and widely appreciated by different audiences. It helps if they have gained some public

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<sup>84</sup> Traditionally, chhau dance replicates stories that the audience already knows, such as stories from the Indian epics, so the audience watches the same story over and over.

recognition, such as local or national prizes for being excellent chhau dancers, or if they have performed on important stages or won national prizes for their artistic work from the Ministry of Culture or local governmental institutions. Chhau dancers begin to dance at the age of seven or eight; those who are trained in Purulia chhau are taught and disciplined in the art as an intrinsic part of their very being and life (see Chapter 7). Pandit, a 70-year-old famous Purulia chhau from Baliagara village, has been dancing chhau for most of his life. He reported that chhau was the reason he is satisfied with his life.

“I am satisfied I have gained importance and I am famous and proud, I haven’t made more money but I am very known and I made good relationships with people I danced for and taught chhau dance” (Pandit, 2011, pers. comm., 19 February).

Most of the Purulia chhau artists I interviewed are born into families who have a chhau dancer, and they are taught from birth to accept their vocation to dance as an unquestionable given and as a way to carry on a family tradition and a purpose in life.

A Purulia chhau group can include fifteen to thirty dancers, with almost fifteen musicians and helpers. Setting up a chhau group and guaranteeing performances of good quality can be expensive (see also Chapter 7 for an in-depth analysis of chhau groups). Hence, masters also look outside their network in order to support their dance groups (through bank loans, governmental sponsorship, private investors, etc.) and, with the arrival of the SE and of the AL project, the opportunities for the biennial 2009-2010) increased. Some chhau masters from Purulia, at the time of my fieldwork, had just started a second group or had re-organised their old chhau group, as one of the masters recalled during a conversation:

“the SE has done more things and programmes, health insurance, workshops [...] I had a chhau group before, for 10 years, but we spilt because we faced several economic problems, after the SE came I have formed a new group again” (Chotu, 2011, pers. comm., 7 March).

Before looking to the multiple intersections and translations led by the primary actor, the SE, we still need to introduce two other sets of main actors: the RT who builds and shares knowledge of the intangible heritage livelihoods, and UNESCO, with its nomination process of Purulia chhau dance among the intangible heritage of the world to be safeguarded going on in late 2010, during the first year of the AL project.

### 6.3.3 The Research Team: Partners, Builders and Sharers of Knowledge

The research team (RT) from London Metropolitan University is the main development project partner<sup>85</sup>. The team of different researchers and post-graduate students (14 people in all, including architects) was involved at different stages of the development project: writing research proposals, and designing three cultural resource centre buildings in the rural villages. Some senior researchers, MPhil/PhD and master's students investigated tourist trails linking tangible, intangible and natural heritage assets, promoted tourism capacity building in participating villages; contributed to the delivery of international seminars and attended programmes and cultural tourism events organised by the project, as the opening excerpt from the field notes at the beginning of this Chapter showed. RT actors had indeed multiple roles. Some of the cross-cultural events that brought local and international RT actors to rural destinations also meet the project's aim of promoting village tourism based on intangible cultural expressions (Field Notes, 2011; SE, 2010a). So, the RT actors were considered experts that brought knowledge and networks to the project, and at the same time, they were also tourists, enjoying and consuming the cultural tourism packages organised by the SE to promote its development model. In other words, the partnership between the RT and the SE supported in several ways the project activities and met both multiple organisational objectives. As one of the senior members of the RT recalled:

“The SE wrote the proposal – we provided some additional detail but didn't influence the overall design of the project. There was a basic lack of consultation with us, as the SE had not fully realised the potential contribution of tourism to their aims – they became more aware of this in the course of our involvement, but it is difficult to adapt EU projects” (RT member, 2017, pers. comm., 3 March).

People from the RT are interested in the project, and they work to “advance[e] knowledge about cultural tourism and development” (Field notes, 2011; SE, 2011a). The researchers' strategy to advance knowledge consists in studying the AL project as a “pilot action”. To do so, a group of international researchers are involved at different points in the project before, during and after implementation. For instance, the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau and the AL project is a subject of investigation for my research degree, so I am positioned between the outside perspective of the researcher and the inside perspective of the project's partner. Although I have already described my role in Chapter 4, when giving background on the research process and methodologies, at this point, it is worth discussing the RT's role.

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<sup>85</sup> There are two AL development project partners: the RT and a cultural association (CA) as already explained in Chapter 2, based in Europe. However, the activities and exchange between the cultural association and Purulia chhau were few and less relevant compared with those carried out by the RT.

A step in the RT's involvement in the AL project was to design three new buildings as cultural “resource centres”, physical spaces for the folk artists to use as welcoming-places for the audience and for the public to use for cultural, touristic and other uses linked to folk arts. Researchers from London Metropolitan University then conducted different types of fieldwork for the project, including interviews with folk artists, research reports, and several meetings with the SE in order to establish the final architectural projects to meet locals’ needs.

“The SE had written a scoping role in for us, but not implementation (e.g. capacity building, or involving villagers in the planning, design, outfitting of the resource centres, or the process of moving in/taking ownership, which XXX was very keen to do as part of the participative process) – this limited us in terms of some of the things that could or should have been done. As this was the first big EU project the SE had undertaken, they were very keen to stick absolutely to the letter of their agreement with the EU” (RT member, 2017, pers. comm., 3 March).

After this initial stage, the second step in researchers’ involvement in the project began when the SE requested the researchers examine ways to develop the cultural tourism destinations around folk artists’ villages. Researchers were asked to visit, observe, participate in, and report on project activities and potentialities. Here is where my research fit in: Purulia chhau and the project itself were subject to this ethnographic and scientific investigation. I wrote notes, conducted interviews, and shot videos and photos of events, rehearsals, project trainings, staff meetings and artists’ villages.

In addition to scientific and ethnographic research, the RT also engaged with cultural tourism activities. The team attended pilot cultural events, investigated project areas, travelled around villages within the project areas, and participated in project events, all while checking facilities and local services to give suggestions and recommendations to the project leader. This step also involved graduate students who, as part of their master’s coursework, had to produce written analyses of cultural tourism options and prospects. In these analyses, many different notions were engaged and linked to the project and its outcomes: cultural tourism, community participation, tourists, rural poverty, infrastructures, transportation and accommodation, travel destination, intangible heritage safeguarding and rural livelihoods, among others (Field notes, 2011). These different notions evoked the role of the cultural element as a livelihood and contributed to its epistemological conceptualisation and critical analysis. However, this is also where controversies arose among the two actors, as one of the member of the RT recalls:

“One issue around this [the research works we did] concerns the extent to which the SE expected or were prepared for ‘critical’ intervention – as you

know many of the postgrad students were angered by the SE unreceptiveness [to their ideas], and their unwillingness to engage in critical discussion" (RT member, 2017, pers. comm., 3 March).

Written accounts describing the successful stories of the SE in the AL project, produced by the same SE's staff began to circulate within and outside the project actor network—at UNESCO conferences, intangible heritage NGO forums, universities, governmental meetings, and on newspapers and journals (Field notes, 2011)—reinforcing the role of the SE as the key actor and expert (or, in Callon's terminology, as *spokesman*) as well as shaping knowledge on the "art for livelihood" approach.

The RT serves the important function of transforming field events into written work that links actions to cultural and political theory in such a way that the AL actor-network outcomes can travel across space and time and be synthesised with past and present written works (Latour, 1999; 2005; Law, 2007). As Latour and Woolgar (1986) say in *The Construction of Scientific Facts*, texts such as conference papers and presentations, grant proposals, and articles are among the many, if not *the* major, products of scientific work. This work requires a process of abstraction from the field events to the academic environment, and it inevitably follows from researchers' criteria of relevance (Latour, 2005; Latour and Woolgar, 1986; Law, 2007; Ren, 2010). However, it helps to link the local practices with the international policy level of UNESCO's prescriptions and the international debate around intangible heritage safeguarding, development and project practice, as this study is also doing.

This brief description of the RT's involvement in the AL project helps to acknowledge its positioning in the project event under investigation. Some of the researcher-participants' direct involvement resulted in the publication of collaborative research papers around intangible heritage and their relation to SEs and NGOs (see, for instance, Bradley, Chakravarti and Rowan, 2013). Next to this research-generated material and knowledge creation, two other relevant actors in the AL actor network are worth describing: the UNESCO, with its vision on culture for development, and the chhau dance nomination file to be considered a world heritage. I will trace the role played by the UNESCO and the nomination file in the AL actor network, specifically in anchoring the project's vision of boosting development through intangible heritage-based livelihoods.

#### **6.3.4 The Project Associate: UNESCO, the Nomination File and the Inscription**

Within the AL actor-network, the role of 'project associate' is filled by UNESCO New Delhi or, more specifically, its representative, an officer from New Delhi (Field notes, 2011).

UNESCO, and its branch in New Delhi, is an international institution working in the field of culture and education, and is a complex actor directed by experts, member states, commissions, policy papers, researchers, legal instruments such as Conventions, listed patrimonies, guidelines and programmes, cultural representatives, and many other elements. According to the project's papers in this role, "UNESCO provides regular guidance and institutional support to the work of the SE" (SE, 2010a, p. 4). In reality, the UNESCO officer from New Delhi was the effective link connecting the SE, the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, the artists and UNESCO's 2003 Convention, under the AL project actor-network. Besides, at the time of my arrival in Calcutta, in January 2011, chhau dance<sup>86</sup> had just been included in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritages of the World (Field notes, 2011). In fact, a relevant association between UNESCO, Purulia chhau dance and the AL project, that is traceable at this point, is found in the inscription file of chhau as intangible heritage of the world. The UNESCO inscription file represents the dance as three-styled forms<sup>87</sup> linked to the three communities of Purulia, Seraikella and Maurbhanj. Together these forms constitute a tangible record of the living element of chhau dance, briefly summarised hereafter.

- Purulia chhau, identifiable by their large, decorated masks and rich costumes, developed in the western districts of West Bengal, Purulia;
- Seraikella chhau, with simpler masks and costumes, localised within the states of Bihar and Jharkhand;
- Maurbhanj chhau (or Odisha chhau), a chhau style in which the dancers paint their faces and dress in very simple costumes, developed in the state of Orissa.

The nomination's acceptance at the UNESCO international meeting in Nairobi represented the success of local and national efforts to raise awareness and work with chhau dance (UNESCO, 2010). Since then, chhau dance has gained a new status and new interests<sup>88</sup>.. UNESCO first requested a flow of documentation that met internal requirements, mostly in

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<sup>86</sup> Very unfamiliar with the bureaucracy of UNESCO and the listing procedure, many dancers were not aware, during my visit, of the nomination to this foreign institution. However, in the end, they accepted hoping that this would help improve their economic and status condition. Since, among the three different regional styles of chhau dance (Purulia, Seraikella, and Maurbhanj) there is always a sort of competition, when we were talking, many Purulia artists were unhappy with the fact that, despite the use of an image of Purulia Chhau as representative of chhau dance in UNESCO texts, they still did not get as much attention or funds as the other two styles.

<sup>87</sup> For a demonstration of the dance as represented by UNESCO (and an explanation of the dance typical traits and origin), see: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/chhau-dance-00337>

<sup>88</sup> For instance, in 2014, at the Republic Day parade at Rajpath in New Delhi on the 21<sup>st</sup> of January, organised by the India Trinamool Congress, chhau of Purulia was displayed as representing West Bengal culture (Field notes, 2014).

the form of written accounts and audio-video reports on the cultural element. The dossier contains letters written and signed by dancers (although only a few from Purulia), images, videos and descriptions written by local researchers from the *Sangeet Natak Academy* (those who presented the dossier for the nomination). The dossier had to be able to manifest the unity of the heterogeneous community of the intangible heritage of chhau, whilst also showing the diversity of each of the elements that compose it. This dossier is where a meta-description (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004) of the intangible heritage of chhau is contained and shared among other actors to sustain the importance of the dance as a central object to be safeguarded. A number of UNESCO experts examined the dossier to check its accuracy (dossiers, letters of consent from dancers and local members, a new dedicated webpage, videos, photos, etc.) and discussed the file, which describes the importance of chhau for the criteria of inscription in the lists. It is through such documentation that the element of Purulia chhau is ultimately represented with the status of heritage that requires safeguarding and is made accessible to the entire world. This transformation into a listed heritage is necessary in order to ensure the management and the subsequent viability of any traditional culture<sup>89</sup> (Bouchenaki, 2003).

In reality, the dossier of the nomination file, as well as the various meetings for its approval, also committed a group of silent actors—performers, mask-makers, villagers, and those producing knowledge around the cultural element—who are all represented in front of UNESCO General Assembly in this nomination file. In ANT terminology, as Callon would suggest, “they [the silent actors] have been displaced from their homes to a room” (Callon, 1986, p. 15) when the dossier arrived at the UNESCO Committee, and they all contributed to conferring a new dimension to the dance, that of the important exemplar of worldwide heritage. The document of the official nomination is, therefore, relevant to our analysis, since it shows how material documents worked into the network of the AL project. Both UNESCO New Delhi and the dossier of the nomination of chhau, are those actors who, with their written and discursive narrative accounts, justify the importance of safeguarding the cultural element of Purulia chhau. They are those actors whose presence, with their normative contribution as a reference point for cultural intervention, potentially legitimises initiatives and measures involving the cultural element (Kurin, 2003).

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<sup>89</sup> According to the 14th ICOMOS Assembly held in Victoria in October 2003, “safeguarding intangible heritage calls for its ‘translation’ from oral form into some form of materiality, e.g. archives, inventories, museums and audio or film records. Although this could be regarded as ‘freezing’ intangible heritage in the form of documents, it should be clear that this is only one aspect of safeguarding and that great thoughtfulness and care should be given to choosing the most appropriate methods and materials for the task” (Bouchenaki, 2003, p. 4).

However, to understand how UNESCO is an *actant* in the AL actor-network (and vice versa), we must also briefly theorise the nature of UNESCO's vision on culture *for* development. Therefore, we must highlight how connections and actions under the AL actor-network allows UNESCO New Delhi to implement and enact his vision.

#### **6.3.4.1 Implementing a Vision: Intangible Heritage for Sustainable Development**

One of UNESCO's material elements concerned with the intangible heritage, the 2003 Convention, reveals how intangible heritage plays a relevant role in human development (see also Chapter 3). The links between intangible cultural heritages and the development process find substantial relevance and reality in SE's work with the AL project actor-network and the heritage of chhau. The issues the AL project wants to address, poverty of folk artists, safeguarding of folk arts, are very relevant for UNESCO's vision. Their relevance is confirmed by several written documents, as reported below from the proceedings of the *International Seminar on Art for Livelihood – Heritage in Development*, held in Calcutta 6-8 September 2011, stating the following:

“[the UNESCO New Delhi Officer] noted that UNESCO and SE share a common vision of mainstreaming culture into India's national development policies. She expressed the hope that the seminar would be an occasion to gather effective and constructive ideas to create a stronger case for culture-based rural development” (SE, 2011b, p. 4).

More recently, from the *UNESCO New Delhi Biennial Cluster report* the section on culture opens with a picture of chhau dance from Purulia and it reads:

“A Promising Tool for Inclusion, Livelihood and Sustainable Development  
Culture and creativity are humankind's most widely and evenly distributed resources. As the international community moves towards the implementation of the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UNESCO New Delhi Culture Sector has a renewed mandate to advocate for the potential of culture, heritage and artistic creativity in contributing to people's livelihoods and well-being in South Asia [...]” (UNESCO New Delhi, 2015, p. 42).

Strengthening the link between culture and development, UNESCO New Delhi finds, in the AL project actor-network, a direct connection with the intangible heritage in the field and the local community of artists, which satisfies some of the 2003 Convention criteria essential for the inscription of chhau dance in the UNESCO list of Representative Intangible Heritage:

“R.3: Safeguarding measures at the national and local levels have been elaborated that seek to encourage the process of chhau dance and sustain its viability;” (UNESCO, 2010a, p. 8)



As for criteria R. 3, the AL project is regarded by actors in the network as an example of safeguarding measures of the intangible heritage linking culture to development process:

“[AL] - a flagship programme of a social enterprise based in Kolkata, West Bengal- intends to create livelihood opportunities in rural India through the revitalization of folk arts and craft traditions. UNESCO signed a partnership agreement with the SE in 2012 to promote and expand the concept and methodology of AL within India and beyond. [The model] is currently being implemented in the [s]tate of West Bengal [...]”. (UNESCO, 2015b)

UNESCO, with the vision on ‘culture for development’ and the nomination file, is crucial in keeping some of the actors committed to the action of the AL project and its successful model. As description so far attempted to show, the nomination file as well as the several UNESCO’s texts are those textual artefacts (also called *inscriptions* in ANT terminology) with high credibility regarding the urgency and role of this heritage in the local development of West Bengal circulating among actors in the AL network and beyond and strengthening the actors’ stake in the AL project model. Finally, we should also note that UNESCO New Delhi remained closely linked to the AL project actor-network as the project assemblages represent the enactment, or the ontological expression, of UNESCO’s theoretical existence and commitment to culture for development. The enactment of the heritage of chhau as a livelihood within the AL project’s activities is the practical realisation of UNESCO’s theoretical work on culture for development<sup>90</sup>.

## 6.4 Conclusion

This Chapter began by discussing the concept of community and arguing that intangible heritage communities are being defined outside of the groups of traditional bearers, by external development actors, due to the widening safeguarding processes under UNESCO 2003 Convention. The Chapter went on to suggest that the ambiguity of UNESCO texts thus allows for intangible heritage communities to be define also by larger groups of actors, such as international development heterogeneous actors. In order to identify the shape of intangible heritage community of Purulia chhau, an actor-network perspective in this Chapter examined the positions of the actors and contextualised them within the alliances and roles to illustrate and support the theoretical arguments around the community of intangible heritage of Purulia chhau and what socio-material relations prompted its existence.

By intermingling the fields of inquiry of intangible heritage and international development practice with a diagrammatic representation of development project actors’ roles (fig. 13)

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<sup>90</sup> See also Chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion on the role on culture in development processes according to previous literature.

and ethnographic description of actors' relations to the heritage of Purulia chhau under the AL project, section 6.2 and 6.3 showed how the community of the heritage of chhau is also an effect of the AL project, an international development project.

The advantage of using actor-network (ANT) perspective is its rejection of predetermined categories and containment relations (Latour, 2005). Categories such as local/international, small/large scale, also typical of the conceptualisation of institutions, communities or groups, are, in ANT's perspective, dissolved. The benefit to think in terms of ANT is its downplaying of the spatial dimension (and any boundary dimension), to concentrate on connections and tracing entities' proprieties (Latour, 1996). In this way, the focus of the analysis moved over the ontological multiple realities created by the new hybrid connections, in this case the AL actor-network, and their circulation. Thus, this Chapter moved the focus of analysis to the actors and their connections established within the AL project, reinforcing the connections of each actor to the intangible heritage of chhau, through unpacking the development project structure which emerged from following the actors in the field.

Unpacking the AL project structure, that is, the actors, ideas and actions used to create and sustain this development project was not taken for granted, but was described carefully (Latour, 2005; Mosse, 2005) in section 6.3 and throughout rest of the analysis of this thesis. This perspective highlighted the geographical and conceptual community of tradition bearers and residents in Purulia (see section 6.3.3) and it demonstrates that an intangible heritage community of chhau is also possible as transnational, trans-professional and trans-cultural in reach as the concept of community here stretches to include project staff, trainers, experts, and implementing agents in Calcutta; international researchers from a UK University; UNESCO experts from New Delhi; international artists and material actors from the masks, conference papers, project papers and nomination files, etc. of multiple heterogeneous actors. Thus, a non-geographical and heterogeneous sort of community of the intangible heritage practice of chhau.

Seeing the community as one of many effects of the development project managerial structure, rather than the point of departure, provides new perspectives on grasping the role and agency of international development initiatives in intangible heritage making process. Above all, this perspective highlights, through all the analysis in this thesis, the limited scope for self-determination given to Purulia chhau artists when they are inscribed as beneficiaries of the development project, and therefore subject to the project management structure (Golini and Landoni, 2014), with regard to the project's final goals and activities. The imposition of the project management structure makes tradition bearers subject to pre-determined rule. This does not mean that artists were passive beneficiaries under the AL

project actor-network but, as the next Chapters will show, the artists adjusted their role according to the project rules and sustained – as it is established by project dynamics - the project manager (SE) as a main mediator of the heritage revitalisation as a livelihood strategy. Therefore, rejecting the view that the community of intangible heritage is only based on some inherent qualities of the heritage itself (such as spatial categories, geography or cultural identity), this analytical Chapter showed that the intangible heritage community is also a product of the heterogeneous hybrid alliances that are mobilised under an international development project. This shows not only the micro level but suggests the implication at a larger macro level.

For the purposes of this thesis, it is worth investigating what happens when these heterogeneous relationships of the intangible heritage community, that is all the actors (human and non-human) that make up Purulia chhau heritage under the AL project, participate in the paradoxical relationships between locality and the global world of safeguarding practices and international development actions, translating the intangible heritage in a livelihood strategy. It is also worth investigating how the hierarchy and power relations created by the project management structure worked out in practice, what impact it had on the intangible heritage of chhau and how artists aligned or reversed the power relations for their interests. Can intangible heritage be preserved, and bring economic development (e.g., via new events and representations), as a livelihood strategy without alienating the cultural element?

Intangible heritage is constantly recreated and ordered by many actors and actions under the heterogeneous community prompted by a project actor-network, as will be shown in more detail in the following Chapters. With a focus on the intangible heritage actor world, or the characteristics attached to the intangible heritage entity/ies by the AL relationships and its actors, descriptions in the following Chapters 7 and 8 serves to unfold the connections between the local rural livelihood system and the heritage of Purulia chhau dance and *how* and by whom the intangible heritage-based livelihood strategy for development is pushed forward.

# Chapter 7

## 7. Intangible Heritage Livelihood Assets: Shaping the Lives and Livelihoods of Rural Artists



*14 Chhau track, picture by the author.*

“They are going back to their villages after they have spent all night performing, probably from 9pm to 5am in the morning; now they go and sleep and maybe tonight they leave their village [again] to reach another place to perform chhau, all night long” (Kabir, 2011, pers. comm., 24th February, 2011).

On a day of fieldwork in Purulia District, on the way to Kotcha Hathu, a small village where, escorted by Kabir, I was going to visit three chhau gurus. We met three different trucks transporting Purulia chhau troupes (see fig. 14 above). It was early in the morning, and the driver and Kabir confirmed that those trucks were undoubtedly carrying chhau performers back home (Field notes, 2011). Our white Ambassador car honked as chhau’s trucks passed us on the road, and they honked back to us in a sort of respectful greeting.

My expectations about looking for signs of the presence of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau that the SE - as project leader and primary actor of the network – had problematised

and presented as being at risk of abandonment (see Chapter 5), were met with a great surprise. I was about to learn what an intangible heritage like a folk dance means in a rural area of India. How the heritage is part of a rooted lifestyle as an internal resource, and how it could be also seen and transformed towards a livelihood strategy for the development planning, therefore, professionalising the folk artists and the heritage practice into specific livelihood activities.

This Chapter presents the actors doing chhau dance and the heterogeneous collectivities that form it as the object of interest (Callon, 1986) of the AL project actor-network or in other words, it presents the dynamic and internal structure of Purulia chhau dance's actor-world (Callon, 1986). Hence, this Chapter explores the rural livelihood eco-system of chhau communities according to the chhau dancers themselves and explores how the arrival of the primary actor (the SE) with the AL project actor-network, the external organisational structure (Scoones, 2009), reinforced a livelihood strategy perspective towards cultural and creative tourism to capitalise on their intangible heritage for the development process.

I will begin by briefly discussing the concept of 'livelihood' in literature, then showing its embodiment in chhau artists' lifestyle at the time of my fieldwork. The limitation of the current livelihood definitions and framework, in which traditional culture receives little attention (Daskon, 2015; Daskon and Binns, 2009) and intangible heritage has no visibility, will be highlighted. This analysis brings us to an exploration of the grassroots concept of livelihood from Purulia chhau artists' point of view and how the intangible heritage is a necessary part of their sustainability. My efforts here are to show that it is not by seeing the intangible heritage of chhau as something other than a livelihood, that we may grasp its living nature (UNESCO, 2003) and viability. Rather, an understanding of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau is achieved only by focusing on its constantly changing character and its adaptability to tradition bearers' needs, as part of those heterogeneous tangible and intangible capabilities (Sen, 1999) and outputs that make life meaningful and sustainable. This Chapter also uses the concept of livelihood as an analytical approach in furthering the understanding of intangible heritage and its practice.

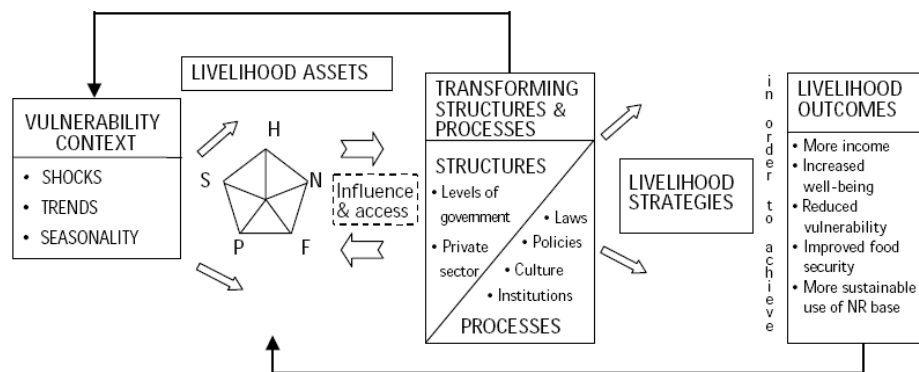
The analysis of the local livelihoods of Purulia takes into consideration the context of chhau dancers interviewed mainly from three main chhau villages, Bamnia, Baliagara and Kotcha Hatu (in the Purulia region), and it is not intended to be exhaustive of the rural livelihood system, of all the inhabitants of Purulia, in all its current complexity.

## 7.1 Rural Livelihoods Investigation and Intangible Heritage

As already discusses in the literature review of this thesis (see sub-section 3.2.3 and 3.2.4 in Chapter 3), rural livelihoods studies share among them some core concepts and definitions on the interpretation of what is a livelihood and a livelihood strategy. The common definition describes livelihood as a mix of capabilities, resources (also called assets or capitals<sup>91</sup>) and activities creating a strategy and required as means of living to cope with external or internal (household) vulnerabilities and stress (Chambers and Conway, 1991, cited in Daskon, 2015, p. 32).

In many approaches to planning for rural development projects and investigating poverty, this conceptualisation of livelihood is associated with the sustainable livelihood (SL) framework elaborated by Scoones (1998). The SL is

“a model of analysis and for practical implementation of rural and sustainable livelihood that takes into account what are the livelihood resources, institutional processes and livelihood strategies, which are important in enabling or constraining the achievement of sustainable livelihoods for different groups of people” (Scoones, 1998, p. 3) (see fig. 15 below).



15 The original SL framework by Scoones (1998)

Different SL approaches have been developed, also including tourism as livelihood strategy (Tao and Wall, 2009); however, in general, the SL framework concentrates on exploring quantitative relationships between measurable variables, namely the resources that can be converted into economic incomes through livelihood strategies, with the help of institutional

<sup>91</sup> The terms ‘assets’ and ‘capitals’ are concepts often used as synonyms in rural livelihood investigations and both represents those means available to people to secure their sustainability (Daskon, 2015, p. 30).

processes as actors pushing a particular livelihood trajectory and strategy. The resources identified by the SL framework, from which people can draw their livelihoods, are also those material resources that can turn into human, natural, financial, social and physical capitals (Daskon, 2015; Daskon and Binns, 2009). Many scholars have criticised this understanding of livelihood as a process of assemblage and negotiation among material resources/capitals and strategies because it has been regarded as unable to account for the complexity and diversity of people's lives, unable to capture the role of social relations (Marschke, 2005) and the "intra-household dynamics and conflicts" (Prowse, 2010, cited in Sakdapolrak, 2014, p. 21),) and particularly unable to acknowledge the role of local culture in the livelihood process (Daskon, 2015; Daskon and Binns, 2009). De Haan writes "by calling resources 'capitals', livelihoods were regarded in an economic view, placing emphasis on material aspects such as production and income, and analysing livelihoods in neo-liberal terms of economic investments and gains" (2012, p. 348).

Aspects such as traditional cultural practices, folklore, cultural values with intangible variables (beliefs, customs, and knowledge, for instance) are not usually included either among the possible livelihood capital assets (Daskon, 2015) of the SL framework or in the general idea of rural livelihood strategies. Rural livelihoods are understood "as outcomes of purely rational strategic decisions" (Sakdapolrak, 2014, p. 22) based on practical changes of economic households. Unfortunately, this idea of rural livelihoods leaves out the role and the significance of intangible heritage for rural communities.

Sakdapolrak (2014) and De Haan (2012) argue against this materialistic perspective and suggest that the specific ways in which people cope and adapt to vulnerabilities (such as environmental stresses and policy changes) are outcomes of an unfolding process in which personal and collective history is crucial. The rural livelihoods of a community must then be grasped, according to Sakdapolrak (2014), as a dynamic socially constructed process, where place and people are to be taken into consideration. This approach to livelihood investigation allows a more holistic perspective; however, few studies consider local cultural heritage (and its preservation) as part of the context and forces (internal or external to the community) that impact people's lives and livelihood choices (Tao, Wall and Wismer, 2010).

Daskon's paper (2015) is the only one (as far as I am aware) that situates the understanding of traditional culture, particularly traditional craft industries, and its values under the concept of livelihood resource or capital. He stresses the significance of such a new conceptualisation of livelihood to embrace all useful roles that traditional culture plays in any rural community (Daskon, 2015) and concludes that "culture is a fundamental phenomenon that plays a crucial role in strengthening livelihood assets" (2015, p. 31).

However, the current literature, already discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis, still does not provide a clear outline of the role of intangible heritage, such as performing arts, within the livelihoods of given rural communities, neither demonstrates how the intangible heritage gives access to various capital assets (financial, human and societal, cultural and physical) to pursue people's sustainability.

Analysis of the relations between the Purulia rural livelihood system and the role of the intangible heritage requires the unpacking of the core activities (Scoones, 1998) and the lifestyle of chhau groups. Thus, the next section recognises the villagers' various experiences of livelihood, both in secondary information and in the words of people who were involved into the AL project. The significance of intangible heritage to chhau communities will be assessed in the context of the typical array of livelihood strategies in Purulia. In employing such a perspective, the analysis will capture the multi-dimensional nature of this actor and the ways in which the intangible heritage relates to the people's livelihood in Purulia and the AL project actor-network.

## **7.2 Reconstructing the Rural Livelihood Patterns of Purulia**

In Purulia, most households rely on a small combination of activities to meet needs and pursue a sustainable lifestyle in a context characterised by great poverty. Previous research on the rural development of West Bengal categorises the households in Purulia into "different livelihood groups: agricultural and allied activities, agricultural labourer, non-agricultural labourer, salaried group, casual labourer, petty business, and others" (Khatun and Roy, 2012, p.116) focusing mainly on the economic aspects of the single household income.

In Purulia there are families in "acute poverty and anguish [...]; family income varies from Rs. 500/- to Rs. 800/- per month in general<sup>92</sup>. The maximum level of income is Rs. 1000/- to Rs. 1200/- for a family" (Dasgupta and Chattopadhyay, 2008, p. 6). As reported in the following extract from Dasgupta and Chattopadhyay:

"The villages in Purulia, Bankura and Midnapore display the same picture of wanton poverty and distress. The people [...] are either unfed or half -fed, clothing are strikingly scanty, the living accommodation consists of a kuchha house of 1/ 2 shabby rooms with no electricity and proper drinking water. There is no scope of separate." (Dasgupta and Chattopadhyay, 2008, p. 6).

Seasonal problems linked to environmental desertification and agrarian deforestation, starting from British colonial times, contributed to the harsh living conditions and water

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<sup>92</sup> The current rate exchange is 1 INR = 0.0111756 GBP (from XE Currency Converter online, accessed August 2018).



scarcity of this region. Average annual and daily temperatures have also increased causing stresses and chronic problems in growing crops, household management of water and food, and seasonal ills (Dasgupta and Chattopadhyay, 2008). All these stresses tend to be ongoing, as in the case of seasonality issues in agriculture, such as a chronic drought, almost every summer (Field notes, 2011).

Despite the unfavourable agricultural climate, there is not much diversification, and still many households in Purulia pursue farm cultivation, harvest natural products, and follow what Dasgupta and Chattopadhyay define as the “same stereotyped pattern of living” (2008, p. 7). The lack of opportunity is considerable, and it is exacerbated by the conditions of poor transport and infrastructure facilities, the long-lasting conflictual context with Naxalites movements<sup>93</sup> and lack of financial credit (Field notes, 2011). From Purulia to Ranchi (towards Jharkhand region), there is only one main road upon which people and commercial life traverse the district. The distances between remote villages, such as Kotcha Hatu or Baliagara, and their primary markets or commercial shops, limit the availability of manufacturing products and access to broader markets. Secondary and higher education institutes and health services can be found only in Purulia or in Ranchi (Field notes, 2011). All the area is known in Hindi as *jungal-mahal* (Dasgupta and Chattopadhyay, 2008), which means “jungle district”, because it was surrounded by hills and some forests. Until recently, groups of people who live in villages on the forest fringe, and many of those living on the plateau, were still recognised as the most forest-dependent of all West Bengal (Dasgupta and Chattopadhyay, 2008; Ghosal, 2011).

For many Purulia chhau households, the forest and natural resources supply domestic needs such as food, fodder, and medicines, but are also resources for selling. People collect leaves and firewood regularly for domestic use; for commercial use, they collect twigs, *sal* and *kendu*<sup>94</sup> leaves and they sell them. Youth and women prepare *bidi*, from *kendu* leaves, the typical cheap cigarettes very well known in all of India. (fig. 16 below) Women often make broomsticks, work in coal mines<sup>95</sup>, do tailoring, weave towels, and make traditional clothes and costumes for chhau dance (Field notes, 2011).

Other studies, not directly investigating Purulia chhau households, but from the same period of my fieldwork, demonstrate the importance of the forest resources in fulfilling households’ needs (both economic and otherwise) in this area. In his research, Ghosal

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<sup>93</sup> See Chapter 1 for an introduction on the political context in Purulia at the time of my fieldwork.

<sup>94</sup> For instance, *kendu* leaves are available for two months per year and a household can collect 15 *chata* (bundles) of *kendu* leaves per year, and these are paid Rs 25 per bundle (Field notes, 2011).

<sup>95</sup> Purulia District, with Bankura and Midnapore, is a district where a large number of small and medium industries for sponge iron, aluminium and steel products are currently located. These industries are often associated with the serious problem of emission and environment sustainability issues (Field notes, 2011).

(2011) reported a villager's interview where natural resources are recognised as essential in everyday life:

"[We collect forest products including fodder, firewood, etc. Whenever we see we need anything, which is available in the forest, we go to collect that product. We live within the forest area so at least one person from each family goes to collect forest products every day.... We mainly collect [them] for domestic requirements, but sometimes go to sell some items to the village market popularly known as 'hat']" (Villager, Purulia district, interview, 22 of September, 2008 published in Ghosal, 2011, p. 161).

When visiting a chhau master's family in Bamnia, Gopal reported that his family and the members of his chhau group make their living from a mix of natural resources, casual labourer and some farming. I quote directly from my field notes:

We arrived in Gopal's house, it was clean and we sat down on the bed. I am with Kabir and Ray. Gopal's home is composed of 3 main rooms and 3 beds. He is the leader [ustad] of a chhau group, around 30 people (20 dancers are from this village, Bamnia). He says they performed recently (1 or 2 times) in the area of Halda (which is in the district). In one year his group can do an average of 45 paid chhau shows so the main livelihood for him is the bidi business. To his group (which is considered the 4th group in terms of importance in the village) chhau is not a livelihood. They dream a lot about going outside (abroad) to perform but more for the fame than for the money. His family is very supportive. Once in a year they farm but they always have problem with water. This area is badly affected by drought. In his group there are boys who are students from the college (Begun Kodha High school), wage labourers, drivers, farmers. So, everybody has a main income coming from another job but still they play chhau as much as they can. (Gopal, 2011, pers. comm., 15 February).

As Gopal stated, it is challenging for his family to rely entirely on agriculture because of the soil condition. Gopal's words contrast the concerns for the unsustainable agriculture typical of Purulia suggesting reliance upon diversification of livelihoods based on the intangible heritage. Today, aged in his fifties, Gopal started chhau when he was 12 years old; he was a student in Jay's group for almost 3 years, after that he was in a group with Chandra (another famous chhau master) for nearly 30 years, and he recently started his chhau group a few years ago. Although Gopal's household, like other villagers in Bamnia, moves seasonally to pursue agriculture with inadequate results, his daily life is always shifting among a variety of other activities (bidi business, gathering forest products, chhau dancing, etc.). He still believes that doing chhau is part of his life, and he has been a chhau dancer for almost 40 years now (Field notes, 2011).

Aged 65, Jaival is a son of a famous chhau dancer, and, today is a chhau master himself in a group founded 15 years ago, in Kotcha Hatu. He says that he still dances because he likes it and saw his father doing chhau all his life and now his son is doing chhau as well. He is "interested in keeping alive this tradition" and he also enjoys dancing because he gains respect

and becomes popular in all the districts; for him “being a chhau is not only a matter of money” (Jaival, 2011, pers. comm., 24 February).

In this perspective, the rural livelihoods are not only the product of the interaction between material choice and contextual constraints, poverty and arid soil, but also rural livelihoods are expressed by, and embodied in, a traditional culture people live within and the cultural heritage they preserve.

In the section below, I am going to tell the story of how the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau is genuinely addressed by chhau masters in the form of capital (Bebbington, 1999; Daskon and McGregor, 2012; Scoones, 1998), and how it represents the continuation of the past in the present culture, with skills and knowledge to transmit to future generations. In addition, I will outline how doing chhau dance is a group or extended family experience, effecting societal relations at village level, as well as a financial resource that has helped families in attaining a better and sustainable lifestyle.



*16 Family bidi business in Bamnia, picture by the author.*

### **7.2.1 A lifetime as a Dancer: Sacredness and Symbolism of Doing Purulia Chhau**

When asking a chhau master ‘what is Purulia chhau?’, some interconnected answers were given. None of these answers were given in isolation or with one single possible interpretation. Instead, their responses reveal Purulia chhau to be more than one simple thing for many men in Purulia.

According to Kabir, the original purpose of chhau dance is to transmit the stories of deities and to embody them while narrating the stories of gods, goddesses (*Shiva-Shakti*), or tribal heroes to an illiterate rural audience in West Bengal, Orissa and Jharkhand (Field notes,

2011). With these devotional and ritualistic purposes, the dance's value has much more to do with sacred symbolism and doing chhau became more than only pure entertainment. Some features from the religious identity of this folk dance are still considered essential features, which characterise an excellent performance (Field notes, 2011). Some of these features, described below, are incorporated in the performances at the village level and observable in the choice of the themes performed, particularly at the beginning of the dance (a more detailed description will be given also in Chapter 9). As Roma Chatterjii (2009) also noted in her book on Purulia chhau, each chhau performance always begins with a Ganesha *vandanaa*, that is, a prayer to Ganesha as "the dance is offered as a gift to the audience" (2009, p. 10). Today, many chhau performances still follow a similar traditional plot, bringing the audience the experience of gods and goddesses' fights with demons.

In literature as well, the dance has historically been known for its religious associations<sup>96</sup> (Bhattacharya, 1989; Chatterjii, 2004; 2009; Reck, 1972). The ethnographer, John Arden, remarked in 1971, when watching a local Purulia chhau performance, "there was nothing human about him [the masked chhau dancer] at all. He was—to an audience already prepared by deep belief and the music of drums—an incarnate deity who was gracing their village by his presence" (1971, p. 68).

The sacredness and symbolism of chhau dance are undoubtedly linked to seasonal rituals, dedicated to Shiva-Shakti, as well as to epic poems and myths from Hindu literature and tribal stories used to celebrate many occasions. One sacred function of the dance is to evoke the changing seasons and the fertility of the soil. In Purulia villages, seasonal rituals, also called *pujas*, are performed to secure the continuance of life for another year. Spring and autumn mark the transition from one kind of activity to another at both social and agricultural levels. These seasons are periods when rural life turns to harvesting, nature renews, and a new agricultural year begins or ends.

Like the old pre-Hindu tribal festivities of spring and fertility, "these seasons are marked by religious rituals related to the Shiva-Shakti cult in which deities are worshipped both in their benevolent and terrifying aspects" (Citaristi, 2001, p. 47). Citaristi, a dancer and researcher, describes *pujas* as follows: "during rituals the devotees exercise a series of self-control tests and physical exertions (also other Hindu rituals such as bathing, prayer, and gathering in

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<sup>96</sup> As already introduced in Chapter 1 of this thesis, origins of chhau dance are not yet established. According to several scholars (see Bhattacharya, 1989 or Reck, 1972) the origin of chhau dance from Orissa and West Bengal is strictly connected to the soldier class of pre-Hindu local communities and it is among them that the martial traits of this dance evolved. Moreover, Citaristi (2001), studying rituals in Orissa, demonstrates that, although it is certainly difficult to establish the historical reasons for the military connections with ritual dances (such as chhau dance), its martial traits and soldiers, many elements usually involved in the performance of ritual dances of *danda nata* (a traditional dance festival usually performed in Orissa in the month of Chaitra, full moon to worship Shiva) such as self-discipline and physical fitness linked to the Shiva-Shakti cult can partly explain this cultural link between the dance and the military traits.

festivals), starting with the full moon of the month of *Chaitra* up to the beginning of the solar month *bisakha*” (2001, p. 47). Although all people at villages in Purulia take part in these rituals, the *Chaitra Parva* (month of full moons between March and April) is particularly linked to chhau dance and its performers. Usually, the period of Chaitra ends in this area with four days of chhau dance festival dedicated to Shiva-Shakti (Field notes, 2011).

Common themes in chhau dance are epic stories of Lord *Krishna* or *Durga* (fig. 17; 18 below), both considered *avatar* (incarnations) of Shiva-Shakti. Some common deities’ stories from West Bengal, such as the killing of *Mahisasura*<sup>97</sup> (a main demon) by *Durga*, are interpreted by chhau troupes over and over, each chhau group with distinctive features under the guide of his master.



17 Lord Krishna, picture by the author.

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<sup>97</sup> “Shattered by the oppressions and exploitations of Mahisasura the gods appeared before Lord Brahma with the appeal to save them and his creation from the demon Mahisasura. Arrayed with the most powerful weapons in her ten hands, Goddess Durga on the back of the lion fought with Mahisasura and killed him” (Acharya, 2013, p. 9).



18 Durga, picture by the author.

With the help of extended physical training in essential pattern of movements and postures, use of hands, positions of the heads, rhythm and music, Purulia dancers depict the entire drama and provide the characters with symbolic meanings capable of transmitting feelings such as vigour, courage and moral distinction between good and evil, to both the dancers and onlookers. As Kabir explained during our conversation:

[...] “in chhau there is always the need to be sharing moral values (honesty or heroism, for instance, or courage). We [chhau artists] also need to make a perfect chhau performance through installing the “bhava” (mood) into the characters; therefore, we [artists] work hard installing the ‘spirit’ of the character into the dancer, first of all through the physical training, then developing the steps and the postures lead by the guru” (Field notes; Kabir, 2011, pers. comm., 13 February).

Kabir’s words illustrate that the dance is charged with an aura of sacred, ineffable, and universal moral values, such as integrity, courage, respect, fairness, honesty, and compassion that are channelled into the performance. The dancers prepare to give an excellent performance by “installing some appropriate *bhava*”<sup>98</sup> (Ganpule, 2014, p. 403), or feelings. They are assisted in doing so by the *gurus*<sup>99</sup>, who also teach, choreograph, supervise and unify the vision and aesthetic language of Purulia chhau (Field notes, 2011) (see also Chapter 9 on the chhau language and the role of gurus). Artists complete extended

<sup>98</sup> The *Nāṭyasastra*, the earliest work on the Indian Poetics, is the first treatise to expound the theory of *rasa* (aesthetic) and *bhava*. The word *bhava* corresponds to the feelings, the emotions installed in the character and passed to the audience. *Rasas* and *bhavas* are strictly connected according to this treatise. The *Nāṭyasastra* identifies eight *rasas* with corresponding *bhava*: *rati* (love); *hasya* (mirth); *soka* (sorrow); *krodha* (anger); *utsaha* (energy); *bhaya* (terror); *jugupsa* (disgust); *vismaya* (astonishment) (Ganpule, 2014, p. 404).

<sup>99</sup> The role of chhau masters and a discussion on ‘chhau language’, as referred by the artists, will be addressed in Chapter 9.

training before reaching the physical and artistic level required to install the *bhava* into the character(s) performed and therefore to achieve universal expression.

Dancers, join chhau groups at the age of 10-12 years old, often because a family member (father, uncle or grandfather) is already a chhau dancer. I recall, here, an episode from Chandra's house where he states that doing chhau also represents the power to make meaningful and elevate an entire life - of a modest farmer - through the strong identification that happens between the man, dancer and character:

[...] in his house, Chandra offers some tea with biscuits and he invites his [old] father to sit with us. His father is around 86 years old and still, as Chandra points out, "he still would like to dance". Chandra and the other men with me kind of laugh with him about the fact that they say "his father is always ready to dance, again and again despite the old age". There is a relaxed atmosphere and it's late morning. The old man stands up and wants to show me two typical 'chhau standing poses' [see picture?]. Chandra says, 'this is the character he has been trained for the entire life and [the one] he played the most, it is Krishna, you can see from the hands to hold a flute, like in the typical image of Krishna in Indian iconography; this one [the second posture] is the typical chhau standing posture, which can be adopted for any character at the beginning of a story - when the character introduces himself to the audience, adds Kabir. My father - continues Chandra - he is really proud of being a chhau and he feels honoured and linked with the character [Krishna] he played almost all his life; he is proud and 'right' like Lord Krishna in his stories. (Field notes, 2011; Chandra, 2011, pers. comm. 11 February).

Throughout their lifetime, many Purulia chhau dancers are inclined to specialise in one or two characters and become the best in those roles. A sort of symbiosis exists between the artist, the man and the character; some Purulia artists suggest that the character takes over the man/artist when he enters the chhau arena (as it is usually called the traditional stage) (Field notes, 2011).

What is important here is that even if all the audience does not necessarily understand the knowledge carried by the intangible heritage during a performance, the dance still represents the connection with elders (those who transmit the tradition of chhau dancing), with past heritage, sacred texts and oral tribal stories, with family tradition or identity. It is as much what these people are, as what they do. Doing chhau forms part of the living cultural tradition that impacts Purulia people's lives, giving a meaning to them.

In the next sub-section, I am going to show the mechanisms through which these effects of chhau dance on villagers' lives occur in other dimensions, showing how the intangible heritage of chhau has, in fact, affected rural peoples' societal and human relations and household incomes.

### 7.2.2 Purulia Chhau as a Societal Resource

Many respondents explained chhau dance also by referring to the “group dance tradition of the indigenous communities” of Mahatos, Kalindis, Samals, Kumhar and others, from indigenous tribes like the Santhal, Munda, Bhuiyan or Bhumij of Purulia (Field notes, 2011). According to the chhau masters interviewed, being a chhau dancer guarantees a framework for gaining, with time, some social trust, a sense of place and social position for some indigenous (tribal and outcast) members, reciprocity in cooperative work and a relation between the individual and the group community. Particularly, chhau masters and the best dancers are regarded not only for their skills in chhau dance but also for the social position and relational networks they have achieved and reached in life as a chhau dancer. Remarkable examples of how chhau dance is this kind of resource in life were pointed out in several conversations with chhau masters from Bamnia, Baliagara and Kachahatu villages.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2011, I went to visit Kachahatu village, and I met with three chhau masters from three different chhau troupes. Below are notes from that encounter relevant to understanding how the heritage of Purulia chhau represents a way people translate their traditional culture into a societal resource:

...we arrived (Kabir and me) in K.H. village and we go to call two of the three chhau masters in their houses; then we move to what they call the “deposit” of chhau, which is a small room behind a petty shop – the small commercial business of one of the two chhau leaders, Amin; [In the deposit] they keep masks, costumes and instruments of Amin’s troupe. We start speaking about their groups. Amin says his group is composed of 35 members, and only one [dancer] is coming from another village, the rest of the members are from K.H. They have a programme next week and, therefore, this week his troupe is pretty busy with rehearsal. Amin says he has a long tradition of chhau dancers in his family and today is a leader of a chhau group, trains other dancers, develops the scripts for the stories they perform in chhau and he also gets to decide who is doing what role among the dancers. ‘I am a group manager [manage the income and expenses of the group] and I am a *pradhan*, a panchayat leader, who speaks with villagers and help them to solve problems, to follow and apply government schemes. I gained [people’s] respect as a chhau dancer and became a trustworthy villager... (Field notes, 2011; Amin and Danan, 2011, pers. comm., 24 February).

As Amin explains, being a chhau dancer is not only a lifetime endeavour, it is a family (father to son) *parampara*<sup>100</sup>, but it is also a reliable source of social relations to rely on and grow some prestige. In Amin’s case, being a chhau master has allowed him to gain

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<sup>100</sup> The terms *guru-shishya* and *parampara* denote the traditional way of teaching where culture is transmitted by the direct relationship between the guru (the teacher) and the disciple.



popularity and trust and, with time, to become the *pradhan*<sup>101</sup>, the village leader and person of reference for other villagers in the area.

As Daiji and Danan suggest, in the quotes below, doing chhau let them establish strong social relationships handed down across the group boundaries, from generation to generation, which strengthened their access to human resources and financial credit in vulnerable times:

...each member here [in the group] has a relative, father, uncle or had a grandfather who has been part of this group in the past; it [the group] has passed from generation to generation [...] this is a 4th generation group for me, and I trained in this group with my father and now I am the master. (Daiji, 2011, pers. comm. 25 February).

[...] the chhau group is much more. The group serves to support members also economically, to try [sharing] and find work for members and also today to share money in form of loans taken from bank or private investor<sup>102</sup>. (Danan, 2011, pers. comm., 24 February).

The group has become a resource in that it involves the development of long and extended relations of knowledge and sharing among members and with elders. These descriptions in my field notes reveal that doing chhau dance helps to establish mutual accountability, with societal roles in the village linking individuals to larger groups on which to rely on during personal or economic difficult times. Purulia is a rural society, where interest and excellence in chhau dance are still essential to retain a social position. Hence, the chhau group membership influences access to social (and labour) relations and other human and material resources; therefore, it affects people's lifestyle.

Most of the benefits of membership in chhau groups, or of merely doing chhau, are also felt collectively rather than privately, for instance, by touching different groups of people (mask makers, costume makers, musicians, jhumurist singers and vocalists, technicians, dancers, elders and helpers).

In the next sub-section, I am going to show more details of the financial lifecycle of doing chhau dance, and the changes in lifestyle as related by the same chhau dancers. Many occasions in the field revealed chhau members were "better off" economically than other villagers. The critical factor in explaining household differences and the increase in the

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<sup>101</sup> Besides being very well known as dancers, some chhau masters I have met were also *panchayat* administrator or *pradhan*. The *panchayat* is a governing body that, according to chhau in Purulia, gather 13 close villages. The *pradhan*, often an esteemed elder from one of the villages, represents the panchayat (or the 13 villages) at local government events of administration, reports to government bodies on behalf of the villagers, and tries to solve problems among villagers, such as inter-caste disputes, and decide on social, religious, economic and administrative questions. (Field notes, 2011) However, how the *panchayats* really work at local level varies across all India.

<sup>102</sup> Chhau masters reported that, sometimes, groups rely on a *middleman* who works as a 'cultural broker'; this person finds where the group goes to perform, finds money to prepare chhau productions and sometimes even funds chhau groups himself. However, chhau masters also complained during the interviews because the middlemen can benefit the most from the performance's income. (Field notes, 2011)

financial performance of some Purulia chhau households is to be found in the working networks established under the cultural heritage preservation, as shown in the next subsection.

### 7.2.3 Purulia Chhau Dance and the Household Economy

The day I met Daiji and Pandit, two old masters from Baliagara village (25 February, 2011), it was 12 pm at Pandit's home, and they were awaiting me with some of the other members from his group. They were just back from a night chhau show. I was surprised that they did not even look tired after being out dancing all night. As Daiji explained:

“in 2010, we had 250 chhau shows, mostly performed at night and, for 2011, we have a crowded agenda booked for 220 night-shows”. (Daiji, 2011, pers. Comm., 25 February).

In the last few years, chhau dance in Purulia had experienced some change, with more attention to its value as cultural heritage accompanied by an increasing request for paid chhau performances<sup>103</sup>. Depending also on the skills and fame of the chhau master, the most appreciated Purulia chhau groups are invited to perform at events where they get paid. It is Gopal again who introduces me to the local classification of chhau groups based on skills and knowledge happening in the village of Bamnia at the time of my fieldwork (2011):

[In Bamnia, and generally speaking in the district, chhau troupes are differentiated according to their quality and skills. The first group [also known as] the best one in Bamnia is Jay's group, who gets booked a lot [he has a programme almost every night]. He takes the majority of invitations to perform from other villages at events and festivals during Chaitra Parva festival and during all year. Then, there is Chandra's group (the second group in term of importance in the area of Bamnia) who takes the other booking requests from villagers and festivals, he is also having another chhau group (a second one) with his son that gets the third place as skilled group in the village. But for my group, which can be considered the 4th one, chhau dance is not offering enough, we had around 45 shows in the last year, and we need to rely also on other activities.] (Gopal, 2011, pers. comm., 15 February).

Some chhau groups, the better ones, are often booked in advance, months and months before the event, as they need time and money to prepare the chhau productions, usually two chhau stories per event.

Pandit, aged 70, states that, previously, chhau groups were not paid to dance at local events or festivals.

“Before [in the past] we were not paid well, some offers as the dinner or we were provided *laddu* (sweets), but today we can get paid and many do it for money as well.” (Pandit, 2011, pers. comm., 25 February).

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<sup>103</sup> The shift from paid to unpaid performance it is something that I could not reconstruct from my field notes and from secondary sources.

Being a Purulia chhau is becoming a valuable economic resource for dancers during difficult times, as Pandit suggests:

“chhau means chhau, but what is this today? Many young dancers are from very poor families, so they need to do chhau, because they need to get paid.”  
(Pandit, 2011, pers. comm., 25 February)

The networks of trust and relations established in chhau groups are critical in helping break the problem of access to money and credit (Bebbington, 1999). To this regard, a short biography from Danan’s group from Kotcha Hatu from my notebook gives an overview of the economic lifecycle of a chhau production that needs investment to generate final income:

... Danan says that his group is composed of 36 members, 15 of them are musicians; he is the first one in his family who started his own chhau group 11 years ago, but his son is a chhau dancer as well. All the members of his group are from his village, K.H. In 2010, his group was booked for almost 100 shows; he has already 36 requests to perform for this year, 2011, and 4 for the next year (2012). As he states, “we had some change lately [in chhau lifestyle] we are paid to perform at local level [Purulia] around 6.500 rupees, while if we do a show in Jharkhand it may rise to 8.000 rupees; the average here in Purulia is between 6.000 and 7.000 rupees for a chhau show<sup>104</sup>”. He adds, “from that money we need to pay an average of 100 rupees for each dancer and helper (usually about 20 people), 100/150 for musicians (about 15 people), we deposit some money to the mask-makers, about 500 rupees per mask (just a deposit), pay the truck and fuel for transportation, which cost about 1.500 rupees, pay the chhau master 250 rupees and the rest of the money goes for other group’s expenses (food, for instance, when not provided by the festival organisers) and in the group savings. (Amin and Danan, 2011, pers. comm., 24 February).

Amin’s interview describes how money earned doing chhau has to be managed with care to be able to cover all the expenses of a chhau production and guarantee a small economic sustainability to the group:

[...] with a bank loan [Amin explains] we could buy masks, costumes, instruments and then every time we got paid to perform chhau we gave part of that money back to cover the loan and expenses. My group, in 2010, did 40 paid shows, we had to deposit some money to the mask makers in Charida [village] the year before, 2009, to get the masks for the programmes of 2010.’ He explains that they didn’t pay the total cost to the mask makers immediately but they paid in instalments, the first part when they got booked [for a paid

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<sup>104</sup> Other chhau masters declared slightly different payments, as Pandit declared that, at the local level, they get paid around 8,000 rupees, plus they get provided a dinner (Pandit, 2011, pers. comm., 25 February). Another chhau master declared they were paid a minimum of 6,500 rupees and a maximum of 10,000 rupees in 2010 (Daiji, 2011, pers. comm., 25 February). Some differences of 1,000-1,500 rupees emerged in accordance to the group’s quality and reputation. When invited to perform, almost all groups, are often given a dinner and alcohol. Most chhau dancers drink alcohol to stay awake all night. Despite the fact that I only heard rumours of the liquor and drug additions of some dancers, in 2013, the scholar, Acharya, published a paper “*Aestheticizing without Agenda: A Counter-Reading of the Western Approach to Chhau Dance*” where there is an explicit reference to the problem of alcoholism and reported that “in a long interview Guru [...] talked about a crisis in the moral life of the young and upcoming chhau performers” linked to liquor and drug addiction (Acharya, 2013, p. 95).

show] and then the rest of the money when they got paid after other events. (Amin and Danan, 2011, pers. comm., 24 February).

Both the biographies of Danan and Amin's chhau groups give us an overview of how much a chhau show is paid at the local level and how incomes need to be managed and redistributed among members with care<sup>105</sup>.

Some of the chhau masters have minimised the chhau production's expenditures considerably, for instance, opening their workshops for making costumes or decorations for chhau. Jay's family in Bamnia has many members employed making chhau costumes (fig. 19 below), as shown in this extract:

...at the house of Jay's relative, I could see how they prepare some of the costumes and how they put on the decoration for masks' collars. There are two women and a 12-year-old boy crafting the costumes made of very different and coloured materials, small pieces of plastic and flowers, feathers, pieces of clothes and other elements from white to gold and silver. (Field notes, 2011).

Instead of opening his own costume-business, Chandra has invested money in buying a truck and in starting a second Purulia chhau group, where his son and some relatives are involved as dancers and musicians. Sometimes he also rents out the truck at a profit to other groups (Field notes, 2011) (fig. 20 below).



*19 Jay's family in the costume workshop, picture by the author.*

<sup>105</sup> Further detail of the costs of a chhau production with examples of costs of masks and costumes can be found in Appendix C of this thesis



*20 Chandra's track, picture by the author.*

Continuing the cultural practices linked to chhau dance through developing different economic activities out of chhau dance tradition (paid performances, costumes making, truck renting, etc.) reinforces Jay and Chandra's families' adaptability to changing situations, with the stresses in agriculture and the seasonality of forest products (Field notes, 2011). Hence, a way that livelihood diversification (Ellis, 2000) occurs in these Purulia households is by putting time and effort into a series of culturally based activities, as a way of reducing overall risks. Description so far demonstrated that most chhau families do not build sustainability and livelihoods on the complementarity of existing livelihood activities (agriculture and forest products), as typical of rural households (Dasgupta and Chattopadhyay, 2008; Ellis, 2000; Khatun and Roy, 2012). Instead, livelihood diversification of chhau families is built also on intangible heritage and traditional practice and shows a newly important angle of coping with poverty, stress and vulnerabilities in rural areas (Ellis, 2000) routinely based in the everyday practice of intangible cultural heritage.

### **7.3 Intangible Heritage as a Sustainable Rural Livelihood**

So far, the combination of ideas presents a somewhat dynamic picture of the daily life of chhau dancers in Purulia. In the fieldwork conducted during this study, it was not possible to form a clear quantitative description of the household income levels of chhau members, as they were not really open about accurately quantifying their monthly household earnings. Moreover, the qualitative methods employed in this research did not yield a quantitative assessment of particular changes in household incomes. However, the experiences of the majority of chhau masters indicated that their livelihoods were relatively more secure than other villagers, thanks to their intangible heritage. Descriptive data shows that, in building

their lifestyle and sustainability, some households in Purulia draw upon differentiated activities' resource exchanges at an individual level, social connections, and networking, built on and around the intangible heritage of chhau dance.

Stories from Pandit, Gopal, Chandra, Jay, Daiji, Danan, Amin, Kabir and other chhau masters challenge the notion of 'intangible heritage-based livelihoods' as new to these people and highlights the complex relationships among Purulia people, the local rural livelihoods system, and the intangible cultural heritage recognition. From their stories analysed in this Chapter, it is made clear that all these elements have an intermingled story in which the intangible cultural heritage of Purulia chhau dance is not a 'pure' cultural practice made of only intangible values. At the same time, the rural livelihood resources and strategies of the Purulia people are not simply made up of 'material capital' or 'work' but are also culturally and socially rooted. The diversification of livelihoods around Purulia chhau dance may be a coping response strategy (Marschke, 2005). However, the ability to pursue livelihoods in a hermeneutical perspective, – therefore pursuing sustainable subsistence while also making living meaningful (Bebbington, 1999), is certainly intrinsically related to the role and definition of the intangible heritage. The intangible heritage of Purulia chhau is a livelihood, and its importance and role in everyday life cannot be separate from that of functional resources in different spheres of tradition bearers' lives. My field data suggests that doing Purulia chhau facilitates other forms of human capital exchange such as skills and training exchange among members linked to chhau masters; as well as forms of cultural capital sharing, with knowledge transmission and preservation of cultural and family traditions; societal networking, with the relationships as well as reputation built as a member of a chhau group within the village and institutions and physical capital exchange, such as transportation means, technology, musical instruments, masks, costumes and other technical instruments while financial capital is accumulated in the form of savings or access to credit through the chhau group membership. The intangible heritage of chhau represents a combination of flexible resources (or capital, in sustainable livelihood language) of tangible and intangible forms, of contextual knowledge and processes that largely determine people's capacity of choice (and strategy) to respond to local issues. Chhau dancers' intangible heritage is intrinsic to the quality of life by affecting people experiences, choices and access to livelihoods, while also improving their non-material well-being considerably (Field notes, 2011). On the individual level, chhau masters gain respect and a role at the village level from being a chhau dancer, some dancers develop managerial skills, such as bank account management, and entrepreneurial skills when they expand chhau groups with related small businesses (e.g. costume making, truck renting, etc.), as some of the informants reported.

Chhau masters' perspective on livelihood sustainability goes beyond pure economic and material concerns and convincingly shifts our focus to how chhau communities live (Scoones, 2009) by mobilising internal cultural resources. Masters have shown how practising the intangible heritage for locals is already an internal strategy for sustainably building resilience.

Bebbington argues that most strategic livelihood decisions for development planning and practice purposes “involve a choice to over-consume a particular capital asset at a given moment” (Bebbington, 1999, p. 30). How people make a choice, according to Bebbington, “depends on what development, poverty and livelihood mean to them, as well as the constraints under which they make these decisions” (Bebbington, 1999, p. 31). Livelihood planning and activities for boosting the development of rural communities are not often neutral (Scoones, 2009), since they engender processes of transformation and power relation (De Hann, 2012) among different actors. Therefore, we need to be concerned not only with how the Purulia chhau livelihoods' eco-system works by itself, but also with the impact of any external institutional process or organisational structure on peoples' living system, sense of their wellbeing and meaningfulness (Bebbington, 1999). Using the instrument of the sustainable livelihood framework, the next section will outline how the AL project actor-network, led by the primary actor (the SE), is positioned to include intangible heritage-based livelihoods in development planning and implementation.

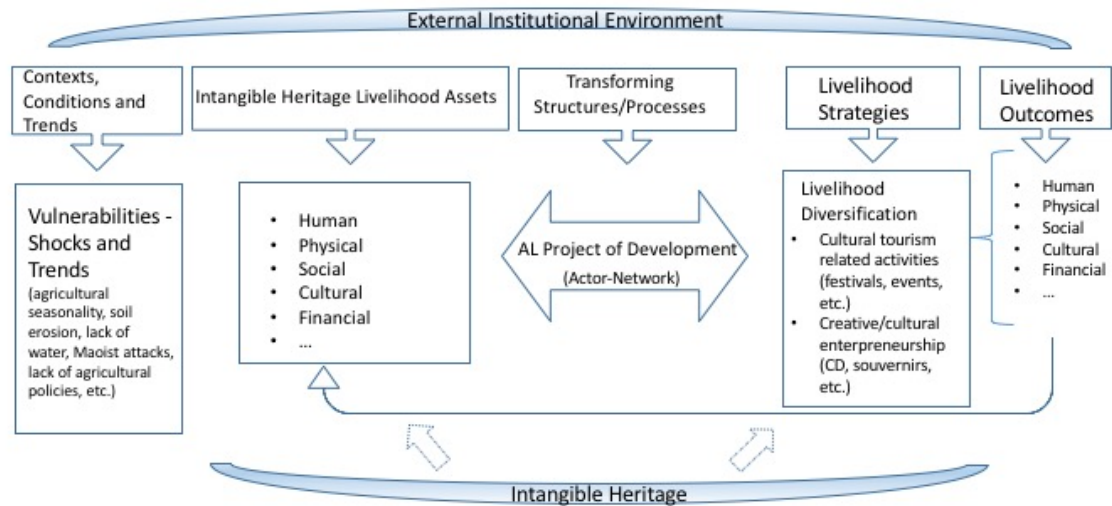
## **7.4 Developing a Framework for Intangible Heritage Livelihood**

Actors in different rural contexts can have access to different resources as capital and come up with different strategies for their sustainability, dependent on a number of variables. Previous studies on rural livelihoods generalised under those elements identified in Scoones' sustainable livelihood (SL) framework (1998): vulnerabilities, assets, transforming structures and processes, livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes (see fig. 15). Research showed that access to livelihood assets and their use for differentiated livelihood strategies is also determined by the institutional processes, policy factors and the structural organisations, which rural people face (see for instance, De Hann, 2012).

One of the main aspects of interest in the investigation of rural livelihoods through the analytical tool of the SL framework is the possibility to highlight *how* and *by whom* local livelihood resources are combined, thus allowing the livelihood strategy for development to be pursued. Scoones' framework assigns the role to the institutions and organisations and those processes able to bind together the livelihood resources or capital assets (referred to in the diagram below on the pentagon as S for social, H for human, N for natural, F for



financial and P for physical capital<sup>106</sup>), to pursue various strategies and realise different livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 2009; Tao, Wall and Wismer, 2010). Applying the visual representation of Scoones' SL retrospectively, this research found limitations in the previous SL framework concerning its application to Purulia chhau members' lifestyle and the AL development project which led to the proposition of a modified livelihood framework. The revised framework is shown below (fig. 21).



21 Modified SL framework into Intangible Heritage Livelihood (IHL) framework by the author of this thesis adapted from Moran et al. 2007.

It is important to stress that this modified 'intangible heritage livelihood' (IHL) framework, whose components are briefly explained below, is not intended as a conceptual or theoretical model. It is a modified SL framework adjusted according to local situations that should help to create a common understanding of the role of intangible heritage at the rural community level and its use in the development planning process. This IHL framework provides a graphical representation of how assets and strategies emerged from secondary data and conversations with local communities' leaders and chhau masters. However, the framework also gives a visual representation of the role of the *vulnerability context*, *external institutional environment* and *intangible heritage* sphere that set the background through which the intangible heritage-based strategy for development is enacted by the AL project actor-network, and the SE's actions.

For instance, the *vulnerability context* is the insecurity in the wellbeing of artists and their households in the face of a changing political and natural environment. Environmental changes, such as the recurrent scarcity of water or lack of investment in infrastructure in

<sup>106</sup> The five capital assets, according to the original SL framework (Scoones, 1998), are defined as: human capital, or the amount and quality of labour available in a household; natural capital, or the quality and quantity of natural resources available; financial capital, or the savings and inflows of money; physical capital, or the infrastructure, equipment or other material tools used for productivity; and social capital, or the networks for cooperation and support among people.



Purulia, as already discussed in section 7.1.2 of this Chapter, affect artists' welfare and can take the form of sudden shocks or seasonal cycles.

The *external institutional environment* (EIE) seen in the IHL framework reflects the decisions made outside the settlement of Purulia chhau communities, which impact the households or individuals and, in the case of intangible heritage, also impact the safeguarding and viability of the cultural element. In light of the analysis of Purulia chhau context, the EIE is primarily concerned with the changes in the governmental and institutional safeguarding policies, such as the UNESCO New Delhi and governmental support to the SE since 2004-2005, before the AL project implementation (2009-2011) (Field notes, 2011). The EIE also reflects other mainstream changes in the infrastructural system of the region of Purulia and state of West Bengal, as well as national intervention and investment in the intangible and cultural heritage sector, etc.

National and governmental intangible heritage policies and plans intersect, overlap and often impact the existing relationships among actors at the local level. In this case study, indeed, this impact can also be established looking at the final AL project report where it is stated that the Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre of the Ministry of Culture, Government of West Bengal took the initiative in the revival of local intangible heritage and, therefore, to support the SE in the feasibility phase of the future AL project, through the *Swarna Jayanti Grameen Swarojgar Yojana Scheme* (SGSY). As can be read in the following extract from the AL project documents:

“UNESCO’s Declaration on Cultural Diversity mentions that culture, cultural knowledge, and intangible heritage all have a role to play in alleviating poverty and creating livelihood opportunities. In 2005, the Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC) under Ministry of Culture, Government of India took a unique, innovative and extraordinary initiative to revive rural and tribal folk art forms of Bengal and Orissa as a means of sustainable livelihood. It [the AL project] was supported by the Ministry of Rural [D]evelopment, Government of India as a [s]pecial project under the Swarna Jayanti Grameen Swarojgar Yojana Scheme (SGSY). In West Bengal, the [SGSY] project was also supported by the Departments of Panchayat and Rural Development and Information and Cultural Affairs of the Government of West Bengal. The implementation in West Bengal was facilitated by [...] a social enterprise [...]” (SE, 2010b, p. 1)

The SE leading the AL project was working in the area since 2004. The AL project structure ‘dovetailed’<sup>107</sup> the SGSY scheme, launched in 1999, which carried out an “assessment of socio-economic conditions, livelihoods, patterns of migration, seasonality aspects, skills and knowledge, attitude and inclination for adopting chhau as livelihood” (SE, 2010b, p. 17).

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<sup>107</sup> Dovetailed – is a term used by SE to described that they adopted, implemented and scaled the governmental schemes – both SGSY and *guru shishya parampara* (Field notes, 2011).

Moreover, the SGSY scheme was significant to Purulia chhau livelihoods by fostering the idea of self-employment through the establishment of skills-based self-help groups (SHGs) (Field notes, 2011). The SGSY scheme encouraged chhau groups to open bank accounts, to access credit and regular savings from their earnings from chhau productions. Hence, what was possible at the local level, at the time of my fieldwork, was also powerfully determined by the opportunities and space (access to financial and human capital) permitted by this external governmental scheme (the SGSY) that also initially financed the SE as a supplier of trainings in strengthening SHGs, cultural product management, and marketing skills for chhau groups (Field notes, 2011). While this component of the framework is a relevant one, in the diagram at figure 12 above, it is positioned in a box above the assets and livelihood outcomes, the external institutional environment, as it exerts impacts, but is beyond the effective control of local people and project actors.

The *intangible heritage sphere*, placed at the bottom edge of figure 12 above in the re-elaboration of the SL framework, acknowledges the dominant role of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau at the artists' households level. This sphere recognises the intangible heritage presence and impact on many elements of the local livelihood framework and planning: the assets and sustainability of people's lifestyle, the choice of the strategy and the increase in livelihood outcomes for individuals and households, as demonstrated in this Chapter (through all section 7.3). In this illustrative framework, the notion of 'intangible heritage' embodies notions of culture, identity, material resources, financial capital, value, income strategies and social capital, as well as their institutional recognition as a domain.

The AL project actor-network, led by the SE, effectively represents a bridge between the local assets and the alternative livelihood strategy for development. The AL project is, therefore, clearly identifiable with what Scoones calls 'transforming organisation or institution' (2009). The AL project can mediate among the livelihood resources (represented by the intangible heritage) and the final livelihood strategies (such as tourism related activities or other entrepreneurship opportunities, further discussed in Chapter 8).

The majority of respondents believed their incomes, social visibility and opportunities had increased continuously<sup>108</sup> with the growing attention to Purulia chhau dance under the AL project, even if unevenly for all the groups (Field notes, 2011).

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<sup>108</sup> For instance, Danan reported that, when performing chhau dance with the SE under the AL project activities, the average pay at the local level for a member was 250 rupees/man, almost double the pay of other local events. They also had the chance to travel and exhibit in Kolkata and abroad (Danan, 2011, pers. comm., 24 February).

## 7.5 Conclusion

This Chapter 7 focused on exploring the rural livelihood ecosystem of the Purulia chhau by analysing and connecting the ethnographic data and existing literature. First, section 7.1 described the SL livelihood framework and outlined its limitations in accounting for the role of intangible heritage as a livelihood that gives meaning and diversifies people's lives and livelihoods by increasing access to other capital assets. It then explored the artists livelihood through analysing and connecting the ethnographic data and existing literature. Reconstructing the rural livelihood patterns of the Purulia chhau in section 7.2, through the experiences of seven chhau masters and other chhau dancers, illustrate these artists livelihoods draw upon differentiated activities, financial and other physical resources, social connections and networking relationship are built on and around their living cultural heritage. Taken together, these two sections provide important insight into the artists' perspectives on intangible heritage and that for the artists heritage is not, separate from, other aspects of their lives and survival and coping strategies (economic, social, cultural etc.).

To provide a more holistic understanding of the intangible heritage livelihood, section 7.3 revised the concept of sustainable livelihood framework (Scoones, 1998) to illustrate both the role of intangible heritage in the frameworks and assess the role of the AL development project. This section emphasised how artists pursue livelihood strategies through engaging and negotiating with external actors, institutions, processes, which can impact people's lives, sense of wellbeing and connections to their living heritage (Bebbington, 1999). This new perspective led to proposing a modified framework for intangible heritage livelihoods (figure 9, above) to better reflect the Purulia Chhau members' lifestyle and the development initiative of the AL project. Section 7.4 then moved on to describe the IHL framework in further detail, specifically the vulnerability context, external institutional environment (EIE), and the intangible heritage sphere. By focusing on *how* the mediation and combination of intangible heritage assets were articulated, performed, and materialised in the field, this section outlined the position of AL project and its project manager (the SE) as the transforming organisation or bridging structure (Scoones, 2009) within this development translation process.

Having briefly introduced how the AL project and SE are bridging structures, the following Chapter will explore aspects of AL actor-network relations. , I will show the ways in which the AL project actor-network transforms and combines the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau with other elements (project schedules, physical spaces, database analysis, seminars, workshops, international partners, etc.) in a larger network for building the development strategy on the intangible heritage livelihoods. I will suggest how, in and through the

development project approach, the knowledge and representation of intangible heritage is constantly being negotiated, renegotiated, and performed along three main heritage representations (that of traditional element, tourist destination and development tool). Chapter 8, aims to illustrate how the AL project's agency regarding the intangible heritage of chhau is linked to the building of meanings and uses of Purulia chhau dance that embody and strengthen different ways of knowing and being of the intangible heritage. The agency of the AL actor-network shifts from being defined solely in terms of intended action, to being seen as an ability to create difference and to enact partially connected realities (Latour, 2005; Law, 2004).

## Chapter 8

### 8. Tracing the Alternative Livelihood Strategy around the Heritage of Purulia



**Fig. 10** Resource Centre in Naya, picture by the author

**Fig. 10** Resource Centre in Naya, picture by the author

During my first visit to Purulia, anecdotes and observations wove into what little I knew about the AL development project, chhau dance, traditional cultures in India and UNESCO safeguarding practices towards intangible heritage. Based in Purulia Township, at the T. hotel, my first day's itinerary took me west of the town, through Joypur to Bamnia, where the AL project identified four groups led by skilled Purulia chhau *ustads* (masters) among the beneficiaries of the AL development initiative. Rural life aspects not only were exacerbated by the scarcity of infrastructure and an arid landscape, which emerged as main traits, while travelling through the district of Purulia, but also, there were many signs of land enriched with culture as folk arts and craftsmanship were visible in the festival posters or pictures displayed along main streets. In Bamnia, at one of the AL project's recently built cultural resource centre (cf. 8.3 in this Chapter), where I used to meet with chhau masters, a panel with the European Union (EU) logo suddenly materialised the relation of the space and the tradition of chhau dance with the global institutional level of development policies. The white and blue panel has become some sort of material "medium transporting specific

types of traces” (Latour, 2005, p. 176) of one (or more) ontological realm(s) that allows any visitor, like me, to connect two or more realities, and “get rid of the spatial dimension” (Latour, 2005, p. 136).

As ANT theorists suggest, in actor-network analysis “it’s not that there is no hierarchy, no ups and downs, no rifts, no deep canyons, no high spots” (Latour, 2005, p. 176); it is that the elements of the network investigated are related continuously and associated both to the global level (e.g. at the development and policy level of EU) as well as the local micro-level of practice of intangible heritage. This understanding of realities has the beneficial effect of rejecting any a priori attribution of size, category or space (such as macro/micro, human-non-human, local/global) to actors. Instead, it suggested that actors under any actor-network are localised or globalised, at the same time, by the accounts and the narratives made of them from the actor-network’s assemblages.

Following the work of Law (1997; 2004) and Callon’s model (1986), already described in Chapter 5, the concept of ordering is used to investigate the AL project’s translation phases and show how the AL actor-network mobilised the actors and stabilised simultaneously enacting different ontologies for the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, showing us also another perspective on the process of commodification of cultural expression for tourism and development action. By describing the workings of the project activities, different representations of the intangible heritage are made traceable, and also the commodification process, as the heritage is continuously re-created within the development project assemblages. This Chapter articulates a small number of these ontologies of Purulia chhau in which the AL project actors and activities re-generate and strengthen each time a specific reality for the intangible heritage, namely the reality of ‘traditional’ cultural element, that of the ‘tourist destination’ and that of the ‘developmental tool’ or enabler of local development processes. These three narratives will show how the intangible heritage is shaped in and by the relations through which it connects, therefore will help to answer the initial research question of what impacts had the AL project on the intangible heritage. In this way, I will also review the livelihood diversification strategy the AL project operated according to project’s aims (presented in Chapter 5).

In the following section, I begin by exploring how the AL project assemblages worked out in practice to shape and reinforce the reality of a traditional cultural element for chhau, also to discuss the AL actor-network’s agency on the material semiotics of the intangible heritage. In this way, I will also address the enrolment and mobilisation moments of the AL project actor-network or the first phases of the project’s roadmap (see Chapter 5) towards intangible heritage-based livelihoods creation.

## 8.1 Enacting the Traditional Purulia Chhau Dance

Crucial to the understanding of the material semiotics' agency of the AL project is the networking that enacts the "traditional" of Purulia chhau. Arguably, Purulia chhau dance is already permeated with the meaning of traditional cultural practice (see also Chapter 7 for a discussion of the role of the dance at artists' community level in Purulia.) Additionally, at the time of the project (2009-2011), Purulia chhau dance was about to be listed among the intangible heritage of the world from India, on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (December 2010). However, as a set of human and material relations the AL project partakes in enacting the reality of the traditional element and then using this enactment to bridge the intangible heritage and livelihood asset, thus touching directly on questions of the relationship between heritage and economic development. How did the AL project actor-network reinforce and enact the reality of the traditional culture for the heritage of Purulia chhau?

### 8.1.1 Mapping the Traditional Traits of Purulia Chhau

First of all, as a preparatory feasibility action for the implementation of the AL project<sup>109</sup>, the SE mapped the local folk arts and artists and created a database of the what they called traditional practices and tradition bearers linked to the possible targeted folk arts of the Purulia District and West Bengal. Therefore, by associating the cultural element of Purulia chhau to locality and a specific mode of ordering in this area, such as local religious practices, puja rituals, tribal dance, annual events, typical masks, costumes, Jhumur music, instruments, people, etc., the SE's work of description and inventory contributes to the cultural expression being framed as traditional in the following way:

"The project commenced in 2005 with a baseline diagnostic study when the folk art forms to be covered were identified and the targeted beneficiaries were mapped. [...] [A] location map of artists was prepared with the able guidance of District Information and Cultural officer, local practitioners, leading folk artists and folk researchers. [The] district level meeting was held with all the stakeholders to help in designing the project and developing [a] future path. Ten to fifteen leading artists were surveyed from 2-3 pockets. The artists included master artists as well as novice artists. Cassette companies, lyricists and makers of instruments and costumes, traditional networks of patrons and promoters were also covered in the study" (SE, 2010b, p. 1; 12).

The database setting is, therefore, a first step in the building of an alternative livelihood strategy aimed at mapping the status of folk arts (Field notes, 2011). According to Law, database creation is the in here that belongs to a particular *tool* for method assemblage (Law,

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<sup>109</sup> This is acknowledged in the project roadmap documents as the first project Phase I, happening between 2005 and 2007; see also Chapter 5, fig. 11, for further details on the project roadmap.

2004). The database produces a useful tool to refer to for project management activities and planning, for coordination and quantitative or qualitative reports, and it produces a description in here (in the database file) of something also real out there (in this case, the cultural expression) (Law, 2004).

This work of mapping and documenting takes the material form of large electronic files, which describe the chhau dancer groups from Purulia, the leading masters and their mastery in chhau dance and “gave emphasis on creating textual and visual documentation for preventing the loss of oral knowledge and also for creation of awareness on the art forms” (SE, 2010b, p. 25). Thus, the database is intended to be a *tool* for assessing, using and making known the traditional aspects of the intangible heritage and those traits of the dance that are becoming lost, thus preserving them as well. At the same time, the database classifies master artists and chhau groups according to their skills and quality standards, as it reads in the following AL project report.

“As for example, to prepare a skill development plan we need to assess skills of the [g]urus, the folk artists, and their inclination for practicing their art form” (SE, 2010b, p. 13).

In their critical paper on social enterprises in India and cultural entrepreneurship, part of the RT pointed out that the database and the artists/heritage classification were developed by the SE with some assistance from external experts brought into the local community of chhau to run workshops and trainings (Bradley, Chakravarti and Rowan, 2013). Therefore, chhau artists and their skills were assessed by the AL project network, and then inserted in the database according to skill levels, so that everyone in the AL actor-network followed the database during scheduled activities. With respect to the Purulia chhau artists interviewed, this classification of chhau groups almost completely reflected the local classification<sup>110</sup>, except for the fact that someone from outside formalised a skill-based classification of the tradition bearers, which seemed never to have occurred before (Field notes, 2011).

Equally important is the fact that the final database defines (and impacts at a later stage of the project) the number and the level of relations in which masters and chhau groups listed in the database are involved in the AL project. As it reads in the following extract from a project document, only those categorised as ‘highly skilled’ were called to train other groups and to participate at national and international project events that also served as exposure and platforms to increase artists’ livelihoods (Field notes, 2011).

“The leading folk artists (gurus) were mobilised to become the process owners and change makers. The folk artists were key partners in the assessment of

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<sup>110</sup> At local level chhau groups are classified according to skills in chhau dance, and the most skilled chhau groups are those invited to perform at festivals and get more paid shows than the less skilled groups.



needs, development of action plans and implementation of project interventions” (SE, 2011b, p. 16)

“Their [gurus’] active participation and support all through the project was a key factor in achieving the key targets of this project i.e. rejuvenation of the art forms and improved well-being of the folk artists” (SE, 2010b, p. 1).

The chhau artists involved numbered nearly one thousand three hundred, grouped in almost 34 groups, but, in fact, not all had the same level of involvement and the same success indicators (income from shows/sales, change in standard of living, average number of shows/year, new promoters, etc.) (UNESCO New Delhi programme specialist, 2011<sup>111</sup>).

The ability to push and increase the livelihood outcomes out of the intangible heritage under the AL project is, at the same time, dependent on a set of relations by (and in) which chhau dance becomes identifiable as a traditional practice, which is distinctive to these people and this place. The database mapping phase and assessment is therefore the place where alliances with local institutions, UNESCO and the 2003 Convention are invoked to sustain and circulate the traditional object of Purulia chhau. The database is where the AL project stresses the descriptions of chhau dance as *traditional practice*, its connections with past and present lifestyle, rituals and meaning (Field notes, 2011). In this set of relations, Purulia chhau dance is continuously referred to and enacted as a traditional object by specific sets of actors (project staff, local newspapers, UNESCO staff, conferences, documents, researchers, conference papers, panel presentations, artists, etc.) who make use of (and circulate) the database information. By following the traditional Purulia chhau as I have termed it, discourses around the traditional chhau are also contextualised geographically by the AL project assemblages through the material connections enacted with the purpose-built resource centres, which I discuss in the next sub-section.

### **8.1.2 Locating the Traditional Purulia Chhau in Physical Spaces**

The AL project stabilises another essential material enactment of the traditional chhau dance, that is, the construction of cultural resource centres to align the locality and originality of specific physical space and geographical areas with the cultural element. According to scholars, a crucial aspect of meaning making in tourism processes is the embodiment of memories of the past through material objects, such as souvenirs, spaces, communication material, photos or videos, that have demonstrated a significant role in contemporary tourism practices (Ateljevic, Pritchard and Morgan, 2007; Van Der Duim, 2007).

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<sup>111</sup> UNESCO New Delhi programme specialist’s report, 2011, unpublished.

The AL project built three cultural resource centres<sup>112</sup> in different areas, with the assistance of the RT from London Metropolitan University, which included scholars from the architecture department (see Chapter 6 on the role of this actor). These centres were intended to have a central role in promoting community involvement, ownership, and participation in the safeguarding and transmission of the traditions.

“Resource centres serve as places to stay for guests/researchers, display their work, store materials, for artists to practice and meeting place” (UNESCO New Delhi programme specialist’s report, 2011, p. 3<sup>113</sup>).

Resource centres were planned as physical spaces for traditional art skill exchanges, education and skills development (SE, 2010a, p. 33). In congruence with the idea of *ashram*<sup>114</sup>, a notion very common in some of the geographical areas the project encompassed, these spaces were meant for the use of the community, especially for the use of traditional artists, and masters with their troupe. In Purulia, the AL project built two resource centres, one in Bamnia, and another in Chelyama for the intangible heritage of chhau dance and the folk music of jhumur (that is strictly linked to Purulia chhau dance as well). Despite the fact that there was no facilitating process to establish wider uses of the centres at the time of my field work (the buildings were often locked for security reasons and accessible just during specific project events - a smooth and efficient handing over process to the local community never occurred, etc.)<sup>115</sup>. What is important to note here is that the resource centres, by their presence, are a new material sign for guests/tourists and for locals associated with the traditional chhau dance of this area.

Just as with souvenirs for tourism destinations, even physical spaces can refer metonymically to traditional culture and its specific spatial-geographical origin and transmission (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Thus, the spaces built by the AL project in Chelyama and Bamnia metaphorically should evoke the local cultural stories of rural Purulia dance. Different festivals and events were organised in these centres, particularly in Bamnia during the AL actor-network mobilisation and promotional phases, to strengthen this relationship between the physical space and the tradition of the folk arts. Just as a point of reference, the resource centre in Bamnia positions itself as an intermediate form between the evocation of

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<sup>112</sup> The project was supposed to build six cultural centres linked to the six folk arts involved as beneficiaries of the project; however, a problem with a land and propriety contract occurred and they decided to build only five centres (Field notes, 2011).

<sup>113</sup> UNESCO New Delhi programme specialist’s project report, unpublished.

<sup>114</sup> An *ashram* or *akram* (in the local idiom) is a place generally dedicated to meditation or guru-shisha traditional teaching. In the specific case of folk arts, ashram are places where masters and students train together.

<sup>115</sup> I am not fully aware how the resource centres in Purulia are managed today (at the time of writing), whether they are still deployed as folk-art hubs, who holds the keys to access them (if locals or not). The RT wanted precisely to add this element of facilitating process on to the deployment of the resource centres. Thus, the RT put this suggestion in various proposals to the SE for doing it, but it never went ahead (Field notes, 2011).

the symbols/signs of the tradition and its contemporary material representation, at the same time evoking the current networking stories of international cooperation in which the intangible heritage is embedded. This evocation is materially represented in the EU panel attached at the entrance to which I referred at the beginning of this Chapter.

The centres are narrated in AL project accounts as part of those physical places (non-human actors) partaking in the creation and dissemination of the traditional reality of Purulia chhau. However, this particular reality of the intangible heritage – the traditional - is being challenged by other ways of ordering by the AL project actor-network, in which the resource centres and the traditional chhau also contribute to what is labelled by WTO (2012) as a “popular tourism destination”, which I further describe in section 8.2 below:

“[...] resource centres, maintained in excellent conditions, and village festivals are particularly important components of its marketing strategy, transforming villages into popular cultural tourism destinations.” (WTO, 2012, p. 50)

## **8.2 Intangible Heritage as a Tourist Destination**

According to Carina Ren, whose work also strongly inspired this thesis, tourist destinations are highly productive realities where the destination is an effect of connections and relations between entities in a network, related with tourism activities:

“[the destination] works and generates effect by creating jobs and income, spreading itself over the Internet, at tourism trade fairs, in the media, in brochures and advertisement. It alters the appearance of the landscape, the infrastructure and the town; it modifies and impacts the practices and events taking place. It draws in, represents and translates history, heritage, culture, folklore, conservation as well as innovation, development and strategy into a whole: a productive and partially coherent entity, namely that of the destination” (Ren, 2010, p. 19).

In the same way, the alternative livelihood strategy for development - made of tourism innovations such as new chhau dance productions, folk art related souvenirs/products, intangible heritage based village tours or festivals - and the safeguarding of chhau dance are regarded as effects of the AL actor-network assemblages and ordering. Between the second and the forth phase of the AL project roadmap (see Chapter 5), the AL actor-network creates the conditions and mobilises the actors for the improvement of artists’ skills and their exposures. The activities prompted by the AL project were trainings, cultural exchanges, conferences on the topic of intangible heritage tourism and livelihoods, setting up of new festivals, cultural events and village tours towards the resource centres and artists’ houses (Field notes, 2011). As shown in the next sub-sections, 8.2.1 and 8.2.2, particularly the

creation of new festivals/cultural events and the village tour experiences are the spaces of the new tourist destination enacted by the project, where revitalised and new intangible heritage productions and objects are displayed, for local and international tourists and newcomers.

### 8.2.1 Intangible Heritage Productions for Tourism

During the AL project's workshops and trainings, chhau artists interacted with contemporary Indian singers, musicians, theatre personalities, masters in other folk arts and international artists. 184 basic skill development training programmes<sup>116</sup> were conducted involving 3,100 beneficiaries in all the project areas, not only in Purulia and with chhau dancers (SE, 2011a). The specialised trainings provided input on how to bring innovation and contamination from other arts in chhau productions and also how to adapt the intangible heritage for international audiences and tourists, to attract new promoters, investors and tourists. As it is articulated in a conference paper the SE staff presented at the *International Symposium on the Challenges in Heritage Tourism* in Bangkok:

"To create new markets and rejuvenate the art form, new folk drama productions based on different myths, stories, local folklore, and even classical works of Shakespeare and Tagore were developed under the formal guidance of leading folk and contemporary artists. Such productions focused on developing short chhau performances, attractive jhumur songs, and dance for the urban tourists" (SE Researchers<sup>117</sup>, 2010, p. 39).

As the excerpt above suggests, some actors under the AL project actor-network worked together – chhau artists with masters and contemporary artists from other arts - towards developing new cultural products and refreshing old chhau productions, which the assemblages of the AL project actor-network then promoted during specific cultural events and festivals, and upon which some artists' livelihoods also became dependent. The AL project actor-network links the intangible heritage and its physical presence and practices to local and national events and actors. The heritage is furthermore linked to new tourism events, such as festivals and pujas as stated below:

"Participation of the folk artists was facilitated in various cultural events through [the] EZCC, I&CA [d]epartment as well as other [g]overnmental and [n]on-[g]overnmental entities. Festivals were also organised to build awareness

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<sup>116</sup> Basic skill development programmes consisted of different basic training according to the folk art (chhau dance, patachitra, jhumur, dolmi, bauls and fakirs). For instance, some of the patachitra artists were trained in technical skills (such as sketching and colouring). Almost all the artists from chhau were taught mythological songs/stories on local heroes and Gods/Goddesses, were trained in the conceptualisation of new themes for their performances and writing new songs/productions on them (SE, 2011a).

<sup>117</sup> As already stated in the Preface of this thesis, all the names of the informants, as well as the names of the authors of published materials relating to the AL project are replaced by general names, for a matter of keeping the source of information anonymous as the ethics rules and regulations from London Metropolitan University require.

among children and youth on their cultural heritage. New market segments like puja organisers [and] heritage tourism were developed. Today the art forms of the deprived and marginalised sections of people have in fact been mainstreamed into major celebrations of Bengal” (SE, 2010b, p. 2).

The framework used in the AL project provides a basis for developing creative enterprises and intangible heritage tourism activities around the resource centres and at village level. The actions took advantage of the economic opportunities provided by the AL project funds to create new tourism activities based on the heritage of chhau (such as new festivals, events, souvenirs, cultural exchanges, and academic seminars). During the tourism events then, the project took the opportunity to display the results of project trainings and workshops on innovation and revitalisation (SE, 2010a) of the heritage of chhau, such as the new six cultural products based on chhau dance some of which will be also discussed in Chapter 9) as the following project report suggests:

“[...] In 2008, folk festivals named Sanskriti Parichay were organised in ten towns across West Bengal namely Maldi, Baharampore, Durgapur, Asansol, Santiniketan, Arambagh, Jalpaiguri, Siliguri, Haldia and Barasat resulting in improved awareness on the art forms and opening up of new income opportunities. 15 [chhau] SHGs, 8 [j]humur SHGs and 4 Jhumur dance SHGs, 10 Baul/Fakir SHGs, one Gambhira, one Domni and around 20 Patachitra artists participated in the program. Chau mask makers also sold their products in the festival. A total of 450 artists participated in the program. Leading [chhau masters] [...] participated in the festival. [...] Between 2007 and 2010, 200-300 folk artists participated in tribal festival Palash Parban at Joypur in Purulia. In 2009 and 2010, associations of the folk artists also managed the logistics and various tourist services. UNESCO has also supported development of a concept note on road map for developing community led cultural heritage tourism trails. Initiatives are under way for developing cultural heritage tourism by availing of schemes of [the] Ministry of Tourism like tent tourism, bed and breakfast tourism, rural tourism and circuit tourism” (SE, 2010b, p. 28).

In the following paragraph, I make use of some data from an event at which the RT, including myself, participated during the project’s activities, in February 2011. I will introduce a music and dance festival in Gaurbhanga, mixed with tent tourism, where some Purulia chhau dancers were called to perform and were also employed as cleaners, cooks, logistic managers, etc.):

Travelling on off-road tracks from village to village, passing by terraces with soil erosion and deforestation, to clusters of green trees surrounded by small reservoirs, we approached the tiny rural village of Gaurbhanga, in West Bengal. We headed from Calcutta to Gaurbhanga to attend the music and dance festival organised by the SE and some artists, supported financially by the AL project. A core group of artists, Bauls and Fakirs, live and have their ashram in this village. We spent three days there, and then another couple of days in Naya village to visit patachitra artists’ houses and workshops. (Field notes, 2011).

In order to familiarise visitors with the locals and with the experience of tourism in Gaurbhanga, the RT and other visitors took up residence in tents on the field grounds for a

few days. Village streets were decorated and illuminated, and we had the tantalizing fragrance of Indian street food from a local seller who set up business next to the festival area. Special tents were set up as formal spaces for meeting with the artists and as a lunch hall for tourists. Bauls and Fakirs music is a unique genre of folk music, with its origins in the lifestyle and philosophy of the Bauls and Fakirs communities, which are “often described as being non-conformist in that they seem to reject traditional social norms” (Bradley, Chakravarty and Rowan, 2013, p. 92). Their music is traditionally improvised and evokes a sense of well-being and unity with God through prayers and ascetic movements. However, during the festival, artists were given a scheduled time to perform, therefore, removing all the improvisation and spirituality from their art, and creating some tension among artists, because not all were going to have the same space/time for exhibition in front of the audience. In the same festival, on the last day one chhau group from Balarampur, a region of Purulia, danced (Field notes, 2011).

From this description, two points are worth highlighting. First, the SE and the project activities were actually defining the way, time and space, where the cultural productions of both Bauls and Fakirs and chhau groups had to be displayed, in particular, defining criteria for the productions to be displayed.

Second, Purulia chhau was purposely used and re-shaped for cultural tourism activities and consumption. In doing so, new social relations were established and some traditional rituals and traits of the dance are revitalised and some are replaced by more practical techniques/elements adjusted, for different audiences and different touristic physical spaces<sup>118</sup>, as it reads in the following extract from a project report:

“The [chhau masters] worked on various shortcomings of the [chhau] dancers like lack of formal training in dance, lack of fitness, lack of knowledge on the dance form, etc. The [g]urus trained the dancers on musical beats and rhythm. They were even taught the basics of [y]oga for improving their fitness. The process led to remarkable improvement in dancing skills and use of body language.

- [...]
  - Developing compact productions of 15-30 minutes duration
  - Developing costumes and masks of lower cost
  - Reviving lost dance styles and movements
  - Training the dancers to perform on stage<sup>119</sup>
  - Developing productions based on works of Tagore & Shakespeare [...]
- (SE, 2010b, p. 21).

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<sup>118</sup> For instance, for performing on indoor stages the number of dancers has been reduced from 25-30 to 10-15 dancers (Field notes, 2011).

<sup>119</sup> Chhau artists usually perform on soil.

Through the AL project actions, the SE defines the artists' skills and the art's potential "as a social and economic capital" (SE, 2013), and trains artists to revitalise and innovate techniques of the dance, mask-making skills, stories and music for new markets<sup>120</sup>.

### **8.2.2 The Intangible Heritage Village Tour Experience**

Next to the intangible heritage performance and festival experience for tourists, the project actor-network pushes the marketing development of, what I call, 'intangible heritage-based village tours' where a new kind of relationship between the artist and the visitor is established as art-sales relations (Ren, 2009; 2010; 2011), characterised by a direct, personal and economic-based exchange.

Tourists accompanied by project staff and folk artists, in much the same way as I was during field trips, are welcomed in artists' houses or in resource centres. There, the tourists, can be accommodated and spend their time experiencing the artists' life, the living heritage (UNESCO, 2003), and the 'art-in-the-making' (Field notes, 2011). In this set of associations, the AL project enacts a new "host-guest relation", to borrow from Carina Ren, positioning the folk artists as "host and vendor in the relation with visitors-tourists" (Ren, 2009, p. 124). Therefore, the AL project pushed the heritage and its artists into an economic dimension, increasing the production of intangible heritage-based objects to sell (small chhau masks, CDs and other artefacts, etc.) and staged performances for new visitors. On such occasions, artists prepare food, guide tourists around their village and private house or workshops, and exhibit for them, telling stories about their art, with the help of project staff. For instance, in Charida (Purulia), the village of the best Purulia chhau mask makers, people started selling mask-artefacts in a smaller size. Usually, a Purulia chhau mask for the exhibition can weigh seven kilos and be very large, but smaller versions are also made, to sell as souvenirs in village tours and festivals (SE, 2010b, p. 26).

As part of its experimental work, the AL project organised a village tour in Naya, a patachitra art village, soon after the Gaurbhanga festival (cf. 8.3.1 in this Chapter). We (researchers, Master's and PhD students from the RT and a few guests invited by the SE) spent two days in the village of Naya, slept in a house belonging to one of the artist's families, and bought work by the patachitra artists when visiting their house-workshops. I bought one such work, which is displayed in my house in Milan. Although this is not a traditional piece of patachitra art, it is an example of the diversification of cultural products for new potential markets. That is to say that artists, such as patachitra and chhau dancers,

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<sup>120</sup> A further analysis of the revitalisation process of the intangible heritage for new audiences will be discussed in Chapter 9.

are also encouraged to produce new designs and productions to increase the chances of selling their art (Field notes, 2011).

According to the literature, the construction of a touristic destination also lies in the building up of material objects, symbols, specific narratives, emphasising the cultural milieu of the villages and the location of connected cultures and intangible heritage references (Ren, 2010; Richards and Wilson, 2006). As Richards and Wilson argue, the shift from tangible to intangible cultural resources in tourism lies “in transforming intangible elements of the culture of a place into ‘experiences’ that can be consumed by tourists” (2006, p. 18). The AL project systematised and provided an official representation of the practices and strategies of transforming an intangible heritage or a traditional culture into an experience to sell. The AL project did this through reports, statistics, studies, activities and seminars where other actors were also involved. Pre-existing texts and emerging policies on the role of culture for development, as well as discourses on the need for safeguarding intangible heritage advocated in the years of the project by UNESCO, WTO and other international institutions, are used to sustain and stabilise the intangible heritage-based livelihood strategy as a model to implement and support the role of culture in sustainable development (Field notes, 2011). As the same AL project leader suggests, project seminars organised by the SE

“aimed at exploring and advocating the case [for] investing in culture as an alternative means to carve a new path for the development of rural India” (SE, 2011b, p. 1).

So far, we have seen how the intangible heritage is *othered* and altered in relation to tourism livelihood strategies, upon which the viability of the intangible element and artists appears dependent. Through global-based actions, the AL actor-network promotes versions of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau whose spatial and social contexts have now altered in relation to project outcomes of creating livelihoods, “thus intended to take forward the global call to mainstream culture in the government programming for development” (SE, 2011b, p. 1). The description of the above networks identifies the relations between the project, intangible heritage, tourism strategy and traditional local practices. However, there are other actors (and relations) that also engage with the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau under the AL project that opens out to the larger political perspective of development theories and practices and bring the intangible heritage to offices of politicians and officials. I turn now to take a closer look at the enactments of intangible heritage as a ‘developmental tool’, to the understanding of another material semiotics’ agency of the AL project in section 8.3.



### **8.3 The Intangible Heritage Development Tool**

A central argument in post-development research is that particular ways of thinking and speaking about development had, in turn, made possible and legitimised certain practices as the unidirectional transfer of a solution to a local community of beneficiaries (McEwan, 2009). Scholars, such as McEwan (2009), Mosse (2005) and Escobar (1995) suggest that development projects are justified through the creation of meanings and knowledge on the “abnormalities” of local communities of beneficiaries in developing countries, such as discourse on their poverty; the knowledge production justifies treatment and solutions that are found in the “tools of development” (such as approaches, technology, NGOs, donors, resources, projects, etc.) (Escobar, 1995, p. 41). Later, Mosse argues that development projects “work to maintain themselves as coherent policy ideas – as [a] system of representations – as well as [a] operational system. [...] they sustain policy models offering a significant interpretation of events” (Mosse, 2005, p. 159; 181).

Likewise, the AL project is where the connections of the words (and worlds) of ‘intangible heritage’, ‘traditional culture’, ‘livelihoods’, ‘safeguarding’, ‘revitalisation’, ‘tourism’, ‘development’ and the articulation of intangible heritage for development policy, are enacted and made real. Following these assumptions, next sub section explores how ways of speaking about intangible heritage (and the project itself), by the actors within the project legitimise a specific development and safeguarding approach, a model approach implemented in different areas of India (Field notes, 2013; UNESCO New Delhi, 2015; 2016).

#### **8.3.1 Enacting a Model of Approach to Development Based on Intangible Heritage**

The AL project laid out a vision for intangible heritage-led development that had the rural poor realities of tradition bearers as its starting point, as it formulated in the project report:

“[...] poverty, lack of exposure and training and low levels of education had created a vicious cycle diminishing potential for growth. Revival and revitalization of folk art forms necessitate value addition to make the art forms market worthy. Because of their illiteracy or low levels of education, many of the performers lack adequate comprehension on the stories and themes. They were unable to give time for practice as they toil hard to earn their daily bread. [...] Amateurish attempts to rejuvenate (say, use of synthesizers) without proper training was affecting quality. The poor artists also mentioned that they could not afford to buy costumes, accessories and instruments and as a result their performances were not able to attract audiences” (SE, 2010b, p. 3).

The quote above illustrates how knowledge concerning the intangible heritage of chhau and its bearers is conceptualised and used by the SE to *problematise*<sup>121</sup> the circumstances and legitimise intervention by explicitly stating that the tradition bearers' communities do not have the necessary knowledge, skills and resource to safeguard, and, therefore, valorise, their intangible heritage. Hence, inferring that the AL project, with its actor-network, does.

McEwan asserts that “the claim to expertise in optimizing the lives of others is a claim to power” (2009, p. 168), which suggests that when the SE – as the main spokesperson of the AL actor-network - supports the initiative, despite a sort of lack of experience in tourism and intangible heritage (as identified in Chapter 6), it is reinforcing unequal power relationships to support the AL project initiative.

To legitimise the intangible heritage as livelihood strategy, the AL project actor-network associates the cultural element of Purulia chhau to economics and development practice, either by establishing new relations, either by narratives, producing and intentionally constructing the story of the successful development tool.

First of all, the AL project actor-network with its project management structure (see also Chapter 6), enacts a set of power relations that link, or bind, the intangible element of Purulia chhau with roles and procedures surrounded by managerial and material contextualisation typical of development field. The contextualisation ranges from international cooperation directives, project narratives, reports, funding agencies, statistics on activities accomplished (for instance planning and participation in cultural events), budgets, receipts, database, technology, international consultants, etc., but also by fostering direct and indirect participation at national/international research, seminars and debates on the role of culture for development in India and abroad. All of these instruments mobilised by the AL project actor-network are not neutral but also shape perceptions, establish relations, narratives and activities (Mosse, 2005) that produce new representations of the intangible heritage reality (Campos, 2011, cited in Sousa, 2015). For instance, the following quote from the final project report showcases how performing intangible heritage is now essentially re-contextualised and valorised through its association to sustainable development planning and practice:

“This project has established a model for empowering communities lacking formal education but rich in intangible cultural heritage. It has successfully used livelihood perspective for safeguarding cultural heritage. The project showcases how performing art traditions can be explicitly treated as resources in the context of achieving sustainable community development. Replication of

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<sup>121</sup> See also Chapter 5 for a discussion on the problematisation as the initial moment of the four phases of an actor-network life.

this model for other performing and visual art forms across India holds the promise of answering the critical need of augmenting income generation options for rural and tribal people of the country” (SE, 2010b, p. 3).

However, the interpretation of a single actor – in this case study, the SE leading the AL project - is not enough to construct and sustain a reality. Mosse (2005) argues that a project gains reality and becomes successful with the unity of points of view. In other words, the intangible heritage gains a new value and reality as a development tool when other actors (such as UNESCO, European Commission, the RT, etc.) also share, identify and use it as such. By the end of the project, this shift of the intangible heritage valorisation from one dimension of local traditional culture, rural livelihood to that of development strategy was already happening. As the UNESCO New Delhi specialist stated:

“Poverty alleviation is the only way to safeguarding their art. [...] the [AL] project is the first step with folk art and livelihood. 10 years ago they [the SE] planned to reach here. I suggest they should expand their market: [the AL II] could be [implemented also] within Madubani area, or Bihar and Goa” (UNESCO New Delhi programme specialist’s report, January 2011, unpublished).

During the project events, considerable efforts went into building a shared vision of the links between poverty alleviation and intangible heritage as a livelihood strategy. Field visits to the project’s activities, dissemination of project progress reports, papers and promotional pamphlets, in and outside the AL actor-network (Field notes, 2011) contributed to create this vision. As Mosse argues, “these materials (such as documents or promotional pamphlets) not only stabilised external interpretations of the project, they also had internal effects disciplining the thinking and information production” (Mosse, 2005, p. 163).

The following description shows the alignment of one of the actors, UNESCO Delhi, during a project international seminar held in 2011:

“The XXX [SE] and UNESCO share a common vision of mainstreaming culture into India’s national development policies. [...] [This] Seminar would be an occasion to gather effective and constructive ideas to create a stronger case for culture-based rural development” (UNESCO New Delhi programme specialist’s speech at the AL project seminar in Calcutta, 6-8<sup>th</sup> September, 2011).

A few years later, an external evaluation report by Jeretic (2014) shows the alignment of the European Commission final assessment with the AL project’s narratives on intangible heritage as a tool for alleviating poverty:

“Among the selected cases there are several that demonstrate how a project or programme can enhance the volume of production and income generated directly by cultural operators (individuals, groups, enterprises, associations) in a given sector of activity. [...] Intangible cultural heritage-based income generating activities have been developed through this [AL] project – music, crafts, traditional theatre and dance forms. [...] Beneficiaries have transformed

from 'daily labourers' to artists and cultural entrepreneurs. The project has been successful in establishing rural creative clusters, further supported by governmental micro-enterprises' support schemes. The effect of the project will be sustained through the establishment of partnerships, adequate public policies, private self-sustained micro-business and an increase of tourism in the area. The communities of the 6 districts involved in the project enjoy a significant increase in their living *standards*" (Jeretic, 2014, p. 26).

According to Jacobs' evaluation, the intangible heritage is recognised as an area of cooperation within which to enact the culture-based rural development process, and also advocated as a model of approach to heritage safeguarding by UNESCO New Delhi after the end of the AL project (UNESCO New Delhi, 2016).

During its networking relations, the AL actor-network built its success on these narratives, positioning itself (and the SE leading the project) in the role of knowledge producer in legitimising (or black boxing) an ideal model of intangible heritage-led development for India. The results of this AL project actor-network (between 2009 and 2011) were, translated into a replicable instrument that appealed to those cultural institutions of India (e.g. UNESCO New Delhi; the Ministry of Tourism of India; the Ministry for Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (MSME) of West Bengal, etc.) in search of a way to implement the 2003 Convention, as it can be read in the following interview:

"Each country has to put in practice the purpose of the [2003] Convention. The first step is documentation, but then? At [the] government level, in India, we don't see more apart from their capacity to organise cultural events, they don't do more [to safeguard intangible cultural heritage]. The Ministry of Culture is the one who is in charge to put into practice the [2003] Convention. [However] The implementation of the Convention requires to understand the meanings and to [find way to] implement. They [the SE] are actually doing the fieldwork and implementing the Convention [with the AL project]" (UNESCO New Delhi programme specialist, 2011, pers. comm., 20 January).

Some years later, the UNESCO New Delhi planning document reports that developing intangible heritage livelihoods are officially one of the main focuses of its work with intangible heritages in India in collaboration with the local government:

"As part of its rural livelihoods focus, UNESCO New Delhi partnered with [the SE], to create a flagship project, 'Art for Life - Culture for Rural Livelihood in West Bengal', which is funded by the Department of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises and Textiles, Government of West Bengal" (UNESCO New Delhi, 2016, p. 35).

Actions undertaken in India under the last UNESCO strategic plan, 2014-2017, are also a continuation of the AL project activities, as it reads in the following description from UNESCO website from 2015:

“Art can be a vehicle of rural development! The Government of India and UNESCO present 20 artists from rural West Bengal and their journey from the margin to development through [the] project.

To be featured are Baul-Fakir singers, Patachitra painter story-tellers and the dynamic martial [c]hhau [d]ance. The event is part of the flagship project of the [SE] and UNESCO in India – [...] – aimed at demonstrating the power of intangible cultural heritage for rural livelihood. [...]” (UNESCO, 2015b).

As the description so far has shown, the AL project enactments of the intangible heritage are also circulating in other and new networks created by the actors and stemming from the AL project assemblages. The intangible heritage enactments – the traditional, tourist and development reality– have created new networks and, with their interactions, they shaped the intangible heritage and make or lose value as they move (Appadurai, 1988).

## 8.4 Conclusion

This Chapter explored some of the transformations occurring within the AL project actor-network, and specifically how these transformations are mediated by specific discourses around the traditional, touristic and developmental realm of the intangible heritage. Drawing primarily on project documents, project research material and also field notes, the Chapter outlined how the intangible heritage is shaped in and by key actors’ relations through which is connected and able to reinforce different aspects, interpretations and uses of the heritage. Thus, description of ANT assemblages served, first of all, to unfold the connections and actors mobilised around the intangible heritage to make the intangible heritage as livelihood strategy. Second of all, description in this Chapter served as an illustrative case of how socio-material relations - created by the project actor-network - worked out in practice and enacted a number of juxtaposed ontological realities for the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau: the traditional, tourist and developmental reality. As section 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3 demonstrates, depending on the networking relations to which the intangible heritage is associated, the cultural element is recognised, valorised and circulated as something traditional (8.1), as a tourism object or destination (8.2) or as development enabler (8.3). For instance, by being connected to the resource centres, to international and local artists, to choreographers, to new stages, to tourists, to trainings and workshops for new and revitalised chhau productions, the intangible heritage’s tourist properties and capacity started to gain importance and circulate in the project network, and beyond (see section 8.2). Moreover, the *problematization* of the intangible heritage as in risk of abandonment and the poor artists’ conditions, introduced in Chapter 5, becomes evident in the ordering of the intangible heritage livelihood strategy presented in this Chapter, where the narrative constructions around development allow actors (such as SE, UNESCO, researchers, government authorities, development agencies and donors) to define problems and

legitimise solutions based on the valorisation of intangible heritage as a livelihood (see section 8.3).

The narratives of the three realities representations (and uses) of the intangible heritage of chhau, reconstructed above, showed how the intangible heritage is continuously enacted in, and by, the socio-material relations through which the intangible heritage of chhau is connected with and in a given network (Law, 2009; Ren, 2010). Project documents, seminars, database, buildings, research papers, tourism markets, cultural events, workshops, development staff, safeguarding policy, resource centres, trainings and other complex material element are active actants in these three accounts and have effected crucial transformations and roles of the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, some of which I will discuss further in Chapter 9. All these elements are not merely material backdrops, as already suggested in Mosse (2005) upon which development project activities take place. Non-human actants have had equal footing as human agents, and how they bring about effects in the social and material worlds related to the heritage of Purulia chhau.

Through its socio-material relations, the intangible heritage is displayed as a functional and fluid object, gradually transforming and existing also in juxtaposed networks. As such, the aim of this Chapter was not only to answer a question of what the intangible heritage is, but also to show how the intangible heritage livelihood strategy worked out in practice, and how its working relations transformed and enacted change connected to other entities.

By focussing on the relations and workings which made the safeguarding strategy possible, rather than on the object itself, it is possible to show a number of effects of the various enactments of the heritage, in other different and partially connected entities.

The socio-material relation between the intangible heritage and the AL project's interpretation of the revitalisation of the element is further elaborated in Chapter 9, where I examine actors' perspectives on two specific events and lead towards the conclusions. We will also see how, despite the controversies concerning how to implement the intangible heritage revitalisation through heritage innovations, artists choose to stay in the project and perform most of the new modern chhau productions the project enacted.

# Chapter 9

## 9. A Discussion on Intangible Heritage Revitalisation as Modernisation

“To recognise one character from another [in chhau dance] we look at three specific things: steps, dress and mask.” (Pandit, 2011, pers. comm., 19 February).

To summarise the argument so far, the formation of the AL development project and its actor-network involved several steps. First, the analysis has showed that the AL project foundations were built on a series of black boxes, or crucial ideas that were treated and *problematised* as closed, taken as “matter of consensus” (Scott-Smith, 2013) by actors enrolled in the project network as outlined in Chapter 2, 5 and 6. For instance, the problem of economic freedom of artists and their socio-economic development, that of protecting the heritage of Purulia chhau and the proposed solution of promoting the intangible heritage transformation into a livelihood asset, through its revitalisation for cultural and creative tourism industries. Second, the AL development project and the leading actor, the SE, enrolled a number of important human and non-human allies, described in Chapter 2 and 6, enacting a new intangible heritage community by appealing to their desires and point of interests (money, expositions, status, heritage protection, studies, research grants, funds, policy implementation, etc.). At the same time all the actors were subjugated to the power relations of the project of management structure (Golini and Landoni, 2014; Lewis, 2014). Third, the AL actor-network of allies was able to make the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau viable by expanding conventional perceptions of both traditional culture and rural livelihoods framework (traditionally based on agriculture), encouraging intangible heritage-based activities and artists professionalisation, as an alternative livelihoods strategy (Chapter 7 and 8). Thus, the project assemblages, the intangible heritage elements, such as masks and music, costumes and stories, the artists’ roles, the work of the researchers, the project documents, the cultural events, international exchanges and seminars, the promotional brochures, the UNESCO experts, all these heterogeneous elements, allowed, at the same time, the AL project to insert itself into the world of politics and practice of safeguarding intangible heritage and implementing the 2003 Convention in a more stable, lasting form.

That said, there is a fourth point that is interconnected to the previous points discussed which this last analytical Chapter addresses. That is, what interpretations are hidden behind the

extremely loaded language of *revitalisation* of the intangible heritage by the AL project actor-network?

Translation is in fact an ongoing process (Rodger, Moore and Newsome, 2009), and this Chapter opens up some of the spaces where intangible heritage ordering as livelihood under the AL project is contested and where translations, for some aspects, fail to stabilise the project network. This Chapter serves therefore to present the operational socio-material relations that affected the intangible heritage under the project, particularly those processes called ‘revitalisation’ of intangible heritage (Field notes, 2011) around the contested points.

The final argument in this Chapter is that revitalisation of the intangible heritage of chhau is contextualised by the AL project actor-network by the act of *innovation* that goes behind purely technical and material modernisation of aspects of the cultural element and it contradicts the local masters’ prescriptions on the process of assembling, performing and transmitting traditional chhau productions. Thus, it shows that not only the contemporary intangible heritage of Purulia chhau is a product of actors’ interactions and local-global contextual connections (between present use of the element and past roles) also, these very development project’ interactions have determined the way in which the intangible heritage is understood and enacted into a contemporary livelihood. This Chapter therefore tackles the second research aim outlined in Chapter 1, section 1.5, on the impacts of the AL project on the heritage, with emphasis on the material-semiotic translation of the intangible heritage in development context.

In addressing these points, I will draw on a series of field data gathered during the visits in Bamnia village and at the first cultural festival of chhau dance held under the AL project, the *Chhau Utsav*, tracing the links between artists’ perceptions of innovation and actions introduced during the project’s second year implementation. By applying the socio-material approach of ANT as seen in Law and Singleton (2005), Ren (2010) and van der Duim (2010), this Chapter discusses examples of ‘presence’ and ‘absence’ in the intangible heritage of chhau by actors in the field. The enactment of intangible heritage revitalisation through AL project actions required human actors to make multiple decisions, choices that had various impacts on their intangible heritage and livelihoods that were made visible through the ethnographic investigation. In order however to continue this discussion the concept of ‘revitalisation’ in previous studies will be briefly introduced below.

## **9.1 Conceptualising Revitalisation of Intangible Heritage**

In previous research revitalisation of traditional cultures, folk arts and heritage has been loaded with multiple interpretations. As the critical analysis from folklore studies properly



argues, a theoretical and empirical pitfall with revitalisation analysis lays in the confusion with “words and concepts” (Ronström, 1996, p. 6). Ronström suggests that too many words have been used to address similar practices called “revival, revitalization, restoration, recreation...” with terms that in reality do not address identical actions (Ronström, 1996, p. 6). There is indeed no clear-cut definition of the action of revitalisation in previous studies. Mathisen for instance, argues that the action of revitalisation has to do with the life of the past as a way of (re)creating a living version of a past through local festival or museum actions (2009).

In a similar perspective to Mathisen, recently Cocq in her article about Sámi linguistic and cultural revitalisation in Sweden, addresses revitalisation as a process of ‘cultural construction’ in which typically traditionalisation<sup>122</sup> - the act of explicitly referring and valorising some element from the past tradition - takes place (2014, p. 81). A value assigning process that select specific traditional aspects of a cultural element from past to construct its current representation in the present. Cocq also suggests that “[the intangible heritage nomination] legitimises a claim of authenticity and argues for the power of a cultural past” (2014, p. 82). From Cocq’s point of view, the intangible heritage label is in itself a strong argument to allow the revival and valorisation of the traditional and past elements of an intangible culture, particularly if past can be valuable asset for the current community’s purposes (2014).

The idea of taking something from the past to revitalise a cultural heritage seems however in contrast with that of considering intangible heritage as something living (UNESCO, 2003). Cecile Duvelle, former Chief of the UNESCO Intangible Heritage Section, argues if the intangible heritage does not show a remarkable degree of continuity over the years and with today’s practice, rather than its revitalisation we are speaking of its ‘re-invention’ as the following extract shows:

“Revitalization means taking actions to reactivate, restore and strengthen ICH practices and expressions that are weakened and likely to disappear in the near future if no measure is undertaken. [...] an element that has become extinct and does not remain in the lived memory of community members associated with it cannot be revitalized. The reinvention of an extinct tradition, practice or expression through books, documents or historical records is not revitalization as described in the Convention,

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<sup>122</sup> According to Cocq, traditionalisation is “the act of explicitly referencing some element of the past considered traditional within the community. Traditionalisation is a self-conscious process (Handler and Linnekin, 1984, p. 287) that takes place in the community at different levels.” (2014, p. 82)

because it is not living heritage anymore. In such a case, it is an act of invention, which is a conscious reproduction or reconstruction to serve particular ends and interests.” (Duvelle, 2010, p. 5)

Despite Duvelle’s position, still the conceptualisation of revitalisation from 2003 Convention is riddled with contradictions. In the 2003 Convention there is no clear explanation on how revitalisation should be interpreted and implemented. A written reference is coming from UNESCO’s experts meeting<sup>123</sup> held in 2002 on the terminology to adopt in the 2003 Convention’s text where revitalisation is also interpreted as the re-introduction of past elements which are no longer in use:

“Revitalisation [If referring to practices developed by the cultural community:] reactivating or reinventing social practices and representations, which are no longer in use or falling in disuse. [If referring to heritage policies:] The encouragement and support of a local community, developed with the agreement of that same community, in the reactivation of social practices and representations, which are no longer in use or falling in disuse.” (van Zanten, 2002, p. 6, from the Glossary on intangible cultural heritage - August 2002)

This lack of clear explanation on how revitalisation should be practiced is coupled with lack of research efforts showing concern on the conceptualisation of revitalisation of intangible heritage safeguarding practice. In the *International Journal of Intangible Cultural Heritage* (IJICH) - at the time of writing this PhD - only two articles (Kennedy, 2010; McLaren, 2010) explicitly refer to the practice of revitalising intangible heritage<sup>124</sup>. An example of a study that granted attention to the revitalisation process is McLaren in her study on China’s intangible heritage from policy and historical level. She argues that in China intangible heritage revitalisation “involves integrating the [intangible heritage] item into the regional economy or providing an economic incentive to practitioners to continue the practice or performance” (2010, p. 33). Similarly, Kennedy argues that revitalisation of craftsmanship in Kabul, Afghanistan, is inextricably linked to establishing economic drivers and

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<sup>123</sup> It was Janet Blake in 2002 that suggested that the practice of revitalisation should be officially among the aims and objectives that the 2003 Convention in order to pay attention to the evolving nature of the intangible heritage and to avoid its ‘fossilization’. (Blake, 2002).

<sup>124</sup> When running a text analysis searching for the term “revitalisation” among the 12 volumes of the journal IJICH only two research papers investigate this practice and these are “McLaren, A. E., 2010. Revitalisation of the folk epics of the Lower Yangzi Delta: an example of China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage. *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, Vol. 5, pp. 30–43” and the second one is “Kennedy, T., (2010) Safeguarding traditional craftsmanship: a project demonstrating the revitalisation of intangible heritage in Murad Khane, Kabul. *International Journal of Intangible Heritage*, 5, pp.74–85.” Other academic journals deal with the practice of revitalising traditional cultures and these are mostly in the field of folklore studies.

opportunity (2010, p. 80).

A limitation of these studies is that revitalisation is rarely contextualised and investigated from the view of social and material practices happening at local level, and with non-institutional actors, such as NGOs and Social Enterprises as in the AL project. The practice of revitalising intangible heritage (and in general, traditional cultures) has been regarded primarily in relation to institutional and governmental heritage schemes, administrative strategies acted by national and international bodies for ethnic, nationalistic or economic interests (e.g. Åkesson, 2006; Cocq, 2014; Kennedy, 2010; Mathisen, 2009; McLaren, 2010). Moreover, how these practices impact the construction and representations of the cultural element still lacks investigation.

Considering the construction and representations of an intangible heritage – or the many layer that form the intangible heritage - also within its revitalisation process means to trace how it or its parts are being produced (Law and Singleton, 2005). The issue is how such parts, its total and representations are made, because flows of production impact and can threaten aspects of the intangible cultural heritage. Such analysis can contribute to the development of post-structuralist approaches to conceptualise intangible heritage and to foster reflections on intangible heritage making process (Felder, Duineveld and Van Assche, 2014; Harrison, 2015).

Drawing from ANT, some scholars handle flows of production and their processes neither as purely social or purely material processes, but as processes based on a set of observables ‘absences’ and ‘presences’ (Law and Singleton, 2005; Faik, Thompson and Walsham, 2013; Felder, Duineveld and Van Assche, 2014). If, for instance, masks are removed from revitalised Purulia chhau productions, as translated by the AL project, then something material is being made absent. As Felder, Duineveld and Van Assche argues “something is only absent when it was or could be observed to be present. The observation of ‘absolute’ absence by a discourse is impossible, since every observation of absence implies the observation of its previous or future presence [...]” (2014, p. 465). Hence, in order to determine what exactly is made absent (or present) in the revitalisation process of intangible heritage of Purulia chhau under the AL project, it is first necessary to present a Purulia chhau production where it already existed to create an example of presence, following artists’ point of views. Section 9.2 and 9.3 below reconstruct the story of a village chhau production, including its cultural elements, as described by the artists and other researchers from the field. These sections will outline how the chhau production is present, as part of the local cultural heritage.

## 9.2 Purulia Chhau Dance Performance at Village Level

In February 2011, I attended the *Chhau Utsav*, one of the main chhau festival organised by the AL project in the village of Bamnia. At the Chhay Utsav, 6 Purulia chhau groups performed daily over a five days period (31 groups in total). What follows is an account of a Purulia chhau performance I attended on the late afternoon of February 16 in 2011 in Bamnia, as it emerges from my journal.

First a caravan of musicians starts walking in a march around the closer sacred altar-tree: there is a small square altar here in Bamnia with a tree inside, it is positioned next to the newly built - by the project - Resource Centre in the village. The musicians walk around the sacred tree playing the instruments, they turn around it three times. Then, they reach the *akhada*, the traditional round space consecrated to dance chhau. First, the roar of drums and then the *shennai* (or *sanai*) a sort of flute is playing. This musical march creates the feeling of excitement for the dance that comes: musicians leave the space and sit on a side of the *akhada*. The rhythm of drums becomes faster and now is the time of the voice of the speaker to prepare the entrance of dancers, with few words or a song. First, *Ganesha*, the God with the elephant head, a sign of good luck, and then *Kārttik* (son of Goddess *Durga*) are being manifest in their costumes. *Ganesha* enters and does few steps and then stops for few seconds, in the standing pose that [as Kabir explains] serves as the invocation of the Lord Ganesha. After this, the story continues with *Kārttik* and other characters entering the stage, one by one first, and then the fight begins and all dancing together; [this is] the *mél* chhau, the group dance synchronised [which] bring the story to an end.

Kabir [next to me, watching the performance] says that not all chhau performances will have someone who accompanies the drama with words or singing. [...] “Artists are performing a story of Durga<sup>125</sup>”, says Kabir addressing the characters; he also says the name of the story but I am not sure about the spelling; “it is a good Purulia chhau group” he adds, “see, costumes are very colourful and rich. I can say that this group is quite famous and well-off because it could afford quality costumes and really nice and big masks. Masks can be very expensive”. [...] “Today”, he adds, “they are following the traditional Purulia chhau style with instrumental music.” [...] (Field notes, 2011, 16 February, Bamnia).

The story being told in the field notes above is about the battle for the fight of the demon *Mahishasura*<sup>126</sup>. It is a drama representation of a traditional religious and somehow cosmological story from Hinduism pantheon. While watching the dance, I was not able to follow and catch the meaning of the story entirely, but only to enjoy the rhythmic dance and powerful energy they transmitted. If I had not had Kabir and other artists with me explaining what I was seeing, I could not have comprehended the development of the story. Purulia chhau dance can be inaccessible to outsiders even when those onlookers are equipped with

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<sup>125</sup> The main worshipped Goddess of West Bengal, according to Kabir (Field notes, 2011; see also fig. 18 in Chapter 7, section 7.2.1).

<sup>126</sup> Few days later the show I could finally reconstruct the name of the story performed that afternoon: the story is called “Mahishasura Mardini” it is based on the myth where the Goddess Kali (in the avatar of Durga) slays Mahishasura, the demon king, symbolising the victory of good over evil.

some knowledge of the Indian religious pantheon and stories, as I was at the time of my fieldwork (2011). However, the above extract indicates a number of requirements<sup>127</sup> on how a chhau dance production is represented: the musicians' procession warms up the audience, the role of jhumur music and of the singer, the traditional plot of Durga's story with Ganesh's opening steps, the role of Ganesh mask as a pray to Gods in most of the chhau shows, the use of round arena as stage, the use of *mél chhau* (the group dance), to name but a few.

As it emerged from Kabir's words, when addressing the performers as a quality group or when saying that they are dancing traditional chhau, artists demonstrate to have specific technical and aesthetic criteria to satisfy in order for their art to be defined as chhau (Field notes, 2011), further discussed in the sub-sections below.

### 9.2.1 Patterns of Movements, Narratives and Costumes in Purulia Chhau

Purulia chhau dance at village level is performed at night, in open spaces, often presented in a form of competition between two or three groups<sup>128</sup> of dancers. The chhau groups normally compete on the same story, each one dancing for up to three hours, in a show that can last all night to the enjoyment of the audience who, at the end, elect the best one (Field notes, 2011). The chhau dance is based on a repertoire typically centred around a dramatic fight: a heroine or hero who fights for love and justice.

When talking with chhau gurus the terms language and chhau were frequently used in connection with tradition or traditional (Field notes, 2011). In fact, masters referred to a chhau language and to a traditional chhau as all those patterns of movements, dance steps, music, masks, narrative themes and knowledge from the chhau guru that are able to create a chhau production.

As reported by Shuba (2011) Purulia chhau dance "starts slowly, followed by an abrupt release of energy culminating in a trance-like state. The dance has three phases, *sithayee* (permanent posture), *madhya lasa* (intermediate movement) and *druta* (faster movements)" (p. 70).

The mock combat techniques, jumps and swirls known as *khel* movements (e.g. UNESCO, 2010a; Shuba, 2011), communicate the dynamics of the fight and give rhythm to the story. However, several steps that are part of chhau dance are also taken from imitation of daily life, in the forest areas and rural households. For instance, *chalis* and *topkas*, are stylized gaits of birds and animals, or *uflis*, representing steps of the dance modelled on the daily

<sup>127</sup> Most of these requirements are widely acknowledged in literature on chhau (e.g. Acharya, 2013; Arden, 1971; Chatterjee, 2009; Mistri and Sarkar, 2015; Mohanta, 2015; Mukunda, 2012; Reck, 1972; Shuba, 2011).

<sup>128</sup> The number of chhau groups exhibiting at a local event in Purulia can vary according to different circumstances, such as the festival funds. However, the tradition sees normally two or three troupes exhibiting in a sort of contest with the same stories (Field notes, 2011)

routines of village life (UNESCO, 2010a, p. 3). These traditional steps constitute some of the traditional elements of chhau dance performances. Acrobatic steps, which are also much more used today, require group performance (fig. 22 below).

If group performances are considered part of the tradition (Field notes, 2011; Shuba, 2011), the acrobatic steps are considered recent novelties introduced by young dancers. An extract from the field notes refers to this shift:

“(...) today’s chhau groups are losing this tradition, because it requires a knowledge and method that is not being perpetuated; the physical training with the classical Indian music, or jhumur music is almost lost in modern chhau, they prefer more acrobatic group steps.” (Kabir, 2011, pers. comm., 13 February).

The narration above highlights the internal conflicts among the different generations of chhau dancers<sup>129</sup>, however, it also points to the importance of music in chhau dance. As Kabir underlines “the training with classical music is very important in chhau. Classical Indian music, with its rhythm, usually leads the dancers to a sort of transition from a person to a vehicle of some spirituality. Music, with the drums rhythm and the notes should be a guide for artist’s steps and postures” (Kabir, 2011, pers. comm., 13 February).

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<sup>129</sup> As it emerges from the field notes, in view of the new demands from audiences, some chhau gurus are indeed introducing more acrobatic steps to gain popularity (Field notes, 2011; see also Mohanta, 2015)



*22 Purulia chhau dancers performing acrobatic steps, picture by the author.*

Along with the dance steps, the movements, stories and music, another striking feature of Purulia chhau is the use of large masks representing the characters, as Pandit suggests below:

“each [chhau] character has his own steps to enter the stage and to move on the stage. To recognise one character from another we look at three specific things: steps, dress and mask.” (Pandit, 2011, pers. comm., 19 February).

Each chhau mask represents a character and is in keeping with the character’s steps and postures. For instance, different masks are required when telling the story of *Kārttikēya* (a deity, son of Goddess Durga): one for the deity killing the demon, another one to show *Kārttikēya* as a child growing up and another mask for the young *Kārttikēya*. Hence, at least three masks are required to represent this character during a performance. In addition, the colours on the masks also indicate the role of the character. For instance, red and black are generally used for demons.

The narratives of the chhau masters highlight how chhau dance has evolved as changes in the technical and material resources, such as acrobatics, are highlighted. The next subsection will however illustrate that when changes are introduced, they are mediated by masters through the chhau language (Field notes, 2011).

### **9.2.2 The Guru Speaks the Chhau Language!**

A visit to Jay’s house revealed how a new chhau performances are being developed by an

artist in collaboration with a elder chhau guru and Kabir. The extract below from discussions with these artists and guru's on how they develop their performance, states:

[At Jay's house] Raman and Jay are working on a new performance. They wrote the text (the script) for a performance together. With the script in their hand, they say "from outside nobody can direct a chhau performance", as they explain "outsiders don't really know the chhau language". [...]

They then explain that to develop a good chhau production takes a couple of month of training when you have your script ready and if you are already a chhau dancer. A new story can even come from outside, they do the example of *Robin Hood* story – "some groups have been performing Robin Hood for years" –says Jay – "but they have interpreted the story of Robin Hood in chhau language". (Field notes, 2011, 12 February)

A very important prescriptive is expressed in the above conversation with Raman and Jay, that is the presence of a 'chhau language' that encapsulate all the requirements for a quality chhau performance (Field notes, 2011). The two gurus described the chhau language as the artistic language that allows to interpret a meaningful story – like Robin Hood – in chhau dance. Even if they think that chhau dance shares some values, such as heroism, with the story of Robin Hood, they still feel that it can only be interpreted in chhau dance if it is led by a guru who knows the chhau language (Field notes, 2011).

The presence of the guru (and of a chhau language) is a very relevant element that emerges as one point of controversy within AL project actor-network translations, as the role of the guru and the chhau language is made absent under the AL project revitalisation process. This interplay between the presence and absence of chhau heritage was revealed throughout the fieldwork, both the material and immaterial proprieties of chhau dance were enacted and ordered differently within AL project, often being made absent. The absence and presence of the intangible heritage under AL project will be discussed below, in section 9.3, focusing on the controversies between reported events and artists' reactions to AL project main outcomes, such as cultural exchanges, the Chhau Utsav festival and new productions.

### **9.3 Absence and Presence in the Intangible Heritage under the AL Project**

An example of such absence, yet present, entity is indeed visible in the links with the adoration of Shiva:

"[...] the dance is important for adoration of Shiva and when we bring the performance somewhere we bring the adoration of Shiva. [...]" (Chandra, 2011, pers. comm., 11 February).

As Chandra underlines the link with the adoration of Shiva and with different religious aspects (also described in Chapter 6) is an important feature of chhau dance. One such *othered* absence in the intangible heritage revitalisation under the AL actor-network is the ritualistic link with the adoration of Shiva. The religious connotation is missing every time



the dance is performed outside the period of *pūja*, although we could actually say that this is already missing every time chhau dancers perform outside the period of *Chaitra Parva*<sup>130</sup>. More specifically (and materially speaking) what is absent, therefore what is changed or *othered*, when chhau is performed under the AL project is the initial pray, the music and masks and costumes linked to Shiva or its avatars.

As descriptions in Chapter 8 pointed out, actors in the second and third phases of the AL project worked together towards organising festivals, implementing cultural exchanges and increasing promotional events participation. For instance, Chotu with his chhau group reached London and Liverpool and other destinations to perform chhau at cultural events and fairs, as planned by the AL project. The group of dancers with only 9 people (7 dancers plus 2 musicians) out of the 26 members of the group from Purulia, in London and Liverpool matched with programmes of international project partners, followed workshops of art exchange with UK artists and trained a group of youth with disabilities (Field notes, 2011). They represented chhau dance before larger and international audiences as the following picture (fig. 23 below) with a poster circulated in Liverpool at the time of my field work clearly exemplifies.



23 Project Poster, Purulia chhau in Liverpool.

As the poster above highlights, the group was going to perform in Liverpool “three stunning performances”, namely: Macbeth, East & West and Mahisur Mardini. What become absent during this event, despite religious connotations already discussed above, is also the number of the dancers, the links with the classical jhumur music and the traditional chhau narratives.

<sup>130</sup> The *Chaitra Parva*, is the month of full moon dedicated to pujas, a period when usually local chhau festivals are performed. See Chapter 6 for a discussion on the role of the dance and its link with local religious rituals.

Two out of the three stories presented in this poster are productions where chhau dance elements (or proprieties in ANT language) are ordered in different ways: the Macbeth and the East & West performances. Thus, at the same time, this poster exemplifies that the AL project triggered a revitalisation of the intangible heritage in new objects, as well as its circulation in larger circles, as the next subsection discusses.

### **9.3.1 Revitalisation Interpreted as New Intangible Heritage Objects for New Markets**

The patterning of absence/presence of the intangible heritage proprieties was influenced by the interpretation attached to the revitalisation by the AL project actor-network. As it reads in SE's reports, new chhau productions with innovative traits and also with reintroduction of "obsolete dance steps" (SE, 2010b, p. 23) have been produced and circulated for the appreciation of new and larger audiences:

"Chhau productions have been developed based on Tagore's Chitrangada and Kalmrigaya and Shakespeare's Macbeth. This convergence of folk and mainstream literary works perhaps happened for the first time. The innovative productions have been performed in various places. Ghatotkach Sambhava was developed by [a chhau] group of Bamnia, based on the story of Bhima and demon princess Hirimba. This beautiful production is endowed with unique masks and costume and using obsolete dance steps like Mayur Chaal, Harin Chaal, Bagh Chaal. The production was showcased to a visiting Romanian delegation at EZCC, Basanta Utsav at Chelyama in Feb' 09, at Bhawanipore Education Society and in various Durga Puja venues and has been highly appreciated." (SE, 2010b, p. 23)

Artists and mask makers were trained to innovate, to reduce costs of production and use other available material like feathers instead of plastic: "new styles and material were also conceived for accessories like masks and costumes not only to make the productions attractive but also to reduce expenditure" (SE, 2010b, p. 23). As this statement from the AL project report proves, depending on the perspective from which this process of absence/presence is observed, differences in mask and costumes – among other heritage proprieties - becomes flexible and more or less relevant, particularly in the context of the intangible heritage making process. For instance, the SE continuously looks for originality and innovation as chhau dance must be able also "to surprise customers and enter international markets" (Field notes, 2011).

It was not before this time that I realised how some Purulia chhau productions were also (co)produced under the AL project actor-network. This made me think back on my own experience in Calcutta a month before, in January 2011, at the Golf Green festival, when I saw for the first time a Purulia chhau group performing. That time, the chhau group was dancing a story called "Macbeth Chhau" (fig. 24 and 25). Did they look less chhau to me – which I now realised – I did not know yet how a Purulia chhau performance is?

### 9.3.1.1 Macbeth Chhau Dance

“Macbeth and Banquo step into the makeshift stage, discussing the weather. Three witches arrive somersaulting into the stage to deliver a prophecy that will alter the fortune of the generals. No prizes for guessing that the scene is from William Shakespeare's famous play Macbeth. But as artists swirl in the air falling onto the floor on their knees exhibiting unparalleled stamina, the audience is floored by the riveting new idiom of performing arts. Welcome to the new avatar of traditional chhau dance, the martial folk dance of Bengal and Jharkhand, ready for a global audience.” (Chakraborty, 2012, p. 19)

This extract is the opening of a local newspaper article the day after a Macbeth chhau show took place on a stage in Calcutta. Macbeth chhau, presented with the title of *Dakini Mongal* (or the Tale of Three Witches) was developed as a main innovative chhau production, fusion of different folk-art elements, during the AL project, to circulate particularly in national and international cultural events (Field notes, 2011).

In Macbeth chhau a number of aesthetic and style proprieties are made absent, as evident in figure 24 and 25 below: elaborate chhau masks and costumes were altered to simpler masks made of wood, paper and cotton. In addition, elements from different local folk arts are melted together with classical chhau dance steps and movements and the story from Shakespeare, thus promoting a human and material collaboration with English literature, a choreographer, international and Indian folk artists.



24 Macbeth chhau dance (I), picture by the author.



25 *Macbeth chhau dance (II)*, picture by the author.

To a non-Purulia audience's eyes the adaptation of the Shakespearian drama into *Dakini Mongal* appeared as a "unique presentation combining the two folk forms of [chhau] dance and [p]atachitra painting" (Field notes, 2011). I attended the Macbeth chhau show in Calcutta<sup>131</sup> and noticed the mix of folk elements (Field notes, 2011). When it was presented in Calcutta the audience also reported enthusiastic feedback of this melting-pot, although we all experience some difficulties to detect the meanings and interpret the scenes (Field notes, 2011). Needless to say, that this modern artefact of Macbeth chhau and its process of production are addressed as new untypical productions compared to what artists define chhau (Field notes, 2011). As master Chotu says

"This [the Macbeth] is a unique experiment initiated by [the SE] quite different from mythological palas<sup>132</sup> we usually perform. Audience in Purulia, initially couldn't comprehend the story, but now they too are appreciating the innovation." (Chotu, 2012 in Chakraborty, 2012, p.1)

If the AL project actor-network successfully reached its scopes in terms of establishing alliances and mobilising interests to allow the modernisation of the intangible heritage for livelihood purposes, still moments of controversies about the new modern chhau productions translated by the AL actor-network emerged. Looking into those moments of controversies within the AL project actor-network help us to highlight the unbalanced power relationships and the impact on the cultural element.

#### 9.4 Point of Controversies: the Chhau Utsav, the Role of Guru and Innovation

The *Chhau Utsav* festival held in Bamnia was an extraordinary tourist event in comparison to traditional local events in Purulia. This festival is where revitalised chhau productions were also introduced to local audience and started to circulate locally. It is also where the

<sup>131</sup> I attended the Macbeth show at the *Golf Green Utsav 2011*, the 2<sup>nd</sup> February in Calcutta.

<sup>132</sup> The term *pala/palas* stays for 'story/stories'.

absence and presence of certain proprieties of the intangible heritage are made explicit. In reality, presence and absence play out in a multitude of ways at this event, where 31 chhau groups involved in the AL project were invited to perform their dances during the festival. It is on some of these observable presences/absences narrated below that the difference becomes relevant to the context of the heritage making process.

The five days festival was followed by an encounter with some chhau masters of the area who also participated and performed. The whole discussion ended revealing controversial feelings on how the festival went, as reported in the following conversation:

“at the Chhau Utsav some [participants] are [known as] really good chhau teams – but their performances were not up to their level. Some [performances] were boring, without a good rhythm [...] Most of the teams who did not perform well were trained by a choreographer [hired by the project]. They performed new narrative stories [developed under the project] that were not adapted to ‘chhau language and interpretation’; you could see that those performances were coming from another point of view and were not directed by a chhau.” (Kabir, 2011, pers. comm., 20 February)

Here Kabir illustrates the simultaneous ordering (Mol, 1999) of different actor-network’s elements: project’s employers, trainings, expectations, a local festival, chhau teams, the chhau language, performances, project constraints, etc., to enact the revitalised intangible heritage. More importantly he observes (and remarks) some presences and some absences. The choreographer with its presence makes ‘absent’ - the role of the chhau guru - presents in another form. This absence/presence of the choreographer/chhau guru is one of the observable ontological transformation (Felder, Duineveld and Van Assche, 2014) of chhau dance in the context of heritage practice for development.

The new modern productions presented at the festival were tagged by artists as “not good for Purulia” (Field notes, 2011). Critique from artists was pungent

“yes, the Chhau Utsav was a good exposure for us, the audience has never seen 31 chhau groups exhibiting together, although, the director [from the AL project] wanted us to play the new productions made within [AL] workshops; that was not our best performance and the audience did not appreciate it. We lost our face there performing something non-really known as chhau and in which we could not give our best [...]” (Chotu, pers. comm., 07 March)

Another chhau master reported “[today] when locals engage my group for festivals, they ask me not to bring the story of Tagore or Shakespeare developed during the project” (Jay, 2011, pers. comm., 07 March). Choreographing, innovating, creating chhau stories and mediating external influxes has always been part of elders and chhau gurus (Field notes, 2011; Shuba, 2011). Although traditions may change over time as also artists suggested, the artists’ community consensus decides which elements of their culture are to be preserved and practised as being paramount.

Another moment also captured my attention during the *Chhau Utsav* festival. A famous master did an out-of-programme, interrupting the established schedule. He gained the stage with a solo performance, I report the scene as it reads in my notes:

After the [final] group performed something happened. Jay [a master] from Bamnia wants to exhibit in a “solo”, they say is called “ekhoua chhau”. It seems to be unexpected and it is not on the official programme. Project officers seems disturbed by this sort of interjection as one of them says “he had his time to perform today with his group, what does he want now?”. Jay goes on. I can tell he is interpreting Krishna (from the mask with peacock feathers and the blue skin);

Kabir, next to me commented with approval saying “this is how tradition wants”. The music is only flute and drums. After Jay’s dance the audience is excited and also other masters around me congratulate for his performance. [...] but there is also a master complaining with project officers about the time given to Jay, and he [the master who complains] goes “Jay exhibited more than he was accorded in the programme” then he continues saying that the day before, his show was cut short because considered too long for this festival [...] (Field notes, Bamnia, 2011).

Was this unexpected performance a way Jay used to communicate his skills or to re-establish roles and control over its intangible heritage that he felt undermined?

I do not have a right answer in my field notes. Clearly this is only an assumption. However, the anecdote on Jay is not intended to criticise or dispute the promotion of intangible heritage at local (or other) level, for which I am sure the AL project offers many options. Instead, I wish to focus on the situation in which the artists are faced with a representation of the intangible heritage that is unrecognisable to some of them. The reaction of astonishment and even anger which the artists sought to convey after the festival expressed the need for the dance to keep some major traits.

As description in sections (9.3 and 9.4) attempted to show, the sudden material absence of the chhau language in *Blind Rish* of Macbeth chhau or during the festival can be an interpretative problem, a loss of popularity or also an unimportant event, depending on the discourse in which it is observed. More likely the examples described above, with some of the main actors’ positions, illustrate that there was an artist’s perspective divergent from the one of the main mediator (the SE):

- that artists had quality criteria to distinguish between bad and good Purulia chhau, between what is done in chhau style and what is not, reflecting the level of mastery in using those material and immaterial elements they recall as classical chhau - which they did not seem to push through the AL project network;
- to some artists the intangible heritage was being weakened by external circumstances of the AL project, with the specific livelihood purpose;

- the SE interpreted the revitalisation of the intangible heritage for livelihood as the introduction of modern innovative elements;
- innovation is part of the chhau dance tradition but it requires specific cultural mediation, by the chhau guru.

In the complex space of the AL project actor-network, revitalisation of the intangible heritage emerged as strongly related to the SE's vision, creating an imbalance of relationships (Paget, Dimanche and Mounet, 2010). Despite the controversial artists' positions on revitalisation as expressed by the AL project, chhau artists indeed stayed in the project. In fact, the exchanges among actors are not necessarily a win-win situation for all the actors (as we have seen, artists reported revitalisation as modernisation having negative impacts on their art), nevertheless Purulia folk artists decided to stay enrolled in the project following the opportunity of socio and economic development concealed in most of the project events. Thus, enabling the translation of the intangible heritage as a livelihood to take place.

## 9.5 Conclusion

In this last analytical Chapter, we have observed more accurately the interweaving work of the AL project when revitalising the cultural element as a livelihood.

As section 9.1 pointed out there is a lack of existing studies on safeguarding measures of revitalisation. This research has attempted to fill the gap with examples of how the revitalisation has been interpreted by the AL project, at the cost of more in-depth analysis for the reader. Considering that revitalisation can be seen as flows of production and that flows of production can be seen as a set of observables 'absences' and 'presences' (Law and Singleton, 2005), the revitalisation of heritage of Purulia chhau was discussed in relation to what was made present and what absent of Purulia chhau traits during its performances at the time of the AL project.

To do so, sections 9.2 and 9.3 outlined, how a chhau production is made present, as part of the local cultural heritage (9.2), and what is made present/absent in revitalised chhau productions during AL project events at local, national and international level (9.3). Description therefore highlighted that revitalisation has been interpreted mainly as innovation of chhau dance with modern traits, materialised, for instance, in the new chhau productions (9.3.1.1).

Innovation is a key element in the intangible heritage life, as chhau gurus recognised, but under the AL project it consisted of new technical combinations and the reintroduction of past forms that included changes in aesthetics or in material aspects of the element contradicting also the cultural prescriptions (9.2) on how chhau dance is assembled. Under the AL project, heritage innovations are no longer to be conceived of as an inherent

foundation and exclusive attribute of the artists and their gurus, but rather as an ongoing social-material process also happening through the project actor-network assemblages and creating points of controversies among the main actors (the SE and the artists). Last section, 9.4, discussed these moments of controversies about the new modern chhau productions to highlight the unbalanced power relationships and the impact on the cultural element.

The Macbeth chhau (9.3.1.1) is unquestionably a very modest example of revitalisation as modernisation. One which has most probably already been discarded by artists, to say that probably today it is not performed anymore. However, the example of Macbeth chhau illustrates that the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau, as well as images, things and people connected to it, are rarely just that, but they are also manifestations of specific cultural, material and social systems of connections, of power and agency, as those established by the development project.

Moreover, the use of the chhau language by the guru - either seen in direct connection to or as the antithesis of a chhau production assembled and played for the AL project - could be used as a marker of authentic Purulia chhau. Its presence/absence establishes a connection between the heritage making, its identity, the project, the role of the guru, the SE, the choreographer, tourism events, to name a few.

Actors all came to the project driven by different interests (money, popularity, passion, working relations, personal interests, etc.) establishing new and unconventional relationships. Chhau artists involvement had consequences for the transmission and dissemination of Purulia chhau dance, at least between 2009 and 2011, namely the creation of staged chhau stories and artefacts (masks and costumes) that began to circulate in and outside the project network. Those circulations were neither evenly accepted nor refused by the artists, but certainly used to create some benefit in terms of international popularity, entrepreneurship, incomes and cultural tourism promotions at national and international level. The new chhau productions also presented during the Chhau Utsav festival (8.4), improved the exposure and created economic benefits for some of the artists. However, artists (and the cultural heritage) experienced a range of additional cultural and social consequences, such lack of popularity at local level, project constraints, interpretative problems and an emerging economic gap between chhau groups' earnings, among those paid directly by the AL project and those not. The outcomes of this research suggest that analysis of the impacts of revitalisation process is necessary and should also look at the broader innovation externalities, such as whether they are in line with the principles and conditions of local traditional ways of assembling, innovating and learning the traditional culture.

Understood in actor network terms description in this Chapter 9 (and in most of this thesis)



conveyed the material-semiotic translations that impacted the intangible heritage in development context. This is useful for a number of reasons, for instance, it tells us that revitalisation and safeguarding should not be regarded without having impacts on the heritage making process; and then, it also suggests that the intangible heritage take different forms in different contexts. This final analytical Chapter in fact potentially raises more questions than it answers on the role of intangible heritage revitalisation in development and livelihood perspectives, on the cultural commodification process and the heritage authenticity, as the last is a question that is debated in most studies on tangible heritage, folklorisation and tourism processes without much of an answer, but it is carefully avoided by the 2003 Convention on safeguarding intangible heritage (Hafstein, 2018; Su, 2018a;b). Next Chapter 10 is the final one of this thesis where the main findings are summarised and discussed in relation to the initial research aims and questions, and where a last conclusion is drawn.

# Chapter 10

## 10. Conclusion: Insights on Intangible Heritage Doing, Revitalising and Ordering in a Livelihoods Development Context

This PhD thesis looked at the intangible heritage in the sphere of international development action and rural livelihoods, with an ontological investigation drawing out questions concerning *what* can be said of the of intangible heritage in the context of livelihoods and development and *how* the real world of practising intangible heritage safeguarding through a development project approach really is.

The first part of this thesis presented the rationale and the theoretical inquiry of this study, with intersecting literature in the field of intangible heritage safeguarding, culture and development, tourism and livelihoods investigation. Since the 2003 Convention entered into force in 2006, discourse and practice around intangible heritage has expanded considerably. Intangible heritage, which involves traditional cultures, folk arts, performances, and practices, has gained the increasing attention of local governments, policy makers, international institutions, academics, social organisations, tourism experts, groups and individuals, with its safeguarding being regarded recently as a development opportunity. In some developing countries, given their often-rich traditional cultures, the practice of safeguarding intangible heritage through its revitalisation and promotion in tourism and creative entrepreneurship is regarded also as a strategic tool to reach the always desirable sustainable development, therefore, to fight poverty and discrimination, to increase social cohesion and foster cultural diversity. However, the role of intangible heritage valorisation in development perspectives is not only a matter of developing countries, but it is becoming a worldwide subject. As of the time of writing this thesis, several policy documents on the role of intangible heritage and its safeguarding for sustainable development were released by UNESCO, UNDP and WTO (e.g. UNESCO, 2013b; 2015a; UNESCO and UNDP, 2013; WTO, 2013) and 178 States Parties ratified the 2003 Convention by May 2018 (UNESCO, 2018). The act of recognising intangible heritage to be safeguarded also for sustainable development has generated therefore new practices, tensions and discourses which together are shaping the understanding and representation of intangible heritage, at policy level but also at ground level. Developing intangible heritage-based livelihood strategies for sustainability of rural communities and their traditional culture is certainly a layered process

that may occur with different level of transformation and adaptability of the intangible heritage and its artists — a possibility that has not yet been addressed in research concerning safeguarding measures and rural livelihoods investigation.

This formed the founding inspiration for this research, which is set in north-east West Bengal. As discussed in Chapter 1, linking safeguarding to development action not only raise questions on the role of intangible heritage in sustainable development processes, but also on the process and impacts of development actions on the heritage and its community. Moreover, it also pushes us to investigate (and conceptualise) the intangible heritage from different points of view, that of the material and semiotic commodification of the intangible heritage as a livelihood: a component that of commodification which, how all this thesis shows, is never completely irrelevant in the life of the intangible heritage.

Thus, by tracing the trajectory of a development action – the AL project – and the key actors' relations through which the intangible heritage – of Purulia chhau dance - is connected within the development project, this thesis addresses the main objective of understanding the intersections between intangible heritage, livelihoods development practice, commodification and safeguarding. On the practical side, this PhD illustrates the design and implementation praxis of a new model methodology in the field of intangible heritage safeguarding, namely the 'art for livelihood' approach, today acknowledge in India (UNESCO, 2015b; UNESCO New Delhi, 2016).

In order to answer the main research aims, presented in Chapter 1, an actor-network approach (Latour, 2005; Law, 2004) provided a methodological lens to this thesis to unpack the processes involved in building and maintaining the development action of the AL project. In particular, this research applied Callon's (1986) four phases of translation – problematisation, interessement, enrolment and mobilization – and used ethnographic data to unpack the AL development project structure and assemblages, to investigate the influencing actors (and factors), whether positively or negatively, and the degree to which the operations of such collaborations were impacting the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau dance. The work of the AL project actor-network reconstruction that this PhD research pursued is divided in the five analytical Chapters. Three Chapters (2, 5 and 6) formed the basis of the project reconstruction and presented the main actors that allowed the alternative rural livelihood strategy based on the intangible heritage to be completed. The other three analytical Chapters (7, 8 and 9) entered the project actor-network processes of translation and discussed how the AL project actor-network operated and transformed the intangible heritage of chhau into different realities for different audience and purposes.

This final Chapter summarises the main research findings in relation to the research aims and theoretical questions raised in Chapter 1. Section 10.1 provides a summary, then discusses findings' implications especially in relation to heritage safeguarding and commodification process, to the role of development project models in implementing the 2003 Convention. This is followed by explanations on the methodological and theoretical contributions of this study (10.2) and the recommendations for future research (10.3). Finally, this chapter presents a concluding remark (10.4).

## **10.1 Summary of Main Findings**

Following the full development of the research path and AL project context, the overall research goal was subdivided into five sub-aims and three main questions in the field of intangible heritage safeguarding, culture-based livelihoods and development actions which were broadly explored across all this thesis. Below I provide an overview of the main findings of this study presented along with the research aims and responding to the research questions.

### **10.1.1 Safeguarding' through Development Project Action**

As already stated before, the analysis of the AL project network assemblages offers an interesting strategic challenge to unpack and question the implementation of safeguarding intangible heritage through development project approach, as well as to question the role and valorisation of intangible cultural expressions in development context. Therefore, the analysis of the AL project actor-network fully contributes to the PhD's aims (1 and 3) of increasing the knowledge on safeguarding measures and their implication and impacts on intangible heritage production and management. For this purpose, a theoretical inquiry was conducted through the literature review on intangible heritage practice in Chapter 3, where it emerged that even though the implementation of 2003 Convention is growing, there is a lack of investigation on safeguarding practices that go beyond listing and museums activities. Even though safeguarding today is addressed also through international development initiatives, there is lack of evidence on how this is happening and its effects actually impacting the heritage and its management. Hence, two correlated critical questions emerged from the field work and previous research gaps: *What is to be gained and lost from linking development agendas and livelihood strategies to the safeguarding of intangible heritage?* and *Should intangible heritage be managed and safeguarded through the use of developmental project action?*

In the following sub-section, the processes mobilised by linking development action to safeguarding as they emerged from the analytical Chapters will be discussed.

#### **10.1.1.1 Enacting Heterogeneous Communities, Managerial Structures and Imbalance of Powers**

As Chapter 3 shows a specific characteristic of the UNESCO 2003 Convention is its particular reliance on a three-way relationship between the local, national, and international communities, in the way it distributes authority and in how it interrelates individuals, citizens, groups, institutions and organisations on the safeguarding practice. Whether the 2003 Convention does this with appropriate means to this end, however, it is still widely discussed, particularly the way implementing the safeguarding promoted by the 2003 Convention shapes the community of the heritage and its participation in decision making processes (Adell et al., 2015; Bortolotto, 2013; Sousa, 2015). As pointed out in Chapter 3, the 2003 Convention calls for the participation of several categories of actors, with different identities, and for international cooperation actions, so as to posing the process of safeguarding in a middle ground, trans-border and transnational networking space also of international development sector. As findings in this thesis show, responding to the UNESCO's call through the specific local-global interaction of an international development project on the ground, such as the AL project, offers the possibility for rethinking and reframing the intangible heritage debates, including tackling the idea of safeguarding and the participatory trajectories as expressed in the Article 15 of the 2003 Convention (see section 6.2.1), posing another possible perspective on the understanding of the meaning of the community of intangible heritage.

First, as the analysis within this thesis demonstrates, safeguarding, in the AL project actor-network, is also interpreted through the translation of the intangible heritage of chhau in a livelihood strategy, in the field of tourism and cultural entrepreneurship.

Second, in the first analytical Chapter (6) of this thesis I briefly traced the entrance of the paradigm of participation and the “community of practice” (Adell et al., 2015) that the development project context enacts and then I introduced how this is interpreted in the logic of the development project approach. Tracing the AL project actor-network assemblages allows to see how the community of practice of intangible heritage gets assembled and moved across in a development context; it shows that the circulating intangible heritage was not only significant for the local community of artists, but also for larger groups - regardless of their actual origins and boundaries. As findings demonstrate, conceptualising heritage safeguarding as a development project goal makes the intangible heritage becoming part of an international heterogeneous community of practice enacted by the development project structure. Thus, the project induced community working for intangible heritage in this case study is extended to include local groups, material objects, international partners, documents

and project papers, project staff whose interests, from research to marketing, intersect with the activities of heritage creation and revitalisation. Chapter 6 describes the particular set of collectivities working with the intangible heritage of chhau under AL development project, crossing borders including cultural, social, material, geographical, professional and policy borders.

Third, the UNESCO participative approach, discussed in Chapter 6<sup>133</sup>, would seem ideal at fostering international cooperation actions with a grassroots appropriate approach to safeguarding intangible heritage, hinting therefore at the turn also seen in post-positivistic development literature, from a top-down to a participatory action of development or bottom-up approach (Lewis, 2014; Lewis and Mosse, 2006b). However, this does not mean that participation and democratisation of safeguarding processes are being implemented with full success everywhere (Bortolotto, 2011; 2013). Sousa (2015), for instance, points out that there seems to be no way of addressing the participatory bottom-up approach without bearing in mind a distinction between the top and the bottom, and that when we talk about who is at the bottom we usually mean the group of people of tradition bearers.

Development project models, especially when they receive large funds and are initiatives involving international cooperation, often impose their management structures on local actors through project activities (Mosse, 2005; Lewis, 2014). Results from the analysis of the AL project structure in Chapter 6 produces significant findings, demonstrating that despite the safeguarding measures and participation advocated by the 2003 Convention, in reality tradition bearers have limited scope for self-determination when they are inscribed to the role of “beneficiaries” (Golini and Landoni, 2014) and are made subject to the project of management structure. Constructed on models of project management, indeed, the AL development project systems legitimise a set of (sometimes unusual) relations that connect Purulia chhau artists to other international and local, human and material actors, in specific “management and labour relations” (Mosse, 2005). Generally speaking, international development projects can be described as specific displays or distributions of agency (Heeks, 2013; Mosse, 2005; Scott-Smith, 2013). In fact, the development project model determines the hierarchy of the community of intangible heritage practice, at least temporarily, and its pragmatisms position the tradition bearers, chhau dance and its artists, as the final recipients of the project. The imposition of the project model therefore makes tradition bearers passive beneficiaries in terms of decision making process and creates an imbalance of relations, also visible in the point of controversies raised in Chapter 9. The

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133 UNESCO asks state members and civil society to take on the challenging task of incorporating the wider possible participation of actors in intangible heritage safeguarding, while at the same time avoiding any manipulation of the heritage (Bortolotto, 2013).

combinations of different intangible heritage modes of ordering create possibilities for organisational change, which kept the project manager (the SE) relevant as main mediator of the safeguarding process and as intangible heritage NGO, accredited by UNESCO after the AL project, and who consequently influenced the safeguarding practice of Purulia chhau and of UNESCO New Delhi. As such, this study, as a whole, pinpoints the contradiction between the aims of the 2003 Convention on participation, which advocates the primary role of the tradition bearers (Art. 15, UNESCO, 2003), and what the AL project does in reality. As the analysis shows, the question to be asked is not what the boundaries of the community are (Jacobs, 2014) but what makes the community, and what roles participants have in it in order to understand if participation and bottom-up approaches in safeguarding are being implemented and how they impact the cultural element. Some of the collective actors traced in Chapter 6 are involved in the contemporary enactments and multiple-representations of the intangible heritage of chhau (seen in Chapter 6 and 9) and even commute to participate in the AL project, for instance, when intangible heritage based touristic productions (such as Macbeth chhau performance or other local festivals) took place. Insights from this study reveal that when dealing with intangible heritage safeguarding through development project actions, power relations “should be dealt with as omnipresent, relational and at least potentially productive” (van der Duim, 2005, p. 68) as they co-participate in the complexities of the intangible heritage and impact its management, knowledge and representations.

### **10.1.2 Multiple Ontological Significance of the Intangible Heritage**

In Chapter 1 this thesis expressed the aims to increase knowledge about the intangible heritage and to critically investigate its correlation with the rural livelihood system of Purulia people and with development actions, raising the specific research question:

- *does the relation between intangible heritage safeguarding and development action, within the development project, reveal something about what is intangible heritage and what is development?*

Following the intangible heritage-based livelihood processes as witnessed with the effective practice of the AL development project, this thesis revealed how the intangible heritage expression interacts with, and is exposed to, a constant flux of changes, in and out the project network. Findings from Chapters 7, 8 and 9 pointed to the intangible heritage interactions, values and meanings in the lifestyle context of Purulia artists’ villages, as well as in the context of the development project actions. Hence, the intangible heritage meaning emerges while being used, reconstructed, shared and contextualised, in some kind of relations and spaces through project action, as the following subsections explain.

### 10.1.2.1 Intangible Heritage as Livelihood

Through ethnographic and secondary data, Chapter 7 showed that a group of differentiated activities and meaningful way of life based on intangible heritage, are all critical in attaining some level of security and sustainability for chhau artists and their families in Purulia area. As findings showed, the intangible heritage improves the quality of people's lives in several ways that go beyond simple income generating activities. These ways can be also addressed as a range of intangible heritage-based "capabilities" at their disposal (Bebbington, 1999), also emerged in Chapter 7, such as:

- the ability to acquire a prestigious role in social groups and village life;
- to engage with different actors at the institutional level, at local and international level and at project level;
- to be the agent of the heritage transmission, as chhau dancer grow older and acquire skills and prestige they create their group of dancers and start to teach youth;
- to share forms of knowledge about the heritage and also about everyday life among the group members;
- to develop resilience to deal with vulnerabilities, distinctive of Purulia, or to deal with lack of governmental investments in improving local infrastructure and agricultural systems.

As previous research demonstrates the livelihoods of a group of people are always impacted by many external drivers (Sakdapolrak, 2014; Scoones, 2009). Consequently, multi-level analysis is today required to have a fuller understanding of a livelihood system of a given group (Scoones, 2009). Therefore, Chapter 7 used the sustainable livelihood framework (Scoones, 1998) as a conceptual framework to examine how chhau masters in Purulia secure their livelihoods and keep a meaningful lifestyle. The livelihood framework is then re-elaborated following the ethnographic data to shows how the intangible heritage and the associated AL development project can fit in within the existing livelihood system in Purulia.

The findings deepen our understanding of the categories of culture and development. With regard to the former, interests in an intangible heritage perceived as holistic in its implementation as cultural practice, lifestyle and livelihood, the result pushes our attention towards its socio-anthropological interpretation and its making process also within informal groups, local social movements or networks of international development action. This study indeed reveals that the intangible heritage is a socio material construction, also constantly assembled by the AL project network and it also reveals that the intangible heritage should



be reconstructed in a pluralistic manner to guarantee its viability. As Chapter 7 forces us to see we might want to rethink the conceptualisation of intangible heritage as ‘pure’ cultural practice. It is indeed the functional role of the intangible heritage, also in material and economic terms, in all the livelihood system of the artists (and their related networks) that is represented in this ethnographic thesis.

At the same time, this thesis reveals that both development and livelihood are best understood by paying more attention to the way artists and their households respond and deal with continuous change and vulnerabilities (De Haan, 2012) thanks to their cultural heritage. Findings demonstrate how livelihood analysis needs to be more cognisant of the intangible heritage context of a given household and community system. In the descriptions of chhau dancers’ lifestyle, in Chapter 7, the concept of livelihood associated to the intangible heritage is de-commodified, its values, indeed, are not determined primarily as commodities only within the economic market system (Appadurai, 1988), but also by its capacity to sustain and inform local and also global societal, material, cultural and human relations (Field notes, 2011). Broadly speaking development with chhau artists came to be associated in Chapter 7, 8 and 9 with the growth of the chhau group, the increase in the quality of chhau performances and of the intangible heritage related activities. Against this backdrop, development becomes a synonym for change. As was introduced in Chapter 7 and 8, the strategy to develop livelihoods the (AL) project pursued is not value-neutral, as this case study demonstrated the project disproportionately impacted the Purulia chhau households, as well impacted the revitalisation and representation of their intangible heritage at both the local and international levels, as will be further summarised below.

#### **10.1.2.2 Intangible Heritage Revitalisation and Representation**

This thesis reveals that developing a livelihood strategy based on the intangible heritage for sustainability requires and presupposes the possibility of manipulating cultural intangibilities and materialities of the heritage for different cultural, institutional, academic and tourism-related activities. Tracing the initiative of the AL development project, in Chapter 8 and 9, shows that the project actor-network not only engages the intangible heritage in different but partially connected ways, moreover actors also translates the heritage knowledge and representation from local to global, for new users and consumers. Through a constant work of selection and differentiation (Latour, 2005) of the heritage meanings and aspects, the heritage of chhau is constantly translated into assets for the combination of activities that contributes towards the final project goals and the alternative livelihood strategy.

As was shown, in the process of pursuing the livelihood strategy within the development project, the cultural element also enters different contexts giving to the heritage different ontological significance, that of traditional cultural element, tourist attraction and that of development tool. Knowledge and artefacts (chhau productions, masks, costumes, CDs, etc.) around the heritage are assembled and re-shaped throughout the AL project actors' interactions resulting in correlated representations of the cultural expression (Chapter 8 and 9). As the analysis in Chapter 9 revealed the new and revitalised representations of chhau are related because they are all expressions (or way of representing) of the intangible heritage, with similarities based on traditional knowledge; but they are also different in that each (for instance, the Macbeth chhau or other chhau) production has a different aesthetic and material form. In addition, each chhau production has a different realm of representation and circulation (e.g. project documents, international stages, promotional material, tourism packages, etc.). These different realities are all made within relational nets (Law and Urry, 2004) made of human relations, physical spaces, material changes, intangible aspects and project activities.

Tracing the different intangible heritage enactments allows to define the intangible heritage not as a linear object whose substance can be bounded clearly within a community, but as an array of conditions, of which the absence of one (for instance, aesthetic elements such as mask or costumes in Macbeth chhau) or the creation of new linkages (for instance those with new international audience for tourism markets) is enough to change the significance and uses of the heritage in other domains.

The result of this actor-network analysis is significant, because it links the notion of revitalisation to actors' roles and (their) interpretation in the AL project network; therefore, detaches the revitalisation of the intangible heritage from the group of tradition bearers and, instead, explains it through the mobilisation of allies for innovation and functional use of the intangible heritage. In other words, intangible heritage revitalisation can be understood also as a specific instance in which development actors find a functional way in the process of linking culture to livelihoods, offering therefore novel insights into the practice of culture and development.

## **10.2 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions**

Chapter 1 raised the specific research aim (4) to present a contribution to new knowledge through the development of a theoretical framework of analysis based on ANT to inform intangible heritage studies and UNESCO's approach to culture and development. There are

several contributions coming from this PhD research in both methodological and theoretical ways.

First this research showed that actor-network theory applied as analytical methodological framework can enhance our understanding on safeguarding practices, on the implementation of the 2003 Convention on the ground and actors' roles and on low income rural contexts rich in intangible heritage, such as India. As Law suggests the research and its methods build the bridge between the world on the one hand and representations of that world on the other (Law, 2004). In the same way this thesis builds the links between the local and the global tendencies on intangible heritage safeguarding (and traditional culture) and development practice therefore informing research and practitioners in the field of culture and development.

In investigating the bottleneck of the intangible heritage safeguarding in the field, this thesis - with its case study - makes a strong case to break the deadlock and clearly spell out a practical agenda that has an effective human, and cultural heritage dimension and that directly interfaces with development practice. Things are often black-boxed when they are difficult to decipher (Latour, 1986; Latour and Woolgar, 1986), and as shown (Chapter 3 and 5) the nexus between culture and development, despite progressive growth at institutional policy level, is certainly still a black boxed matter. This thesis is therefore a comprehensive contribution to move ahead the debate, from theory to practice, on culture for development, expanding both academic work and practical directions for researchers and practitioners who are engaging in the debate on culture and development.

The empirical investigation of a case concerning the safeguarding of intangible heritage through a livelihood strategy and development project is indeed of interest to experts and any other heritage and development practitioner, mainly, because UNESCO is among the actors (see Chapter 6) of the AL project. Therefore, UNESCO assessed the AL project methods and monitored the project with frequent field missions, formalising the “art for livelihood” in a culture for development approach (UNESCO New Delhi, 2016).

Second, this investigation is also of interest to UNESCO, because UNESCO has started to evaluate the implementation of the 2003 Convention, and the impact of safeguarding measures on intangible heritage (UNESCO IOS<sup>134</sup>, 2018). The micro level of this case study investigation is therefore relevant as it is representative of the way intangible heritage functions when used for development, how the heritage is managed, shaped, and by whom

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134 Recently, the UNESCO Internal Oversight Service (IOS) produced several internal audits on its instruments, on the Conventions and working methods. (UNESCO IOS, 2018)

during safeguarding practice (Harrison, 2015). Practically, this thesis may help the heritage community better plan and develop through the contribution from artists, the understanding of their aspirations and priorities for a sustainable heritage safeguarding.

### **10.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

On reflecting on the whole PhD process this research suggests three main areas for future study that can be developed from this current work.

#### **10.3.1 Intangible Heritage based Livelihoods**

This PhD reflects first of all the need to turn ourselves the reality of material processes on the ground to a range of perspective on traditional cultures and intangible heritage meanings as a resource, as having a potential tangible role in human, social, economic and cultural life of people around the globe. As was shown in this thesis, the relation between traditional cultural expression and development is today a hot topic, high on the agenda of leading international and institutional actors. Therefore, further investigation on the processes of intangible heritage based livelihood alternative strategies for the sustainability of rural and urban communities around the world would help not only in understanding the role of intangible heritage in society and social processes of development but also to broadening the understanding of livelihood and the application of livelihood frameworks (Scoones, 2009) in emerging field, such as cultural heritage management and intangible heritage tourism. Thus, broadening and replication of this investigation in other communities and with other groups of stakeholders implementing intangible heritage safeguarding and its valorisation through a livelihood development approach is strongly advised. The relation between intangible heritage and livelihood needs further attention.

#### **10.3.2 Intangible Heritage Tourism: the role of Rural Craft Hubs in India**

This PhD also reflects the need to engage in more advanced studies on existing projects in countries, such as India, that are making viable their intangible cultural expressions as the core of creative industries, tourism and cultural entrepreneurship initiatives. Today, the Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise, Government of West Bengal (MSME) is partnering with UNESCO to establish ten Rural Craft Hubs in the state of West Bengal. The initiative is aimed at conducting capacity building of the artists apart from providing direct marketing linkages and access to institutional mechanisms for enhancing their sustainability and competitiveness (UNESCO New Delhi, 2016). The vision is to develop the villages with families skilled in crafts like terracotta, patachitra scroll paintings, dokra art, wooden and chhau masks, clay dolls etc. All these crafts making skills are also strictly

linked to intangible cultural expressions, traditional practices and skills, as the case of Purulia chhau exemplifies particularly in Chapter 7. Since 2013, the Rural Craft Hubs programme became part of UNESCO's world network of intangible heritage safeguarding and culture and development practice (UNESCO New Delhi, 2016). Today, the initiative also attracts funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to conduct research on the development of craft and cultural entrepreneurship linked to intangible heritage as livelihood programmes, for the people in the area. Conducting research on such efforts may enhance our future knowledge about intangible cultural heritage tourism and livelihoods development in India and impact of current process of valorisation of intangible heritage and cultural expressions.

### **10.3.3 After Documenting and Listing, How Revitalisation is Being Interpreted?**

This PhD also raised the question that among the measures advocated by the 2003 Convention the revitalisation of intangible heritage is the less investigated (Chapter 3). This study reflects on the way actors interpreted the revitalisation process, under the AL project actor-network, showing that the way it is interpreted and implemented can impact the heritage making process, its transmission and viability (Chapter 9). Therefore, this study raises the need to engage in more advanced studies on the existing actions of revitalisation that are happening around the world.

## **10.4 Final Conclusion**

As shown in this thesis, for the intangible heritage of Purulia chhau to be kept alive it must be relevant and be connected to the multiplicity of the actors, human and non-human. This thesis prompts a rethink of the boundary between intangible heritage and development with a new conceptualisation of intangible heritage that encapsulates the *functionality* of the cultural element in everyday life of the people. The intangible heritage of Purulia chhau not only demonstrates the connections within a social system in Purulia region, including individuals' complete mode of life, with daily activities and social experiences, but it also refers to the big picture of a group of actors, in a larger international community, established and circulated through and within the AL project.

The analysis shows that there is a conscious process of cultural commodification, so that the commodification is not something to avoid that can only negatively impact the heritage, but something that they, the artists and the heritage, as well as other intangible heritage-networking actors, can benefit from it. This forced us to rethink the intangible heritage as pure cultural practice, to see how commodification is part of its living nature. It is not by the recognition of a cultural expression as intangible heritage itself that the conscious

commodification process happens, but it is through the different translation and othering processes that the multiple heritage networks, such as the AL project network, enact. In the end, this thesis is a study that sheds light on the cultural commodification process as inherently part of the intangible heritage life.

The entanglement of representations and lack of singularity of the intangible heritage perceived in this thesis raises the problem of what it means to be a faithful representation of intangible heritage that is no longer only locally circulated and managed, thereby also challenging the way it can be safeguarded according to UNESCO 2003 Convention. In a way this study is suggesting that we need new words or concepts to describe what is going on with intangible heritage when development and viability interests are present. These interests of pursuing sustainability of both people/artists and their heritage, however, are not only present when a new development initiative is implemented but are part of people everyday life.

While some elements of intangible heritage framing as a livelihood can contribute to poverty alleviation and heritage viability, there are however critical areas where additional perspectives and investigation are strongly recommended, such as the analysis of power relationships in development project as determinants of the strategies of revitalisation, transmission and promotion of the intangible heritage. It is unlikely, for instance, that the very poor or those in positions of less power have the ability or networks to contest development models (Diallo and Thuillier, 2004; Golini and Landoni, 2014). One of the many problems of international development, also raised by this thesis, is that projects and programmes, while favouring some actors or strategic choices, can disadvantage others (see also Lewis, 2014; Mosse, 2005). Hence, international development projects can become deliberate means for both constructing and de-constructing the intangible heritage, empower and disempower intangible heritage artists, and symbolically legitimising or de-legitimising the implementation of 2003 UNESCO Convention.

It is from this insight on the multiple, functional and enacted character of intangible heritage that future research in intangible heritage and culture for development may hopefully benefit.

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<sup>135</sup> As stated at the beginning of this thesis, for ethical reasons and University rules, the real name of the social enterprise, as well as the names of the social enterprises staff as they informed this study as primary source of data and information are hidden, as well as online web links to the original web source, even if available, and are not included in this bibliography.

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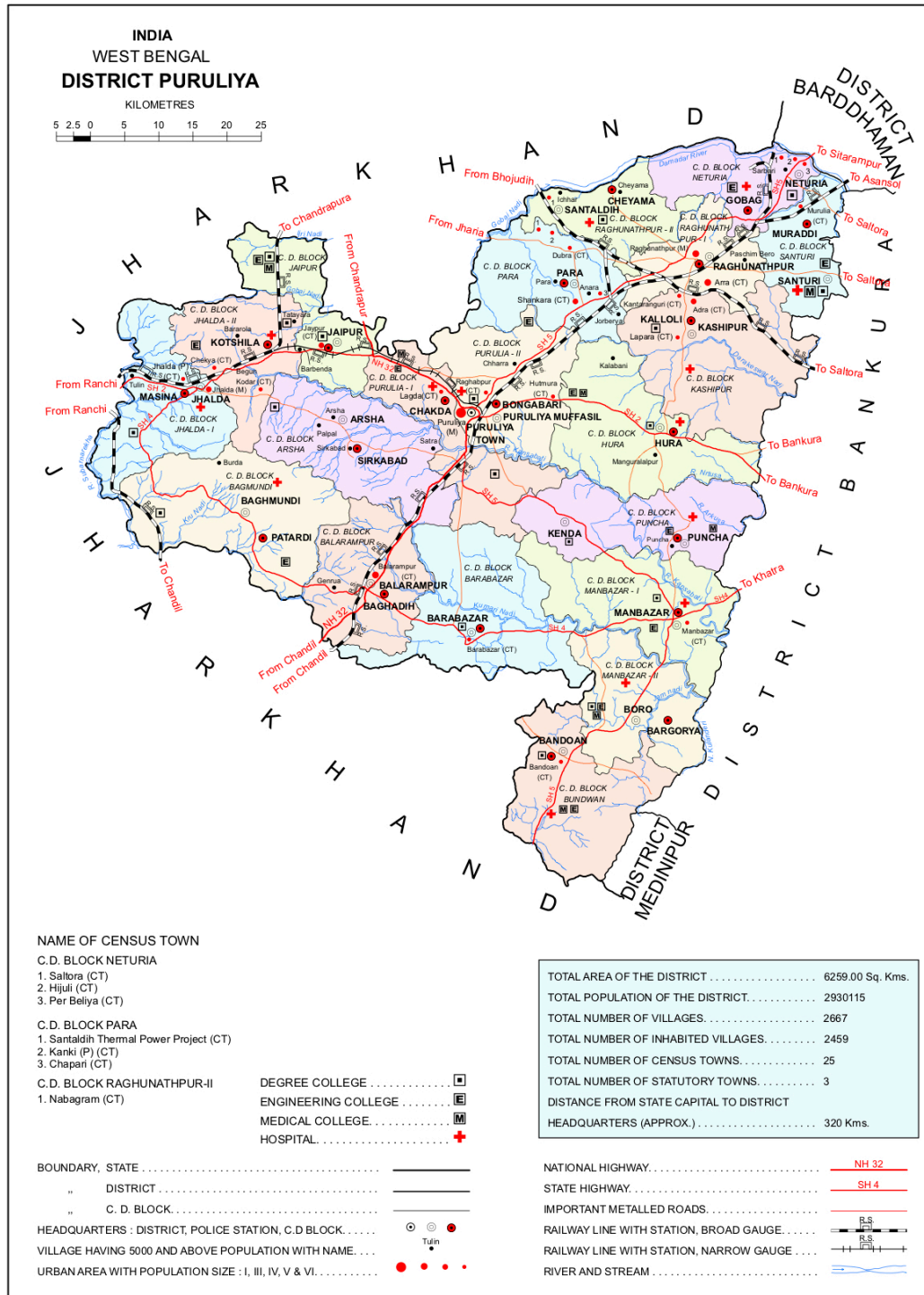
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# Appendices

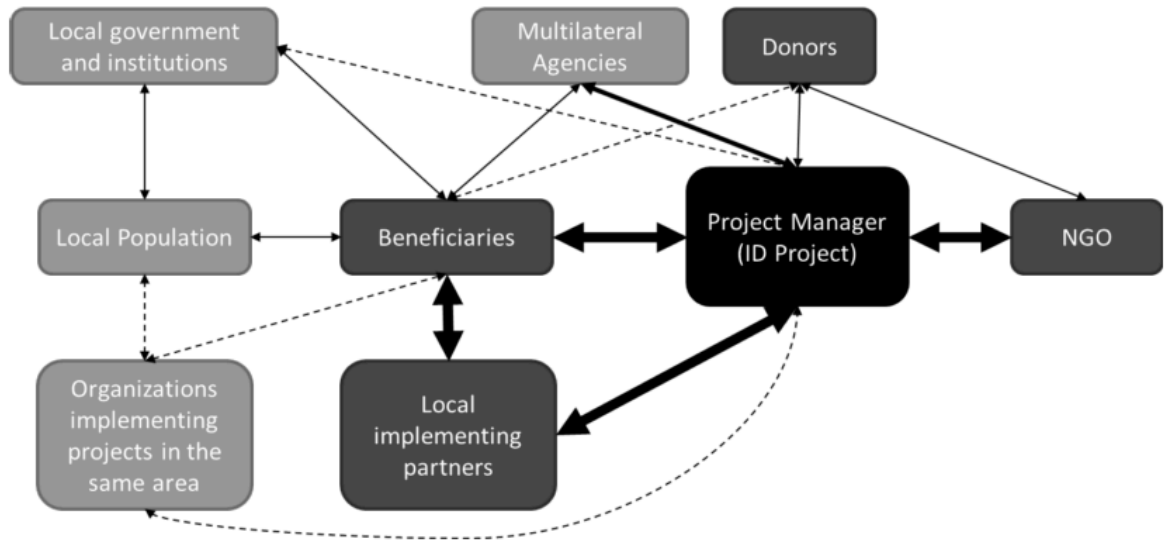
## Appendix A: District of Purulia Map



West Bengal map from the last governmental census in 2011 (Directorate of Census Operations West Bengal, 2011, p. III).

## Appendix B: Development Project Stakeholder Network

The following diagram is the example of a stakeholder map typical of development projects elaborated by Golini and Landoni (2014, p. 127) and from which the AL project actors map has been redesigned in Chapter 6 of this thesis.



In the above stakeholder map as Golini and Landoni suggest “the dark boxes identify key stakeholders. Solid arrows represent regular communication between the parties involved and the dotted arrows represent likely communication between parties. Adapted from Ahsan and Gunawan (2010)” (Golini and Landoni, 2014, p. 128).

## Appendix C: Field Notes on Purulia Chhau Masks

Purulia chhau dancers wear very elaborate masks with glittering colourful costumes, compared to chhau dancers from Orissa and Jharkhand who developed different styles (UNESCO, 2010a). Chhau masks are particularly relevant as they represent the character and give the attractive traits to this dance.

Masks are made through a long and complex handmade process, with mud and paper, and well-decorated with pieces of bamboo, plastic and silk.

In many villages of Bughmundi District in Purulia region, such as Balarampur and Charida there is a family tradition of mask-makers (more than 350 families) that is well established, provides the typical Purulia chhau masks to all the groups of the region and serves as the main source of income for many villagers. Charida, among all, is recognised as the more important village where chhau dancers buy the best masks and where a large cooperative of mask makers formed a SHG and works towards safeguarding this tradition. Recently the traditional rural craft of Purulia chhau from Charida was awarded the GI (Geographical Indication) tag by West Bengal Government (2018). According to a recent interview by Debapriya Nandi for The Hindu Business Line, "there are more than 200 chhau groups in Purulia town and all of them source their masks from Charida, about 55 km away. For long, these dance troupes were the only source of income for the mask makers. However, of late, the masks are being recognised as objects of art in their own right" (Nandi, 2016, p. 1).

According to field data gathered in 2011, masks cost ranges from 800 rupees up to (and more of) 3,000. A detail on the cost of a chhau production is outlined in Gopal's description:

"... doing chhau comprises the cost of masks, costumes, musicians, dancers, transportations, instruments and helpers [says Gopal]; the organiser [or who engage the troupe to dance] gives normally an allowance but this is often not enough to cover all the expenses, so the group finds other ways to cover the expenses. Sometimes we take some loan of 1,000/1,500 rupees from the group [members] itself or from an outsider (someone who normally gives money as loan) and sometimes from the bank – but we need a guarantor for this. Musicians are paid (150 rupees per day). And in some show, there are even 10-12 musicians and the troupe go up to 35 members (chhau performers, helpers and musicians, etc.), but occasionally if we get a contract we reduce the number of people according to how much we get paid in that contract. [...] masks before were 500 rupees now a minimum price for a mask is 800 rupees, the simple, it is the one they use to do *ekta* chhau (the simple solo performance), a basic mask. [...] the *Durga* [mask] is around 1,200 rupees, *Ganesh* would be around the 1,400/1,600 rupees;

*Durga's* dress complete would be around 4,500 rupees which is 3,000 rupees for decoration [and mask] and 1,500 of sari [the dress]. Then there are the demons the *ravana* those are very expensive. Only the [demon] mask can be around 2,000 rupees. The more expensive is the mask of *bara* [adult] *Kārttik* 3,000 rupees." (Gopal, 2011, pers. comm., 19 February)



A very good quality Purulia chhau mask can last from a few months to a year, but the average mask is used by Purulia dancers only for a year (Field notes, 2011). In fact, due to the type of dance that is very acrobatic and to mask's weight (a single mask weights near 5 kilos) dancers need to renew or change masks regularly. Below there is a list of 6 pictures illustrating the initial phases of the mask making process. As the pictures below show, the initial process is made of made of many layers of a paste of pure clay, of papers and clothes, shaped with the help of fingers and wooden chisel. The process requires that masks sun-dry from one layer to another and then colours according to its character and the expression. After colouring, there is a final layer of gloss varnish and then the mask can be decorated. Pictures below were taken by the author of this thesis in Baghmundi block.













## Appendix D: Excerpt from Field Data, 20 January 2011

West Bengal, Kolkata

20 January 2011

Informal interview with XXXXX a from Unesco (Delhi) January 2011 held in the SE house where both of us were guests. She came to visit the villages where the ngo was working at the moment (pingla, naya, purulia and etc.) and because after few months in the same year she was going to take her sabbatical period and she wanted to do some work in the field with them.

I asked her if she wanted to talk with me about Unesco and the convention in the practice. Original form of this interview is on notes on the red notebook.

me. Tell me about Unesco and the relationship with the ICH convention.

- *Unesco is not a funding agency. EU is a funding agency. Each country has to put in practice the purpose of the convention. The 1<sup>st</sup> step is documentation but then?? At the government level, in India, you don't see more [to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage] apart from their capacity to organise events, they don't do more. The Ministry of Culture is the one who is in charge to practice [implement] the Convention. The implementation of the Convention requires to understand the meaning of the convention and how to [find way to] implement. One obligation is develop a national inventory. It is a request (to have international inventories) from Latin America and Venezuele, not Europe. Most countries from Europe did not like the ICHC (intangible cultural heritage convention) because more money to put on. It was more wanted by African Countries. Some did not vote (ratified) yet for the convention like France or UK.*

Me. How to select on ICH?

*Each country has to have a clear definition of standards and it is very sensitive question because it is a very emotional subject – people care about their tradition and they fight. How do the India selected the 20 who participated to the selection. It was a very ad how Working committee in India 2010 composed of many different ministries but it does not work for the moment. And they don't have human resources.*

Me. What about NGOs?

*They [the SE] are the one who are actually doing the fieldwork. Unesco does not support NGOs directly, not often but it does capacity building at Government level. and the Government can apply for small funds.*

Me. Relationship between the I SE and UNESCO work.

*Poverty alleviation is the only way to safeguard their art. Paper on how they asset baseline surveys about Purulia. project is the first step with art and livelihood. 10 years ago they planned to reach here. I suggest they should expand their market I could be with Madubani area, and Bihar and Goa (there is there a lot to do on women empowerment and marginalisation).*

Observations:

*She was going to take her sabbatical the next September and spend most of her time with the SE in Bihar to help them understand if it is a model that can be exported regionally in India. Since she was really sure the work done by the SE was a great step ahead for safeguarding ICH that neither the government nor*

## Appendix E: Excerpts from Field Data I

Coded in NVivo: intangible heritage and livelihood

<Internals\\Draft thesis- raw analysis\\DOC B1 - RD2\_Cardinale S May13 A cultural sustainable development for pro poor alleviation.> - § 2 references coded [2,13% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,28% Coverage

For instance, only one group of Chho from the village of Maldi was allowed to perform abroad and invite to attend events (i.e. festivals in Kolkata or in London) as part of the project's activities with the result of having increased their income and their "status" of important dancers for a period.

Reference 2 - 0,85% Coverage

if the economic development did not reach the expected outcomes the portrayal of Chho reached a wider audience (international/national) and enter the public sphere with a new slightly different profile.

<Internals\\Fielddata\\10632662\_10152618101835199\_3218417091022532720\_n> - § 2 references coded [100,00% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 100,00% Coverage

Artists are eager to connect to new markets -

Reference 2 - 100,00% Coverage

develop ten rural craft hubs along with the department of Micro and Small Enterprises of the Government. (another network

<Internals\\Fielddata\\AL Project\\EZCC Final five year report> - § 10 references coded [1,12% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 0,19% Coverage

Regular thrift and savings help the folk artists in times of flood and drought and also to procure instruments , costumes and props. The leading folk artists across all the folk art forms were sensitised on the prospects of safeguarding their traditional heritage as a means of livelihood. Their active participation and support all through the project was a key factor in achieving the key targets of this project i.e. rejuvenation of the art forms and improved well being of the folk artists

Reference 2 - 0,16% Coverage

Training and capacity building plan was formulated with participation of the Folk Gurus as well as leading singers, musicians, theatre workers and various stakeholders in promotion and patronage of our cultural heritage. Between 2006-2007, fifteen days of rigorous training was held per month for three to six months across six districts for strengthening the basic skills of the artists under the aegis of the Gurus

Reference 3 - 0,08% Coverage

2007-2008, innovation, exchange, interaction and skill transfer with contemporary dance, music and theatre performers was facilitated to innovate new ways of rendering the art forms and improve their marketability

Reference 4 - 0,01% Coverage

rural business hubs

Reference 5 - 0,08% Coverage

New market segments like Puja organisers, heritage tourism were developed. Today the art forms of the deprived and marginalised sections of people have in fact been mainstreamed into major celebrations of Bengal

Reference 6 - 0,17% Coverage

They have started earning regularly from their art performance and productions. Improved quality and variety, greater market reach and stronger market linkage have led three to five times increase in number of income opportunities from shows and events. Income from show which was nil or a pittance of Rs.50-500 for a show for most of the folk singers has increased manifold. Average income from a performance is now Rs. 3000-5000.

Reference 7 - 0,03% Coverage

Chau dancers are developing productions based on works of Tagore and Shakespeare.

Reference 8 - 0,17% Coverage

best practices and effective initiatives are audio visual and textual documentation of oral traditions and dissemination of the products among the community, development of activity clusters, creating new brand or identity for heritage traditions, use of folk media for development communication, innovating new products imbibing modern trends while safeguarding heritage aspects and using modern technologies like internet for dissemination.

Reference 9 - 0,13% Coverage

a model for empowering communities lacking formal education but rich in intangible cultural heritage. It has successfully used livelihood perspective for safeguarding cultural heritage. The project showcases how performing art traditions can be explicitly treated as resources in the context of achieving sustainable community development.

Reference 10 - 0,11% Coverage

developing cultural industries based on traditional intangible cultural heritage. Our folk forms can become powerful tools for economic development, poverty reduction and assurance of cultural diversity if cultural industries are mainstreamed into national development plans.

<Internals\\Fielddata' \\B.com on Facebook> - § 2 references coded [100,00% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 100,00% Coverage

Tag of Social enterprise

Reference 2 - 100,00% Coverage

Art for Life - flagship a new paradigm fostering the use of

<Internals\\Fielddata\\CS 1 Chaau\\Chhau Utsav\\734556\_440840655990367\_1910264777\_n> - § 1 reference coded [2,81% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2,81% Coverage



Sell the experience of traditions and local art and food.

<Internals\\Fielddata\\Interviews\\5th day at Chhau Utsav in Bamnia> - § 1 reference coded [2,72% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2,72% Coverage

xxxx group from The same group who performed the Macbeth in Kolkata and the one who is going abroad with

<Internals\\Fielddata\\Interviews\\Conversation 1B> - § 2 references coded [11,85% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 6,67% Coverage

he has a big track for reaching other villages and perform when they are called (see fig 2). The track is colourful with image of Chhau, **they need big van or track because of the number of artists** (never less than 12-15 people) the big masks and sometimes even few instruments, especially the drums

Reference 2 - 5,19% Coverage

20years ago chhau dance was becoming important and known. So they started to be invited and perform out of their village. They got a very good pay from performing in Kolkata o to the puja festivals around or out of their region.

<Internals\\Fielddata\\Interviews\\Conversation 1D> - § 3 references coded [13,45% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 3,83% Coverage

chat inside a small room a kind of storage but there was a bed inside (so maybe someone is also sleeping here).

Here all the group's masks and costumes are kept and the door was locked. It is a kind of deposit.

Reference 2 - 2,04% Coverage

**they normally rent the musicians and for other people of the group we have a system of economic (riconoscimento).**

Reference 3 - 7,58% Coverage

He expresses again complaints about the fact that the government is not recognising them significantly (and economically).

I asked him how many time he spend working for chhau and he says that **he is full time involved with chhau that he has 30 people in his family so he has the time to concentrate on doing the Chhau since Banglanatak.com but he doesn't know how long this B.com is staying around how long this will last**

<Internals\\Fielddata\\Interviews\\Conversation K1> - § 8 references coded [30,12% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 6,69% Coverage



The economic life as he describe is made of : masks, constumes, musicians. The organiser where they perform (could be whoever engage them for a festival or a private cerimony) gives normally an allowance but is not enough to cover all the expenses. So they take a loan of 1000/1500 rupees from the group itself or from an outsider (someone who normally gives money as loan.

Reference 2 - 4,98% Coverage

**Musicians are paid like 150/160r. per day.** And how many musicians for a performance? **“In some performance even 10 and the group goes up to 25 people (performers, helpers and musicians)”** but sometimes he said **“if we got a contract we reduce the number of people according to it”**

Reference 3 - 2,71% Coverage

Maks before were 500rp now minimun price is 800rp, the simple, it is the one they use to do **ekta chhau** (the simple single performance) has a basic mask

Reference 4 - 0,68% Coverage

In one year his group can do around 45

Reference 5 - 0,95% Coverage

so the main livelihood for him is the **bidi business**.

Reference 6 - 5,85% Coverage

From Bamnia the first group of B2 gets booked a lot and take the majority of the requests. Then there is the B1's group (the second group in term of importance in the village) who takes the other booking requests from around and this last B1 he is also opening another group with his son. The attempt is to create two groups.

Reference 7 - 3,64% Coverage

**for his group (which is considered the 4<sup>th</sup> group in terms of importance in the village) chhau is not a livelihood. They dream a lot about going outside (abroad) but more for the fame than for the money.**

Reference 8 - 4,63% Coverage

start speaking about masks. Price and lasting.



Figure 2 Small Kartik

## Appendix F: Excerpt from Field Data II

Coded in NVivo: chhau guru and tradition

<Internals\\Fielddata\\  
[0,43% Coverage]

\\AL Project\\EZCC Final five year report> - § 3 references coded

Reference 1 - 0,19% Coverage

Regular thrift and savings help the folk artists in times of flood and drought and also to procure instruments, costumes and props. The leading folk artists across all the folk art forms were sensitised on the prospects of safeguarding their traditional heritage as a means of livelihood. Their active participation and support all through the project was a key factor in achieving the key targets of this project i.e. rejuvenation of the art forms and improved well being of the folk artists

Reference 2 - 0,16% Coverage

Training and capacity building plan was formulated with participation of the Folk Gurus as well as leading singers, musicians, theatre workers and various stakeholders in promotion and patronage of our cultural heritage. Between 2006-2007, fifteen days of rigorous training was held per month for three to six months across six districts for strengthening the basic skills of the artists under the aegis of the Gurus

Reference 3 - 0,08% Coverage

2007-2008, innovation, exchange, interaction and skill transfer with contemporary dance, music and theatre performers was facilitated to innovate new ways of rendering the art forms and improve their marketability

<Internals\\Fielddata\\Interviews\\Conversation 1D> - § 2 references coded [17,75% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 10,57% Coverage

Utpal (the 5 days festival organised by I The AL project at the resource centre) they will perform from CHONDI MONGAL (chondi monglu) and for this they had some training with XXXXXXX the dramaturgical director from Delhi who is working/attached to the project.

They did some workshops to develop new stories, shorter and newer.

Here are some of the picture they showed me, with the masks did for the Chondi Mangal performance, developed during the workshops. The style is new and different compared to the traditional chhau masks. They are mainly in paper with some painting

Reference 2 - 7,18% Coverage

they developed a "new script" the USHA ANIRUDHA (the story of the love between Usha and Anirudha, from two different casts and taken from Ramayana). **It took them (the group) 1 week to learn the new script because they know already the method, they follow me quickly because they know the method.**

He says that he wanted **something to show to the public but develop a new script brings in new expenses.**

<Internals\\Fielddata\\Interviews\\Interview with Old Chhau dancer from Baliagara 19 February 2011> - § 1 reference coded [1,04% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 1,04% Coverage

went to live with his guru, and he learned everything