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*Sub-theme 3: Market Empowerment*

### **Market Empowerment - for Six Days Only:**

## **An exploration of the empowerment of market actors to constitute, perform and dismantle Durga Puja Markets**

### **Abstract**

This paper explicates the enduring and permanent structures that empower market organisers to act as they shape the temporary markets of the Durga Puja festival in India. Market organisers invoke, create and assemble market devices that empower market actors to perform these temporary markets. Using a visual sociology methodology we show how organisers calculate and intervene to empower certain market actors - specifically, 'those at the BoP', as well as to disempower certain forms of action - the use of toxic substances in the production of the Durga icon. We show how sometimes market empowerment and disempowerment are sustained beyond the performance of the temporary market, transforming the community and environmental practices. In this way, the paper foregrounds the two-way relationship between broader social structures and the performance of temporary markets by showing how market practices sometimes spread out beyond the market and become part of the broader structures of everyday life.

## Introduction

Temporary markets are some of the oldest organising systems we know, and are assembled and disassembled at particular sites and are framed by time and space constraints. These frames are created to define the situation and are understood to be built in accordance with the principle of organisation that govern the market (Goffman 1974). The notion of a temporary market both frames and is framed by the types of devices and practices that unfold in the effort to organise and perform those markets. This paper examines how such devices and practices are assembled to shape temporary markets as they are performed and reproduced for the annual Dura Puja festival in India.

Archaeologists and historians suggest that people have come together to exchange goods, sometimes across considerable distances, for almost as long as they have practiced agriculture. First through barter and later through exchange systems such as the Bazaars and markets that are so familiar to us today (Polanyi 1963). Temporary markets have historically been created as part of a *spectacle*, for example at zoos, circuses, botanical gardens and exhibitions, to show how different worlds are collected and displayed (Corbey, 1993). Markets form as actors assemble in a particular place, on a particular day or time of year, often to witness the spectacle, but also to buy and sell goods as an integral part of the spectacular experience. Temporary markets also occur without spectacular attractions. Many towns today still have a weekly market day. After market day the actors return to their homes and the marketplace becomes empty again. Such markets act as the fabric of social life in what are still referred to today as 'market towns' (c.f. Hilton 1985). In her historical account of the organisation of markets in Holland c.1200-c.1450, Dijkman (2011: 325) claims that as early as the mid-fourteenth century 60 to 66 percent of the Dutch population were involved in markets and this rose to around 90 percent by c.1500. In such setting, where market performances are tightly temporarily bound, it may be easier to see how calculative devices are put to work help actors make judgments about what a market could or should be, how that market is performed and how the market can be closed or brought to an end at the end of a set period. Further, such devices need to be powerful, not just to shape the judgements of market organisers but also in ways that empower other market actors to take up their role.

Despite the importance of temporary markets to our economic and social life, we know little about their interaction with the enduring social structures that produce them. We know little about their ability to empower or disempower specific types of actors or specific actions that either sustain or transform these social structures. In focusing on temporary markets and the organising effort behind them, we select a setting where temporal boundaries are clearly drawn to frame specific types of action and explore how actions closely associated with the market endure beyond the market setting. Markets are understood as collectives that allow compromises to be reached regarding the nature of the goods produced and distributed and the value given them (Callon and Muniesa 2005). We draw on Callon and Muniesa's (2005) notion of calculation to explore how such compromises are explored and settled to shape what the market becomes. By recognising that calculation starts by establishing distinctions between things or states of the world, and by imagining and estimating courses of action associated with those things and states, as well as their consequences, we explicate how temporary markets are organised, performed and dismantled. Specifically we ask, what kinds of market devices do organisers invoke to empower and disempower multiple market actors to act in ways that enable temporary markets to happen?

The temporary market we focus on in this paper, is performed every October as part of the Indian, Hindu festival Durga Puja - a celebration of the Goddess of strength and destruction of evil. Our research is driven by one key research question, *how do specific market devices empower and disempower market actors?* In order to explore this question we examine 1) the market devices actors draw upon when organising markets, 2) the market devices organisers create and assemble to empower certain types of actions and 3) the way market devices are used by market actors in their actions. Below we present a brief literature review before describing the socio-visual methods adopted to research the Durga Puja markets of Kolkata, India. We then present findings that show the types of market devices that are invoked to make temporary markets begin and end. The final section presents a discussion that raises four key issues around the nature of market-making devices before considering their implications for the broader markets studies literature.

## **Literature Review**

This review considers two key areas of literature. First, we briefly review the literature that discusses conceptualisations of temporary markets and consider the role of empowerment and disempowerment in such settings. In particular, we discuss the extant literature on temporary organising to understand how temporal boundaries affect organising practices. Next, we discuss the market studies literature to explicate how the performance of temporary markets might have implications for broader issue of social stability and change.

### ***Temporarily Empowering Markets***

While it might be argued that all markets are temporary because they constantly shift and change as they are performed by multiple actors through their different roles and practices, some markets are more clearly temporarily bound than others. For example, the local 'fruit & veg' market in our home town is performed weekly in the town square for just one day. Whereas the market for the popular 1990s, electronic, child's digital pet toy - the 'Tamogochi' - lasted about three years. In this paper, we wanted to explore a specific form of temporary market that is reproduced and performed annually – for six days only. In this more extreme contexts we argue, the temporal nature of the market makes the issue of empowerment more pressing and perhaps more visible. Such settings are likely to be more revealing of the devices and actions that empower or disempower market actors. We found almost no literature specifically about the organising of temporary markets. Extant literature presented historical accounts, rather than explanations of how market actors are empowered to make temporary markets happen. To understand more about this process we turned to the literature on temporary organising. Much of this research focuses on temporary organisations and particularly on organisations that are constructed to perform a specific task, and are then disassembled on completion of the task. Projects are a particular example, but film making, sports events and festivals are other examples (Bechky 2006; Kozinets 2002; Pipan and Porsander 1999).

Bakker (2010), identifies four key dimensions of temporary organisations: time, groups, tasks and context. Temporary organisations are characterized *ex ante* by a limited period of time of interaction of its members. In this sense, the organizational processes, practices and social interactions are bound by specific temporal aspects (Grabher 2002). For the Durga Puja markets, these temporal aspects are i) that they occur annually, and ii) that they are

performed for six days. Groups are understood as interdependent sets of people working together (Bakker 2010; Goodman and Goodman 1976). As Bakker observes, many studies on temporary organising tend to take the group (a collective of individuals, rather than any single organizational entity) as their unit of analysis. What is of interest here is the knowledge, skills, and resources that a particular assemblage of individuals can bring to a particular project or initiative (Lundin and Söderholm 1995).

The task of creating a temporary market is central to our understanding of the process of organising. Lundin and Söderholm (1995: 441) argue that the 'creation of a temporary organization is motivated by a task'. However, while much of the literature conceptualises temporary organising as oriented towards a specific task, for example, shooting a film (Bechky 2006) organising events (Pipan and Porsander 1999) or constructing a building (Bigley and Roberts 2001), the task at hand for the Durga Puja is to create a specific kind of market with multiple purposes, and consequently as multiple tasks; as a place for sacred rituals and participation, social and economic exchange, as an entertainment and tourism event. This raises interesting questions about how the actors make judgements about and even sometimes control how the market is performed and re-produced. Such processes are deeply political, bringing conflicting beliefs and models of action into the frame (Callon 1998). As Barry (2002: 269) explains, "[T]he political actor does not come isolated into the political arena any more than the consumer comes isolated into the marketplace. He or she comes with a whole array of material devices and forms of knowledge which serve to frame political action." This suggests that both structures and material devices shape the reproduction of the temporary markets. Yet we know little about the tensions between stability and change explain how such structures and devices become generative of new knowledge and innovation in the way markets or even everyday life are performed. These tensions seem pertinent as they are responsible for reproducing recognisable Durga Puja markets as well as innovating and changing practices that may be sustained beyond the performance of the market.

To generate a deeper understanding into the organising practices that form temporary markets we need to know much more about the role that politics and tensions play in the negotiated process. Fligstein's (1996) explanation of markets are an assemblage of

individuals and organisations that come together to constitute a particular kind of market for a particular purpose and as such constitute markets as innately political, is useful but tells us little about how this process unfolds, or how the use of certain market devices in preference to others changes the calculations made and the beliefs or models of action that become privileged. Thus to understanding temporary markets we need to know how these groups are constituted and empowered to act. What practices, processes and material-devices shape their constitution? How are the actions of such groups co-ordinated and managed to make the market happen (Callon, Millo and Muniesa 2007; Callon and Muniesa 2005)?

### ***Organising for Market Empowerment***

In its broadest sense, empowerment is the expansion of freedom of choice and action (Sen 1999; Sen 1985). In an extensive exploration of the term empowerment, Kabeer (1999; 2001) focuses on three dimensions of empowering that define the capacity to exercise strategic life choices – access to resources, agency and outcomes. Whereas, in the development discourse, the concept of empowerment has evolved with the ‘bottom-up’ approach to markets; it has been used to imply, the strengthening of inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. *“The concept goes beyond the notions of democracy, of human rights and of participation to include enabling people to understand the reality of their environment (social, political, economics, ecological and cultural)...as to take steps to effect changes to improve their situation”* (Singh and Titi 1995: 13). These conceptualisations of empowerment raises interesting question about how market actors become empowered and disempowered to perform temporary markets. For example, it might suggest by showing actors different images, maps or models of a temporary market being performed, or constituting rules of engagement with potential market actors, they may become empowered to act and participate in markets. The question then becomes, what kinds of images, maps, models or rules are empowering and how?

The market studies literature explores how social structures shape, and are shaped by market-making practices (Araujo 2007; Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007) and specifically looks at the devices put to work by market actors. Sunderland and Denny describe how a market device created tensions that reveal an unexpected structural characteristic of a market. In their study they explain how a group of market researchers attempted to use a market

segmentation device (given to them by the commissioning company). The device was to be used to help them make judgments about how to develop a marketing campaign. Sunderland and Denny (2011: 146) cite the tensions created as the agents try to recruit participants from each of a company's market segment categories but find out that the 'Executive Manager Mums' segment is composed entirely of men. The agent inquires, "...should I stay away from men on this particular list or should I call them?" These tensions help to shape action, but also generate new narratives of how the world is re-understood to be constituted. Sunderland and Denny's study also reveals how such devices might empower or, in their case disempower action. The researcher did not know what to do or how to act. The tensions represented in the list of market actors in a segment (all being men) and the description of the segment as being 'mums' generated so much doubt that the research could not calculate or make a judgement about what she should do. While Sunderland and Denny's story is one of disempowerment, it is not difficult to see how such a device could be equally empowering. For this reason we suggest that calculate devices could be created and circulated to *make and break* temporary markets.

The final issue raised by the market studies literature relates to the practices that become widely adopted or normalized within a market (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007), but also potentially survive and are sustained beyond the market. The study of temporary markets presents an excellent site of inquiry through which the sustained practice of market activities beyond the temporal boundaries of the market's performance might demonstrate broader changes to society and social structure. In this sense, we suggest a market configured and performed in a way that adopts certain ideologies or practices with specific and alternative purpose, may invoke acceptance and actions that could not have been entertained without the market. We know something of where markets come from, the work that is put in to create them, and their entanglement with existing social structures and practices (Araujo 2007; Fligstein and Mara-Drita 1996; Loasby 1999; White 1981). Indeed, the extant literature shows how existing structures shape new markets. For example, Baldwin and Clark (2006) and Langlois (2007) describe "mundane transaction costs", to show how we disentangle the role of permanent and temporary structures such as those associated with counting, valuing and paying for what is transacted, but also at those that calculate how the performance of the market itself is valued. These market

practices exist in other markets, outside of the temporary markets and can be reassembled and reproduced with less effort than if all had to be created from nothing. Without these market practices the Durga Puja markets could not be performed. However, we know much less about how the performance of markets (both temporary and otherwise) in turn transforms society and broader social structures. We need to know much more about how market devices might shape broader social practices and to consider the challenges and benefits that different forms of market might bring.

## **Methods**

Adopting Kolb's (2008) three stages photo-interview methods; we used photographs to 'involve' participants in our research, 'share' ideas and areas of interest. We used photographs to 'analyse' and uncover unfolding market practices, and to help us understand and identify objects that empowered or disempowered particular practices.

Using photo documentation to involve community residents, we shared photos of Durga past markets on site and worked to enrol market participants from different social backgrounds in the research process. In the second phase, the photo interview method was used to encourage community residents, local and non-resident or 'visiting' market actors and researchers to share insights and perspectives. We encouraged participants to work with us to develop our understanding of local structures, processes, and possible solutions to problems associated with organising, performing and ending of the Durga Puja markets. We asked participants to 'show us what you mean' and enabled them to access images of their choice of from the internet<sup>1</sup> or from their private collections when they were willing to do so (see photos 1-5). In the third phase, the photo interview method allows researchers to analyse visual and textual data as a representation of a local societal context (Rose 2007). In decoding images, researchers ground the analysis in subjective perspectives, using residents' visual codes along with other methods to further analyse community data, and explore the wider societal context in which the study is embedded. We validated findings through follow-up interviews with key informants and undertook a comparative study of Durga Puja markets in India (Kolkata) and the UK (Liverpool and Bolton). For the purpose of

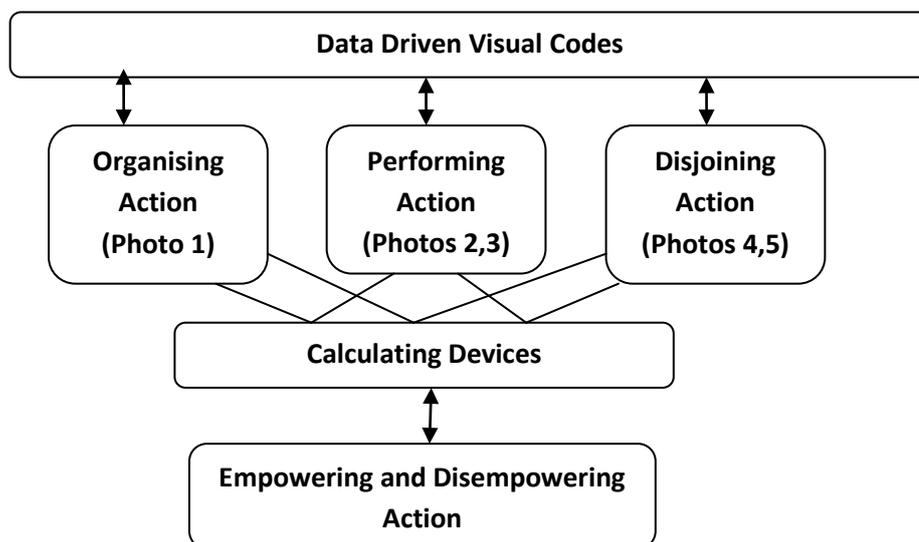
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<sup>1</sup> Many Communities keep photographic catalogues of past Durga Puja markets that can be easily accessed on the net or by visiting someone in their neighbourhood who is responsible for keeping these records.

this paper we focus on the Kolkata Puja.

The analysis examined the content of photos as photo motifs (Rose 2007: 59) to enable us to understand representations of specific market situations associated with temporary sites of the Durga Puja. The visual empirical data were coded against three categories of action: 1) organising 2) performing, and 3) disjoining markets. These three themes of action came out of the visual sociology and our interactions with participants as we asked them to show us and explain the markets through images. Subsequently, photo interviews were analysed and empirical description generated our analytical framework (Figure 1) to show how socio-material devices (Callon and Muniesa, 2005) are used in temporary markets to both empower and disempower these different categories of action. By drawing on Callon and Muniesa's (2005) work, we understood that devices are *agencing* action through the way they empower and disempower certain types of actors and certain kinds of action. The associations' market devices make with and between market actors produce knowing, and entangle other objects and ideas in the market that makes them calculative –helping people make judgements about how to act and with whom.

Figure 1: Analytical Framework: Time Bound Devices and Market Action



Using multi-methods including ethnography, photo-documentation, participant observation, in-depth interviews, archival and secondary data, we moved abductively between data and the literature to understand the unfolding practices of our market actors as the temporary markets were organised (Dubois and Gadde 2002). We used a secondary data to help us

uncover the more permanent structures behind the practices we observed (c.f. Araujo, Kjellberg and Spencer 2008). .

**Photo 1: Actions of Organising - Arrival of the Durga idols across the river Ganges from Kurmartuli market on boats**



**Photos 2, 3: Actions of Performing - Durga Puja market stalls at the Benagli Club 2013**



**Photo 4 and 5: Actions of Disjoining – Departure of the Goddess from the market to the River Ganges**



### **Analysis and Findings**

This empirical findings show 1) that more enduring, permanent structures shape the way the temporary market is organised and performed; 2) the annual reproduction of the markets shape the politics of competition and how the market is performed and 3) as the markets are reproduced they begin to shape and action everyday social life. Table 1 outlines the different actors and their performed roles as examples of permanent or temporary organising.

**Table 1. The Durga Puja Market Actors and Roles in organising the Temporary Markets**

<b>Permanent-Temporary Organising Durga Puja Actors</b>	<b>Actor's Role in the Durga Puja Market</b>
Durga Puja Committee (permanent)	An elected committee, within the boundary of a neighborhood that comprises of a president, vice president, general secretary, cultural secretary and members. Committees are the central organisers of the Puja and depend on fund raising which they attain from: 1. householders in the neighborhood who are bound to give a subsection of monies according to their means and economic wellbeing. 2. corporate entities to acquire subscriptions and sponsorship 3. committee souvenirs produced as a yearly magazine in which all aspects of the Puja are described for that particular year prior to the festivities. In this magazine members pay monies to the committee to have their names mentioned, write congratulatory messages and best wishes for the festivities. 4. Local business people who advertise their business in the magazine by payment 5. Local traders and distant traders who sell their goods in a selected neighborhood Puja market after permission by the committee. They pay a fee to the committee for allowing their temporary stall for 6 days. 6. The committee collect funds called "chaanda" through subscriptions and funds are used for expenses e.g. pandal construction, idol construction, ceremonies etc.
Idol makers (permanent)	Organization's whose sole purpose is to manufacture, design and craft artistic sculptures of deities. Contracts are made one year in advance by Puja committees for specified idols.
Designers Committees and Award Giving Bodies (permanent)	A group of eminent enterprising and media bodies that source literati who rank neighborhood Durga Pujas and gives multiple awards. Communities have also created inclusive prizes to award e.g. Best Pandal, Best Puja etc.
Kolkata Municipal Corporation (permanent)	Civic institutions involved in organizing Puja locations, sites, volunteers, access to river beds, cranes and resources for immersions practices.
Police (Permanent)	Organised police divisions are set in place to secure Puja sites, monitor numbers and immersion locations
Central and state pollution control boards (CPCB and SPCBs (permanent)	Government bodies involved in controlling pollution levels and distributing more environmentally friendly paints to idol makers. These boards provide detailed guidelines for immersion practices that are court ordered.
Pandal makers (temporary)	Business owners who construct themed temporary structures to house idols for the Puja. During the year they engage in constructions for weddings, events etc.
Site (temporary)	The Puja site outside of the festivities are typically a public field, or street corner.
Artists (temporary)	Local, upcoming and eminent artists are hired by the Puja committee to fulfill theme base design work for idols and pandal makers in the construction of the Puja.
Priests (temporary)	The Puja committee hire Brahmin priests to carry our the ceremony and rituals of the Durga Puja.
Media representation (temporary)	Larger Puja Committees go to media organisations, to secure recordings and transmission of the Puja.
Magazine Houses (temporary)	During the Puja elite magazines create specialised issues which incorporate writings from aspiring writers, established writers on the festivities. These are sold in millions, with poems and stories once a year.
Stall Owners (temporary)	Food and confectionary producers, arts and crafts, clothing, jewelry, florists and musicians set up stalls in specific Puja sites after securing a place with the Puja committee. Several businesses (e.g. clothing, jewelry) begin selling Puja fashions as early as August with production cycles for the market being set up one year in advance.
Drummers (temporary)	Individual or groups who come to Puja committees to secure a role during the Puja to provide a service. Drumming is indispensable to the festivities and the specific type of drumming that they provide is integrated at set times during the Puja (morning, early afternoon, late afternoon, night) in accordance with rituals. By trade these people are farm laborers or fisherman, builders etc. but also performance artists specialising in the art of drumming (learned from their ancestors). They earn monies drumming and bring their families to the city for Puja for the festivities and to spend monies (producer-consumers). The Puja committees organizes provide accommodation (club houses) for drummers to board and food is provided free of charge.

### ***Organising Action: Enduring, Permanent Structures Shape Temporary Markets***

To see how a temporary market can be understood in the context of more permanent organisational structures, institutions and networks in which it is entangled we asked our respondents, how they worked out their 'next innovative steps' when they were planning what to do to be part of the Durga Puja festival. We asked them specifically how they the time deadlines imposed on them by the temporal constraints of the festival. In other words how does time and other more permanent structures shape market-making practices?

Permanent structures were found to not only shape what the temporary market becomes but also to frame inclusive practices as part of the temporary organising effort. Permanent structures such as the local neighbourhood committees, the legislative and regulatory institutions (that direct traffic and authorise road closure for example), and global practices of organising temporary markets in local market places (setting up stalls, renting space to stall holders, exchanging goods for money, standards associated with measuring and counting goods) all shape how the market is organised and eventually performed as an empowering platform for inclusive actions (see photos 2,3). Inclusion is an important part of the ideology behind the Durga Puja markets, and is entangled with the Indian culture and the Hindu religion (Bhattacharya 2007). The performance of inclusion is centred on the specific sites of each community's tribute to the goddess Durga.

Despite this 'spirit of inclusion', site selection for the Durga Puja was historically organised in and around the social spaces of temples owned by affluent families and wealthy landowners in their households. With the first Puja dating back to 1610, these private affairs were transformed into community Pujas in 1761. Community Pujas became known as 'Baroyari' ('baro' meaning 12 and 'yar' meaning friends) because they were performed by 12 young men. The Baroyari came about because the young men had been barred from participating in a family Durga Puja. In the late 19th and early 20th century the burgeoning middle classes, primarily in Kolkata created the Sarbojanin (or community) Puja which today are organised by permanent Puja committees (see Table 1) representing a locality or neighborhood. The spirit of inclusion has been remained with the Sarbojanin.

With the democratization of the Puja, wider communities and social spaces began to develop a process of transformation where sites were transformed into places of festivities

and where the Durga Puja community market could be performed. Sites ranged from micro shrines within homes or villages, to significant physical structures within townships. Such sites of Durga Puja festivities can be found all over India. Some are spacious enough to accommodate increasing numbers of spectators and participants. Within Kolkata, Puja sites are typically situated within a cluster of pre-designated neighbourhood areas in the north, central, south and south west of the city (see Photo Maps 6a and 6b):

**Photo Map 1a and 1b: Representation of the Jodhpur park locality and neighbouring Pujas (6a) and other Pujas in the South Kolkata cluster (6b). Blue markers in both maps show a snapshot of the distribution of the Durga Puja markets in the area of South Kolkata**

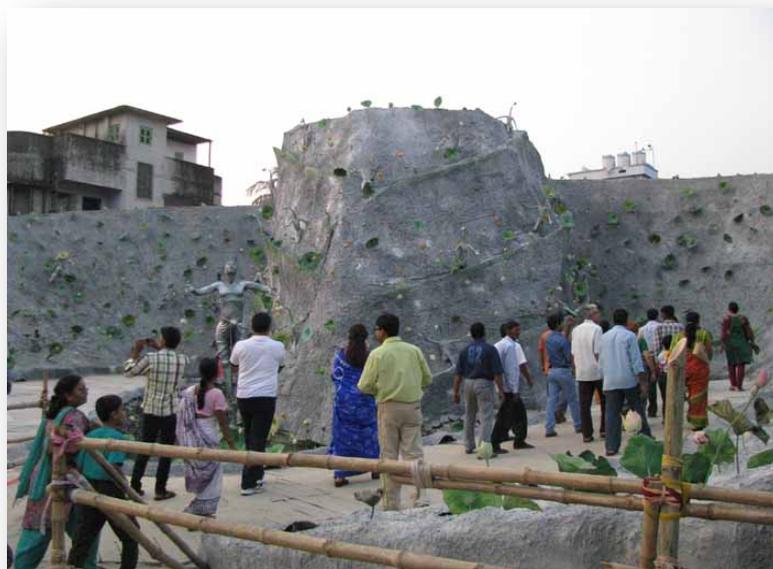


*“I live close by to the locality of the Jodhpur park Pujas known as Pally Mangal, 95 Pally, and Jodhpur Park Lake which you can see in the photo map. Jodhpur Park Lake has been running for the past 61 years since the formation of the Jodhpur Park Saradiya Utsav Committee. Outside of the Puja, the site nearest my home is much loved and used as a field to host cricket and football games and social strolling. As a community we cherish these grounds and enjoy being witness to its reshaping for Durga Ma and the market festivities. I take pride in our Puja committee and in welcoming local people, visitors and market sellers from within and outside of Kolkata to our neighbourhood Puja” (Barun, local resident of Jodhpur Park).*

In the above quote, Barun explains the significance of what will temporarily become the Durga Puja site, to the everyday life of his community. The details of the local practices that are associated with this site show how spatial locations are valued and used by local residents as a device for inclusive neighborhood practices, which take precedence during

the Puja period. From an economic sociology perspective, the notion of devices is useful as they bring objects into sociological analysis (Beuscart and Peerbaye 2006; Muniesa, Millo and Callon 2007) and in so doing enable us to see how such objects have agency to do things or make things happen. By questioning if markets can exist without a set of devices Muniesa et al., (2007) propose that the notion of market devices are vital to understanding how material assemblages intervene in the construction of markets. In our findings we begin to reveal how devices are critical to the formation of temporary markets. In photo 7 we see evidence of people taking pictures of the skeleton site and gathering around it at the cusp of its transformation from field to marketplace. The permanent structures of the cricket club and the Puja committee are therefore critical, as they inscribe local people with an understanding of the standards and rules within their neighborhoods, to follow and un-follow in the organising of a temporary market.

**Photo 7: Visiting the empty site of the forthcoming Durga Puja Market**  
Kolkata 2013.



In contrast, findings also show how permanent structures shape innovation and change in the performance of the markets. Market actors in the Puja committees use their understanding of previous Duga Puja markets to work out more creative market designs. Data show how the constitution of permanent structures in the Puja committees gives agency to idol producers, creating new forms of deities in collaboration with an artistic

talent pool (photos 8 and 9). This speaks to the ethos of the Indian freedom movement. In 1926, the first 'Sarbojanin' Durga Puja pronounced that anybody irrespective of caste, creed and religion, could participate in the festivities.

**Photo 8, 9: Photo 8 Kumartuli Durga Puja idol sculptor's at work and photo 9 Badal Chandra Paul artisan, designers and creative sculptor designing for local and foreign Puja's and arts since 1957**



*“Puja committees in and around Kolkata procure idols from Kumartuli, which is a renowned artisans' town in north Calcutta spanning a unique heritage of artistic talent and tradition for the crafting of idols. Selecting talent is a crucial part of the planning process. Committees select artisans designers and pandal makers as the architects that create the abodes to house idols. The intention here is to form collaborative teams that will manifest the main attraction of the Puja, the goddess and her family.” (Narod, Puja Committee member Kolkata)*

In the organising of temporary markets the notion of planning and more specifically the 'committee plan', acts as an empowering devise that triggers both innovative design practices and inclusive practices. We see how enduring structures of a local talent market in Kumartuli are depended upon year after year to a) shape practices of rituality to sustain heritage based traditions that follow religious rituals and rules and b) innovative design practices within temporary markets by way of the artistic production of the idols and architectural creations of the pandel makers (see Photo 10).

**Photo 10: 'Chakkhu Daan' ritual of painting the idols eyes**



*“In the organising of the Puja a ritualistic process must be met in the creation of idols. The collection of clay to the ornamentation of idols is a holy process, supervised by rites and rituals. For example, clay for the idols is collected from the banks of the river Ganges (preferably) on the Hindu date of Akshaya Tritiya and after the required rites, clay is transported and idols are fashioned. Following this, a ritual of 'Chakkhu Daan', (meaning donation of the eyes) begins, where the eyes of Durga idols are painted on for the first day of the Puja (called Mahalaya). However before painting on the eyes, the artisans fast for a day and eat only vegetarian food” (Durga Puja historian, 2014).*

A core element of empowerment is agency which according to according **Kvinnoforum** (2001) and Kabeer (2001) is not only the ability to define goals and act upon them but make sense of agency. Agency can be made sense of by both individuals and collectives. Actors as agents are capable of determining their own needs and participate in decision making. By revisiting the notion that markets contain devices that enact particular versions of what it is to be 'economic' we see how market assemblages can attach and action empowerment (Callon 1998). The agency of the pandal makers, empower them to engage in innovative practices and produce temporary, physical structures to house idols (see photos 11 & 12).

Through the entanglement of temporary and permanent structures, hybrid collectives of market actors generate empowering innovative market practices. For example, idol

construction unleashes the creativity of designers and artists who exist on the fringe of the mainstream art world and integrates them into the organising of the market. At the same time economic exchange is negotiated between committees and idol makers. This reflects how temporary markets, are socio-politically organised (Grabher, 2002).

**Photos 11 and 12: The site of the Durga Puja Market during the six days.**

Outside (11) and inside (12) the Pandal. A Pandal is constructed to display the Durga Goddess and her family at center stage and is specially built for the market. Jodpur Park Puja, Koklata 2013.



Standards upheld by the committee plans help market actors know how to organise and mean that certain practices do not need to be rethought or reinvented (c.f. Baldwin 2008). These practices allow groups of individuals who do not know each other to come together and act collectively in a way that enables the market to be performed (Araujo 2007). The shared task of organising the temporary market allows actors to draw on these permanent structures, performing different roles in co-ordinated ways. They not only shape inclusive practices but empower economic exchange and financial livelihoods to be met through the organisation of temporary markets.

*“From craftsmen in Kumartuli, to small business owners setting up food stalls and drummers from rural communities who reside at the bottom of the pyramid (BoP), they all depend on the Durga Puja to make enough money to sustain them through the whole year. This is in supplement to monies made from other Pujas e.g. Laxmi (Goddess of Wealth), Ganesh (Beloved Elephant God who is the remover of obstacles). The large sponsored Pujas have resources to attract huge pots of monies. With budgets over £20,000 pounds to give you an idea, volume of business during the two months of the festival period surpassed Rs 350 crore*

*(£43 million) over 10 years ago. You can imagine how much more is made now” (Sithanath, Committee organiser)*

The analysis suggests that there are clear linkages between the performance of the market as a temporary organising event and the more enduring structures of markets, in the social lives of neighbourhoods, villagers, townships as well as international tourism and commerce. In this sense, the context of the Durga Puja market really matters. A focus on context foregrounds organisation and social practices (Grabher, 2002; Grabher, 2004). With the government of West Bengal granting a two week holiday period during Puja time, Kolkata becomes a major retail destination. Increased disposable income among twin salaried professionals in the city lead them to save during the year and spend during the Puja period, since shopping and gift giving for clothes, garments and other consumer durables (clothes, metal objects (jewelry and lifestyle products) are integral to the Puja spirit.

The organising of the Puja contributes to a cascading effect of consumption through larger permanent structures. New films are timed for release, leading musicians or bands release Pujor Gaan (Songs of Puja), newspapers and magazines bring out their annual editions showcasing the offerings of leading fiction writers, essayists and poets. Novelists are also contracted in advance by leading newspapers and magazines to publish in their Puja annuals (Ghosh, 2006). We see here how permanent structure of macro and micro enterprise (e.g. the BoP cottage industries of the musicians and poets for example) becomes assembled into temporary markets. As each Durga Puja market competes as competitive entity, economic flows between clusters of temporary markets and neighborhoods do not prevail. Instead what we see are economic flows into the Durga Puja markets from permanent market structures in the Kolkata area.

### ***Sites of Performing: The Politics of Competition Shape Organising Practices***

Over 2000 pandals are constructed across Kolkata, each with its own Durga Puja market. The design of these temporary markets is competitive. Awards are given for the 'best' markets according to a set classifications and rankings. Only a handful of neighbourhoods are given recognition. The Asian Paints Sharad (autumnal) Shamman (award/respect) was instituted in 1985 by sponsoring company Asian Paints and is heralded in the market as the

true achievement for excellence in decorating the abodes for the Goddess Durga. This award acted as a springboard for other media broadsheet organizations (e.g. Anandabazar Patrika Sharad Arghya, The Times of India Sharad Shreshtho and CESC The Telegraph True Spirit Puja) and corporate industrialist bodies (e.g. M P Birla Foundation Puja) to form their own versions of awards:

*“In reality only a few Pujas from the thousands are shortlisted. Among them six awards are given by Sharad Shamman. Initially in the 80s only three awards were given to the best pandals. In 1994 the award for "Discovery of the Year" was introduced to honour a completely unknown pandal for its excellence. Then in 2000 the body found that they was no demarcation to identify Best Decoration of the pandal and added two new award categories of "Creative Excellence", for the Best decorated Pandal, and "Best Artisan", given to the artist of the Best looking Idol” (Gauri, Puja Committee member).*

By initiating a ranking system the award classifications act as a market device to configure calculative capacities and qualify market objects (Callon and Muniesa 2005). Our data shows that idols and pandals action qualification. Judges are selected among notable Bengali literati (that include artists, art critics, writers, actors, politicians, models, singers, poets etc.) who evaluate those Puja pandals that submit applications for judging. As new awards are introduced into the market, we see how market devices are calibrated and affect the way things are translated into calculative practices. The qualification not only enhances competition but also expands the boundaries of how competition is performed in temporary markets. The assemblage and reproduction of a market is a bundle of time-bounded acts judged for their ‘uniqueness’ in a pre-defined time and space (Latour 2005).

The ‘valuation’ practices of temporary market organising, produces permanent market imprints and traces that both govern and challenge the legitimacy of a market site. Multiple Puja committees collaborate to represent and reassemble multiple versions of the Durga Puja markets held in different locations. However, market devices can lead to friction.

*“ These are cheat prizes and a way for business to earn money. I would be cautious” (Lakhan, annual Durga Puja visitor)*

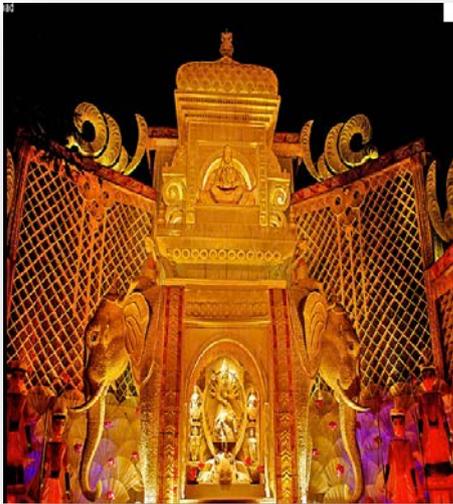
Consumer backlash against the legitimacy of awards suggest that devices can have disempowering effects. Only an oligopoly of Puja markets become part of the ranking system and this is disempowering to smaller players. Ranking systems lead to the market being performed and judged based on performance indicators that can act as destabilising devices. The effect of rankings and the feedback it generates belongs to a finite group of Pujas. As such it excludes others but at the same time creates an in-group of Puja markets that change their behaviour in reaction to being observed, measured and ranked (see Espeland and Sauder 2007).

Our data also shows how collections of visual representations of the market create imprints, acting as archival materials and metrologies of public space/neighbourhood performance that legitimises their relevance (see Photos 13, 14, 15 and 16). In this instance, both idols and pandals act as time bound market devices that produce knowledge to stabilise and set apart committees Pujas based on themes. The representation of 'themes' are multi focal, mutually exclusive and varied. Topics range from ancient civilizations e.g. 'the Incas' or 'Rome' to contemporary subjects e.g. greenhouse gas emissions and solar energy (Photo 17). The 'themes' shape the competitive practices of the temporary market. Themes can also help market actors consolidate bigger budgets to send on the Durga Puja market by securing sponsorship. This in turn attracts larger crowds.

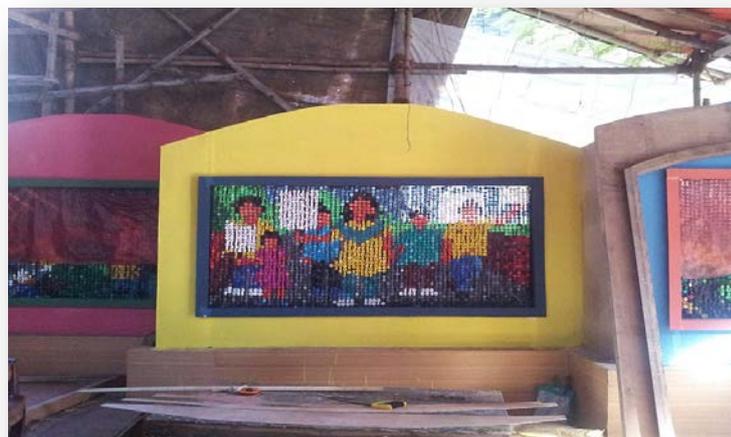
**Photo 13 Selimpoor Pali Puja 2013: Contemporary Durga idol and Photo 14 Behla Natun Dal Puja 2013: The theme is rural Bengal and the pandal and style of the goddess looks atypical to what is seen in rural Bengal.**



**Photo 15: Tridhara Sammilani Puhja 2013: Theme of Rajasthan and specifically the adobe of the Rjputs (Kings) and Photo 16: 66 Pallu Puja 2013 with the theme of the idol is "Amar Durga" (My Durga) artists show how every woman around them can represent the Godess.**



**Photo 17 Mahatirtham Durga 2012: Theme based on the eradication of pollution and the use of natural materials Solar plates are incorporated into the Puja pandal to build awareness.**

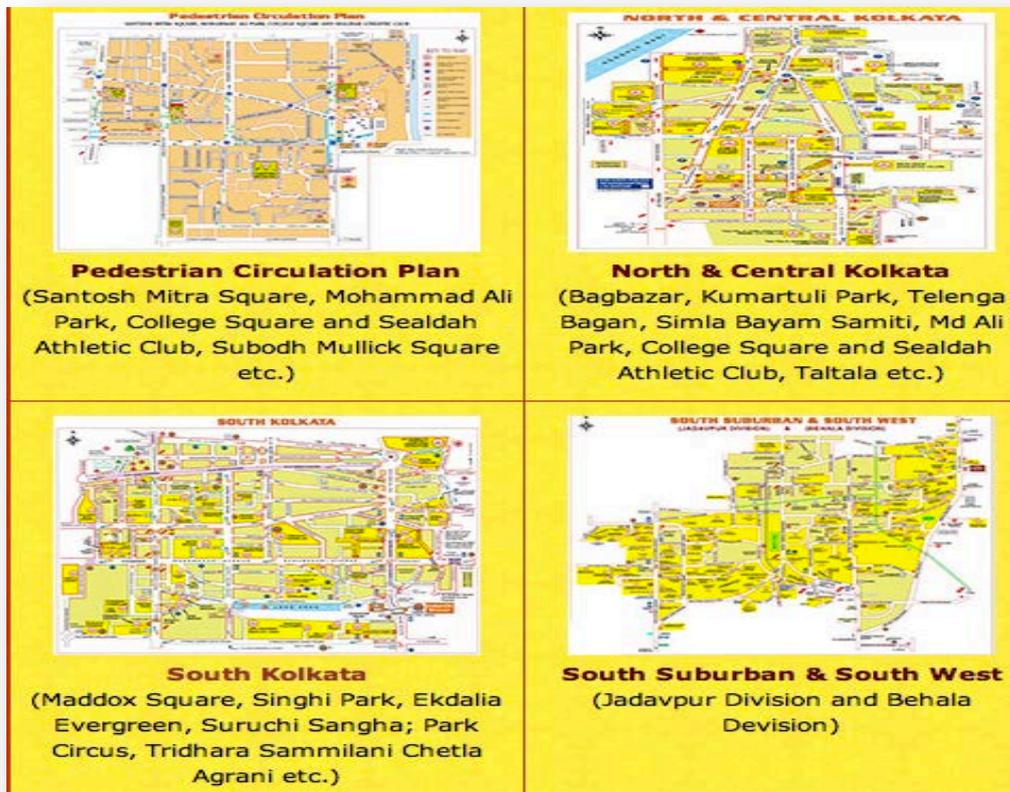


Nevertheless, these devices generate contestation. With the Puja itself becoming a consumption item, certain Pujas are retaliating and opting to go theme less: *"We don't do themed"* (Salt Lake Puja Committee)

Valuing practices involve Puja committees in rigorously reviewing (measuring turnover, footfall, number of stalls etc.), evaluating neighbourhood rankings and perceptions and formulating plans to reproduce more elaborate temporary markets and structures. This generates tensions as Puja committees chase sponsorship, seek media representation, and enlist prominent businesses to set up stalls. These practices are focused around the task of building a competitive neighbourhood reputation and identity. For example neighbourhood rivalry in terms of the celebration of Durga Puja has become increasingly corporatised as awards empower particular Pujas, as advertisers willing to pay higher rates for having their advertisements and hoardings displayed at the Puja (Ghosh 2006).

Map based representations also act as important calculative devices. Detailed Maps provided by the Kolkata Police serve the purpose of showcasing routes into the markets but also act as a calculating tool to enable visitors to organise and perform the activity of 'pandal hopping' (the visitation of multiple pandals with friends and family) (see Photos 18a and 18b). To ensure optimum success in this activity, technology devices e.g. mobile phone apps are being downloaded to provide updates on crowds, weather conditions and optimum times for photo opportunities. Map based representations not only show how enduring structures are shaped by the inclusion of temporary markets but reveal the enormity of scale in which temporary markets are performed. We see how the map as a calculative device is empowering space and place in the agencing of temporary markets.

**Photos 18a, 18b: Zone based street maps of Kolkata Pujas (18a); close up of South Kolkata map and the Jodhpur park area (18b)**



**Photo 18(b) close up of South Kolkata map and the Jodhpur park area**



### ***Actions of disjoining: Temporary Markets Shape the Practices of Everyday Life***

In the final stage of actioning we see how changes in market-politics create contestations among permanent organisational structures and temporary organising as markets disjoin. Historically, practices associated with closing the Durga Puja, involve idols being carried to the river Ganges and immersed, representing the goddess' departure (Picture 19). Idols are generally lifted out of the water but are sometimes left submerged. Despite this being an age-old practice, it is considered a disruptive ritual which requires the Kolkata municipal corporation to organise access to multiple river banks, recruit hundreds of volunteers, ensure elaborate security arrangements with police, and to hire cranes to pull out the debris of idols to avoid pollution. Despite measures taken to tackle water pollution, this practice has generated environmental concerns. The paint and adornments of idols continue to pollute the river and guidelines formulated by the central and state pollution control boards have largely gone unheeded in spite of efforts by municipal bodies and police to curtail the practice (photo 20). Environmentalists and river experts have campaigned over the last ten years but are not yielding results through judicial intervention. We found that contestations have produced a series of changes where new practices are being created for idol makers, developing non-toxic paints for the goddess.

**Pictures 19 and 20: A Durga icon being submerged in the river in the aftermath of the Durga Puja Market. Cleaning up the debris from the river at the end of the Durga Puja Market**



In 2012, the West Bengal Pollution Control Board (BPCB) distributed 1,200 litres of lead-free paints to idol makers, who had dangerously switched from using mud and naturally

coloured paints to plaster of Paris and harmful paints containing heavy metals. To date, efforts to phase out coloured paints with high concentrations of lead (found particularly in red and yellow paints) and enforce stricter guidelines for idol immersion practices have been instituted by the BPCB. In some instances these guidelines serve to make processes of clearance more empowering for the environment and the everyday practices of local people. By involving wider market actors (e.g. the Kolkata Port Trust (KPT) and municipalities) the BPCB guidelines act as a calculative device to action temporary market representation and intervention. We see how these guidelines are becoming intertwined with permanent structures (Muniesa et al., 2007) and are producing knowledge that is being replicated across to other states in their clearance processes (e.g. the Delhi Pollution Control Board DPCB).

*“Court guidelines give 24 hours for the removal of idols and debris after immersion. The most visited pandels require large clearance efforts with the deployment of cranes, paid loaders and coordination by members of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. Although recycling of waste is encouraged and done by idol makers most of the waste is taken to solid waste dumping sites. However this is mainly observed for larger Pujas by the municipality and smaller scale Pujas can go unchecked leaving waters polluted with lead and idols abandoned” (Munmun, Puja committee member).*

Nevertheless, these guidelines are not being performed by the totality of the market and represent only a smaller subset of Pujas. Immersion practices are opening up new spaces for political controversies (Callon and Muniesa 2005). In this way the socio-material system created through this particular form of temporary organising is beginning to shape the practices of everyday life. When devices are not followed, however, they can generate disentangling effects that are disempowering to everyday practices. Continued water pollution brings forward critical health risks for consumers who depend on river waters for drinking, bathing and fishery. In another instance, disempowered action is seen in the unsuccessful attempts by the BPCB to introduce a device (as an award) to recognise Puja committees and idol makers using lead-free paints.

*“Cost increases to use lead-free paints have put off committee buyers as costs of idols increase by Rs 600 to Rs800 more. The problem with using environmentally friendly colours*

*is that we cannot experiment with them due to our limited knowledge about them – we know exactly how many coats are needed with our existing palate of colours” (Babu Pal, secretary of Kumartuli association of idol makers).*

Table 2 illustrates the complex nature of the Durga Puja’s market devices, many of which have multiple roles in temporary markets. By performing these multiple roles devices produce movements that can action empowerment and disempowerment. The very nature of something ‘temporary’ suggests a constriction of time and this adds to the complexity of devices that operate under time bounded conditions. Ranking and award classifications, not only show how devices can become attached (Callon 1998) to the organising and performing of temporary markets, but offer opportunities to empower (through recognition), innovation and replication (in the creation of new awards). The replication of devices in different contexts can however afford disempowerment (see Table 2). This shows how actors entangled in market contestations (on lead free paints) detach themselves from disserving devices.

Furthermore, we see that time bound devices can travel beyond temporary markets and become part of everyday market practises. The contestations around the use of lead based paints has empowered several hundreds of Puja committees to source lead free organic colours and is also opening up potential new markets for the used metallic or fiberglass idols that are becoming collectors items after the disjoining of the market. Although these are not yet standardised practices, we see how time-bound devices empower change and offer market creation opportunities beyond the temporary setting.

**Table 2: The empowering and disempowering actions of time bound devices**

Time Bound Devices	Assemblages of Organising, Performing and Disjoining	Action of Empowerment/Disempowerment
Map based representations	Organising	-Empowering people to know where to go and strategies ‘pandal hopping’ activities. -Empowering by specifying boundaries and zones between neighborhoods and the city of Kolkata. -Empowering the scale of temporary markets and wider municipalities and the police force to manage heightened security for unprecedented numbers of visors in the millions.
	Performing	
Plans	Organising	-Empowerment local talent markets to incorporate innovation, art and design. Committee plans empower inclusive economic exchange. -Empowering clearance routes, coordinating municipalities, ports and wider actors. -Empowering the usage of lead-free paints from the BPCB. -Disempowering the environment (water pollution) when BPCB guidelines are not followed.
	Performing	
Photos	Organising	-Empowering as socio-visual materials that enable committee members to evaluate the performance of past Pujas, photos are used as a tool for evidentiary comparisons with rival neighborhoods by committees to plan next year’s theme. -Empowering spectators, the media, committees to create visual diaries and logs of the performing of the markets. -Empowering environmentalists to capture acts of environmentally unfriendly practices of idol immersion to support petitions.
	Performing	
	Disjoining	
Idols, Pandals, Paint	Organising	-Empowering a local market of artist, designers and local enterprises as pandal makers to construct a vision and develop artistic license for creative themes. -Empowering to the ritualistic practices in performing the Durga Puja -Empowering masses of spectators to perform in the markets. -Disempowering to the environment due to idol immersion and lead based paints on the idols that causes water pollution
	Performing	
	Disjoining	
Rules	Organising	-Empowering cultural production in the film and music industry via new releases, the print media industry with annual editions. -Empowering the inclusion of BoP cottage industries for market exchange. -Empowering BoP drummers and artisans in the reproduction of ritualistic practices -Empowering retail business to make optimum profits leading to the Puja prior to seasonal sales -Empowering consumers to engage in gift giving activities -Empowering the exchange of goods and monetary flows between markets. -Empowering repeated standards and practices in the performing of the Puja e.g. pandal hopping, Bengali food stall experiences.
	Performing	
	Disjoining	
Awards Classifications and Ranking systems	Organising	-Empowering competitiveness of theme-based Pujas -Empowering committees to opt out a theme-based Puja -Empowering artists, designers and committees through recognition -Empowering multiple bodies to make their own awards and specify new classifications -Disempowering through the exclusion of smaller scaled Pujas that do not qualify to ranked -Disempowering for Kurmartuli idol makers that have not mastered the art of lead free paints due to a lack of experimentation. Puja committee are not incentivised recover the costs of price inflation to procure lead free idols.
	Performing	

## Conclusions

Our findings contribute to our understanding of empowerment in markets and market practice in four key ways. First, we show how permanent organisational structures begin to shape temporary organising forms and practices through an innately political and negotiated process (Callon 1998; Grabher 2002). Our findings show how neighbourhood committee members assemble and circulate market devices that temporarily stabilise important understandings of what the market is, and how, when and where it should be performed. These devices often come from existing ways of doing things or from representations used in wider societal or market practices. Such devices are invoked to and assembled into groups or associations of devices to create persuasive arguments of what should be done. Often such assemblages and arguments are contested showing the organising of markets to be a deeply political process. Consistent with the work of Fligstein (1996), market-making is seen political, as market themes, budgets and rules of engagement are both contested and negotiated. Our findings foreground three key types of assemblage of market devices. These assemblages frame 1) place and space, 2) spectacle and meaning, and 3) mechanisms of exchange.

*Market Devices that Frame Place and Space:* Neighbourhood committees connected with municipal authorities and local land owners to work out or understand when roads would be closed and opened, possible routes through markets (and the policing of such routes), routes into markets (for visitors and tourists) and the boundaries of each neighbourhood market. These places and spaces are represented by maps, guidelines and photographs and help organisers calculate the boundaries and rules of engagement in these places and spaces, as well as the specific roles and responsibilities of the different actors in managing them. As the Dura Puja markets are reproduced annually there are many market devices that are re-invoked each year. This cyclical re-invoking of established market devices is demonstrative of the connections between the market and the broader, more permanent organising structures that shape the temporary markets.

*Market Devices that Frame Spectacle and Meaning:* Our findings also show how neighbourhood committees assemble market devices such as photographs, competitive rankings and expert knowledge of craftsman. These market devices are often the products

and outputs of previous market performances. Such devices are invoked to help the committee make judgments about 'this year's market'. These devices frame what the spectacle should be, who should construct and perform the spectacle and how much would be invested in its creation and presentation. These market devices value the aesthetic and provide a different frame for calculation compared with that of the spaces and places or socio-technical arrangements that determine where markets are held and how they operate. This contributes to a broader understanding of markets by foregrounding what is calculated and why (Callon and Muniesa 2005). Further, it contributes to our understanding of the role of asthenic knowledge in organising and market-making by positioning the aesthetic, not just as representations of knowing but as devices that shape judgements about how to act in future, by calculating ways that make the aesthetic valuable (Strati 1999; Strati 2006).

*Market Devices that Frame Mechanism of Exchange:* The framing of a socio-technical system that supports the practical exchange of goods is also important if our market actors are to assemble and disassemble their six-day market. Some artefacts are so widely part of everyday practices they do not need to be specified, for example money, roads or transportation of goods (Langlois 2007). But others have to be assembled. Some socio-technical devices come with the market actors that are enrolled in the market-making process – market actors bring their own stalls, craft technologies and instruments of production. Other socio-technical devices have to be constructed and inserted by the market organisers. Our findings show how non-toxic paint was distributed by organisers to support the decoration of idols without the resultant pollution associated with the destruction of idol at the end of the Dura Puja. Thus market devices sometimes take the form of complex socio-technical objects and arrangements that exist outside or at least in addition to representations of knowledge such as plans, rules or pictures.

Second, the research shows that the frames created by the assemblages of market devices act as coordinating mechanisms during the organising of temporary markets. This builds on the work of Baker and Faulkner (1991) and Bechky (2006), who explore the roles and resources that constitute the co-ordinated effort of temporary organising. By looking at how devices are invoked and transformed through their circulation, we show how the politics of neighbourhood concerns influence the judgements that actors are required to make during

their organising practices. For example, the committee became concerned with judging issues as varied as whose market is the 'best', to how to deal with the issue of river pollution. These concerns become represented in artefacts that circulate and became the centre of contestations between residents, committees, authorities and technical specialists such as craftsmen and traders. These devices are assembled to frame what matters in the organising of temporary markets (Barry 2002; Barry and Slater 2002; Latour 2004) and, together help the neighbourhood committees mobilize the community into a collective action that shapes the performance of the market. This extends the extant literature on temporary organising by showing how assemblages of devices can create a co-ordination framework. Findings also explain how the framework unfolds as it is circulated, encounters contestation from different groups of market actors and finally becomes stabilised and temporarily settled. This research also contributes to the extant temporary organising literature by explicating the complex nature of devices required to perform or empower multiple tasks, that engage a broad spectrum of expertise and actors (c.f. Bakker 2010).

Third, our analysis suggests that visual objects are assembled into a grammar that acts as a calculative code for making judgement. Our findings foreground the role of visual codes as a means of calculation and judgement. In this sense visuals do the work of important market-making devices. These visual codes, foregrounded by the socio-visual methods adopted in this research, help us see where empowerment and disempowerment happens and what assemblages of market devices are made. We saw these visual codes performed as actors explained to us how they interpreted photos of the markets. By identifying the grammar of visual market-market devices we see how they act as both generative of knowing as well as shaping future action by enabling comparison and standard setting. The way the Dura Puja markets are systematically captured and catalogued by committees, visitors, rankers and residents through photographs, descriptions, illustrations and art, creates visual diaries and catalogues of practice and productive possibilities that can be invoked as market-making devices in the future. These observations contribute to our understanding of empowerment by showing the representation of past markets as devices for calculating what to do differently (or the same) in the reproduction of that market. In this way, we contribute to our understanding of the tensions actors face when walking the line between stability and change as temporary markets are reproduced through time.

Finally, by gaining a better understanding of how the reproduction of temporary markets generates tensions and negotiates a balance between stability and change, we also gain a better understanding of how temporary markets kick back and can gradually begin to change what have previously been thought of as 'permanent' structures (Bakker 2010). Our findings show how temporary structures can generate new practices that are adopted beyond the performance of the temporary market – the introduction of non-toxic paints to the craftsmen led to some craftsmen adopting them in the normal crafting practices that extended beyond the Dura Puja markets. Innovative and temporary organising practices have the power to travel beyond the temporal and spatial site of its singular performance (Grabher 2004; Sydow, Lindkvist and DeFillippi 2004) and can begin sometimes to transform, through their continued reproduction, the more permanent practices and structures of society. This shifts our understanding beyond 'temporary organising as embedded in permanent structures' to an exploration of organising as the interaction between different configurations of practices and the processes of institutionalisation understood to create both stability and change.

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