Kolkata – The Post Globalised Urban Heterotopia: Differential Right to the City with Reference to Hierarchy of Marginalised Spaces

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ABSTRACT

The city that Kolkata images today appears to be a manifestation of spatial and temporal heterotopias born to complicate the social construction of spaces and the spatial construction of social identities, more so pertaining to the post-liberal and post-global urban processes. The creation of first world spaces within third world cities altered the urban dynamics and the subsequent rights to the city. The segment of city space used, participated into and belonged to seem to have shaped the senses of accessibilities and denials, acceptances and rejections, freedoms and un-freedoms of the city dwellers across time stretches through everyday(s), multiplying manifold in cities of the developing world constantly gaping to become world class cities. The claims to the city and their justifications thereafter get conditioned by an individual's imaginations, perceptions and expectations from the same city built through multiple spatial and temporal processes of accommodation and otherness up to a point in time when the othering has attained such common sense.

The basic **objective** of this paper is to explore the changing urban dynamics and spatial patterning within the city of Kolkata in a post-global and post-liberal temporal instance, given the rampant injection of capital within third world spaces and the consequent accumulations and dispossessions and the rights claimed and denied to the same. The paper draws **data** and information largely from the existing literature on the problem and substantiates it with a critique of governmental and non-governmental documents and everyday real life experiences of the people of Kolkata. An overall deductive method of analysis has been adopted as the Right to the city is a concept and movement born in the so called western (developed) part of the world. Within which a critical theoretical **method** of analysis has been used to explore the right to the Indian city of Kolkata.

Keywords: Post-globalised, City, Rights, Urban spaces.

1. INTRODUCTION

The complexity that a city stands for cannot confine it within the understandings of any particular discourse of knowledge; instead it borrows from a spectrum. Any discipline that has dealt with the city has finally added a bit of its expertise to the analytical understanding, meaning thereby, the science of the city, if any, is an amalgamation of theories, practises, contents and concepts and so on. It has been conceptualised as an organism, an oeuvre, an imagination, a commodity, a market, a spatial manifestation for democracy, a society almost at the level of perfection and most conveniently an ever incomplete transition and much more. Today, understanding the city is therefore undoubtedly hyper-interdisciplinary.

The urban also is extremely dynamic in its approach and scope. Therefore, there is no one urban order, the order of the urban evolves within space-time continuums. It is thus most appropriate to explore the urban orders of recent times, the post-global-post-modern type urbanisations and urbanisms. Also, different spatial units across the extent of this globe characterises the same in its own different way. A post global first world city is certainly different from a post global third world city, which in turn is different from a post global small town or a village.

2. OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

The basic objective of this paper has been to explore the changing urban dynamics and spatial patterning within the city of Kolkata in a post-global and post-liberal temporal instance, given the rampant injection of capital within third world spaces and the consequent accumulations and dispossessions and the rights claimed and denied to the same under this new kind of urban order.

3. AREA OF STUDY

Its Context to the Problem

Though territoriality is an essential aspect of research in geography, yet the place-problem juxtaposition is extremely important as well. Justifications for Kolkata, in this particular study, may find less ground as compared to say another city, but finds enough with respect to itself. Also, the present point in time qualifies Kolkata as a justified field of enquiry on post global urbanisms with greater strength. To realise this, one must travel through the contrasting images the city has lived through temporally, very carefully analysed by Pablo Bose (2013) in his attempt to locate the 'Right to the City' in the Global South. Kolkata has undergone very negative transformations from being the industrial and cultural capital of British India to becoming a dying city.

Then there existed a point in time when the city was dying internally but its former image was still popular for the world outside. Today, in fact the city is undergoing a second round of image transformation and most consciously this time – from being a dying city to one that is experiencing renaissance. The Communist Party that took charge of the city for more than three decades have itself contributed to this second round of image transformation. In fact, it is this second urban transformation that has given the city enough evidences of denials to rights, though denials are most intrinsically woven into the history of Kolkata.

Therefore, if the war is against the state or the system, both rights and denials can be easily articulated and claimed and fought for. Sometimes, when citizens have conflicting claims against each other by virtue

of an overarching existing global order, with the state acting only as a passive agent, the questions arise as to, who decides the rights and denials then? What forms an optimum decision – the rights of one or the denials of another? The study therefore, makes an attempt to incorporate individual perceptions vis-a-vis a collective consciousness of the state or the society.

Sources of Data

The paper draws data and information largely from the existing literature on the problem and substantiates it with a critique of governmental and non-governmental documents and everyday real life experiences of the people of Kolkata. The everyday experiences have been captured through a detailed questionnaire survey carried out in various parts of Kolkata, mainly focussing on the slum, the homeless, the Muslim ghettos, gated residence and planned areas (as a part of my larger doctoral thesis fieldwork.

4. METHODOLOGY

An overall deductive method of analysis has been adopted as the Right to the city is a concept and movement born in the so called western (developed) part of the world. Within which a critical theoretical method of analysis has been used to explore the right to the Indian city of Kolkata.

Binary Logistic Regression is used (on the data collected from field survey) with whether an individual feels discriminated against (or not) or free to protest (or not), to bring about a change (or not) or wishes to leave the city (or not) and whether one considers Kolkata to be his/her home or not as the dichotomous dependent variables and Age group, Sex, Monthly Per capita Consumption Expenditure (total expenditure on consumption for an entire household/household size) and Religion as categorical independent variables so as to answer questions on loyalties and attachments, where the Expected (B) represents the odds ratio or the probability of the occurrence of an opinion with respect to the reference category taken as 1.

5. DISCUSSION

The Colonial Urban Order

Migrant and Black Town Claims

An extensive mass of literature has persuaded Kolkata to simultaneously thank and curse its colonial experiences for the city it images today, be it Dominique Lapierre's (1992) image of a dying city or Sukanta chaudhuri's (1990) image of a living city; so much so that anything that one wants to talk about the city has to draw out its validations and justifications from that period in history. The Right to the City claims have not managed to escape grips from the colonial claws as well. They seem to exist in an intertwined fashion with the folklore associated with Kolkata.

The artisans, labourers and menials who were the early settlers of the black town were gradually pushed out of the city on grounds of rapid urbanisation, as instigated by the British-imitating-so-called-then-elite of the city. Partha Chatterjee (2011) explains how the snake charmers, the puppeteers, the peddlers and the prostitutes lost out on their claims to the streets of Kolkata, which had to be made visually more appealing to the Europeans in those days. Also, possibly to a class of the Bengali *Babu* who emerged under British patronage and claimed Kolkata to be a city of the *Bhodrolok* (gentleman) – a class that became most

instrumental in making Kolkata a city of un-equals, as most sarcastically portrayed by Kaliprasanna Sinha (translated by Swarup Roy, 2008). And through the decades that followed, the still persistent class of 'the educated (contemporary) Bhodrolok, ever in search if bourgeois respectability, has always found the public culture of Calcutta of the early nineteenth century something of an embarrasement. As a result it has kept (all these instances and experiences of inequality) firmly to itself, like a family secret that must not be revealed to outsiders, writes Partha Chatterjee in a foreword to Sinha's English translated work (2008); the secrets which became the most profound image of the city in times to come.

It was in the hands of the colonisers that Kolkata became a city, in the first place, from three consecutive villages. With no other urban centre anywhere in its vicinity then, up to a very long time after that and possibly to some extent even today it commanded a huge threshold zone. The attractiveness of its magnetic field led to an unprecedented inflow of people. Soon the city became the work place of thousands who with immediate effect desired to convert it into their homes as well. 'There may not be another city containing such a hotch potch of people as this one, with so many crucial differences of subculture, of race, of religion, of caste and of language riddling them and holding them apart even when they are thrown most crushingly together' (Moorhouse, 1971; 163).

Kolkata was not only attracting cultures, it was simultaneously attracting poverty in the process. Fortune hunters in Kolkata were largely very poor people who initiated the history of squatting in the city and constituted the lowest stratum of the economic ladder with the existing poor; the newly formed *Babus*, the landholders and the colonisers constructed the higher orders.

Urban land in those days was made available to these poor migrant labourers possibly with the consciousness that they were the city makers, their contributions needed value. A Darwinian kind of growth organically terminated such consciousness in no time at all. When rights were not given, they were taken. Notions of substantive citizenship allowed those that served the city, to perceive the same as home. Poverty did not allow them the convenience to travel without qualms and they had the information that the city was benefiting from them. Thus, their claims on city spaces stood established.

The Partition Urban Order

Claims from Refugees

Interestingly, despite the variety, one strong image of the city got concretised through time – Kolkata, a Bengali city (Bose, 1990). An identity that immediately takes away from its liberal upfront and generates streams of exclusion. What is all the more fascinating is, within the Bengali identity as well there exists a divide – those hailing from present day Bangladesh as against those from present day West Bengal. This divide was born out of the partition process and made some Bengali speakers outsiders in a Bengali city.

With the partitioning of India, the world probably saw the largest streams of human beings move. As many as 14.5 million (Sharma 2014) people moved between the newly drawn borders on either side. About eighty percent was concentrated in the west and only twenty per cent in the East where the East (of) Bengal (East Pakistan then) got separated from the West. The border on the East may not have been very violent then but it never got sealed since then. It is still as leaky with a revolting Assam and a still living department for refugee, relief and rehabilitation in West Bengal.

The 'refugee movement' (Sanyal, 2012) in Kolkata coincided massively with the 'squatting movement' (Sanyal, 2012). The architects of this alliance were refugees whom 'the government could not help at all because they were neither so destitute to be cared for completely, nor were they wealthy enough to carry the burden of rent' (Sanyal, 2012). These were the people who thus forcibly took over land in and around Kolkata and began squatting there. They constituted both the lower and the middle classes sometimes against the vanity and image of the latter.

The incoming refugees established their claims to the city of Kolkata by occupying spaces in the Sealdah station to begin with and continued, with the displacing of the Muslims, the prior occupants of the area (Sanyal, 2012). The story therefore in those days was slightly different. Slums were not dispossessed, they grew out of dispossessions. Even before that, 'the Muslim population, a minority in the city, was …. at the receiving end of the violence that erupted' (Sharma, 2014; 6) as a result of the 'Calcutta riots' on the 16th of August, 1946. The border that separated the East and West of Bengal was supposedly drawn on religious lines. However, 'a considerable number of Hindus remained in East Pakistan and so did a large number of Muslims in West Bengal' (Sharma, 2014; 9) The Muslims therefore have organically been a part of Kolkata. However, if there is a particular social group that can be distinctly separated out on the city space today, it is the neighbourhoods of the Muslims; which in more instances than one coincide with the poorer neighbourhoods as well. Does the ghettoised existence of this religious community establish specific claims? Does it reveal a concretised consciousness?

The Post Colonial Urban Order

Claims from the Precariously Homed and the Homeless

Kolkata therefore has been a city that has been inviting, but accused of being less assimilating. Every individual in the minds of a Kolkatan is either a Bengali or a non Bengali - an identity absolutely specific to Bengal. There is no such identity in any other part of India possibly. The non Marathis, non Gujaratis, non Tamils and so on are probably not as popular entities. However, Bengalis are capable of dividing the whole world into this binary identity. They locally term their counter half as *'abangali'* in Bengali – a mechanism that immediately excludes everybody else who does not speak the majority language. However, the identities are not as homogeneous as an average Bengali imagines. An individual could be a Bengali, yet a refugee or a migrant, could be a Muslim or a Hindu, could be a poor man or a *Bhodrolok*. Especially with a partitioned Bengal things are complicated and Kolkata has attracted one and all.

Kolkata's attractiveness was not an imagination; it used to be real in those days. It was actually an industrial city with raw materials, hinterland, port facility, market and other situational advantages. However, today it is all in the past. Development sounds like history for the city. 'No one any longer says with Gopal Krishna Gokhale that what Bengal thinks today, India thinks tomorrow' (Sharma, 2014; ix). Kolkata possibly could be one of those unlucky cities to have undergone phases of 'de'-urbanisation and 'de'-industrialisation with extensive periods of stagnation. 'The hollowed-out industrial landscapes of the city and high rates of unemployment bear testament to this transformation' (Roy, 2008; xvi). Ananya Roy (2008) therefore calls Kolkata 'the "black hole" of Third World urbanization'. For long, 'the Bengali has happily relinquished the position of entrepreneurial leadership to people from other states … The average Bengali is also quite comfortable with the state's relative backwardness' (Sharma, 2014; 4). But, not any longer perhaps!

The Right to the City debate in the Indian context is largely somewhere stuck at the urban poor. This is possibly because this problem is so huge and so fundamental that it becomes almost impossible to look beyond it without first providing satisfactory solutions to the same which is being sought in the context of the very many *yojanas* undertaken for our cities. The focus has also been reasoned out to be the awareness that the poor is the voter in this country as opposed to the rich who precisely is the tax payer. However, not all are voters since not all have the privilege to possess the required identity to exercise choice. These are people who cannot technically place any claims since they do not feature anywhere in the citizenry. They are invisible Indians. Ironically, their literal visibility on the Indian streets is undeniable.

Kolkata is no exception, in fact a glaring example. Ananya Roy (2008) interestingly clarifies that if one is searching for the urban poor in Kolkata, then it 'requires a spatial conceptualization that discards the conventional urban markings of wards and neighbourhoods. An alternative conceptualization has to pay close attention to railway tracks, drainage canals, bridges, urban streams, and vacant agricultural land' (Roy, 2008; 34) and so on. These are those city spaces which bear evidence to the claims of the poor, at times coinciding with those of the migrants and glorious state denials in both instances. These are people who are contributing to the making and unmaking, production and reproduction of the everyday city spaces and activities. These are people who could be migrants or commuters, evicted 'city'zens or residents with generational legacies. Yet, they are either squatters or slum dwellers.

A keen look at the classification of slums in Kolkata today establishes the fact that they are generally owned by people who are or have been outsiders to the city. Poverty intersects with migrant and minority identities making claims more complex. Among them, again there are Bengali speakers from Bangladesh or/and from rural Bengal and there are others. The slums in the city of Kolkata exhibit variable bargaining standpoints of the inhabitants who are the urban poor. Yet, it is a manifestation of their claims which they have established quite successfully on city spaces. They feel a sense of accomplishment and freedom as compared to their homes in their natives places where the push was enormous.

There are too many policies and initiatives undertaken at various levels of the country, state and the city to ensure housing, precisely affordable housing, or at least shelters for those who are either homeless or 'precariously housed' or living under 'sub-human' conditions by state and non state agents. And then, there are complains from the same quarters against each other and even against the beneficiaries of these attempts – the urban poor who often refuse to avail these facilities for reasons varying between distance from work place to absence of freedom and privacy. Then, there is an elitist approach to the existence of these homes in the city. They are like eyesores to people who acknowledge no unlawful existence as valid. People, who in their botheration for hygiene, security, beauty and so on believe these ugly looking huts must be removed with immediate effect. The government through time had catered to both sections implementing some clearance and some improvement policies with effect.

The Left Urban Order

Claims from the Right

In an era when the market seems to arrange and rearrange everything using its invisible hands, politics reigns supreme in Bengal. Besides *para* (neighbourhood) and *adda* (gossip) and *rajneeti* (politics) etc. form an equally interesting trait of Bengaliness. This is because the influence of the State government is profound in the

city. Sadly, it is there everywhere; 'benefits that should come to the citizen as a matter of right can only be received through the intermediation of a powerful middleman, usually allied to the party in power' (Sharma, 2014; 3), be it the an over three decades of the Left regime or the over three years of the Trinamool Congress.

There are enough evidences to prove that time and again the unchanging and taken for granted left government had been held responsible. A prolonged single standing government became the obvious explanation for all good things and bad. A government that came to power with the poor and the farmer on their priority list left after thirty four years when that list was kind of usurped by their single competent opposition only in 2011.

Enough had already changed before that, in the city, state, country and the world. It was the Left front's third term in Bengal, when India decided to undergo structural reforms. 'In the face of these developments, Jyoti Basu formulated a new industrial policy for West Bengal, which was no different from the liberalization policy adopted by the central government' (Sharma, 2014; 88) – a coalition government headed by the Indian National Congress. But he indeed was a careful man. He could not let Bengal's communist and his pro poor images get stained. Sitaram Sharma (2014) quotes the former West Bengal chief minister on an occasion confessing, "I will have to make friends with industrialists, as I want investment here. I cannot tell them to get out of the state because we are communists" (Sharma, 2014; 139).

Thereafter, 'In the closing years of the twentieth century, Calcutta was being made and unmade through several forces' (Sharma 2014; xiii), like those of rural landlessness, poverty, rural-urban migration, governmental fallacies and so on that had pushed the city towards congestion, crowding, deprivation and squatting. '2004, has been marked by the launch of an industrial development oriented growth strategy that started modifying the governance of the Kolkata agglomeration in a context of national competition' (Ghosh, 2009; 30). Urban governance in Kolkata was 'state-centric' and the model for the state was development-centric. This was a less realised but a more remarkable year of substantial *poriborton* (change) in Kolkata and West Bengal at large. This was the year of the 'new left', a different hue and a different leader. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, the new chief minister of the state was however, a less cautious man. With respect to the neoliberal turn, he had once commented, "According to classical Marxism there is a fundamental rift between capital and labour but here we are practicing policies of capitalism not socialism. We do not want to raise slogans like "*ladai ladai, ladai chai?*" (fight, fight and fight) and close down factories" (Sharma, 2014; 139).

The Post Global Urban Order

A Whole Spectrum of Claims

'With the liberalisation of the country's economy, the economic opportunities and their scope [had] expanded to a great extent. The KMA [Kolkata Municipal Area] and its hinterland have been proved to be highly attractive to the investors because of its fundamental business advantages like the size of its markets, the availability of certain key resources such as its skilled work force, agro based inputs, political stability, improved governance together with the State Government's policy on decentralisation and last but not the least – the positive impact of a relatively low competition intensity which is very vital for any industry to start off' (www.jnnurmwestbengal.gov.in, 4). 'Following the State Government's policy of spatially balanced and eco-friendly urban growth' (www.jnnurmwestbengal.gov.in, 9), several infrastructural developments had taken shape. 'As for the retail markets, the scope for brand retailing has increased in

recent years'… 'The ready-to-eat food category is growing at a very fast rate'…. 'A number of big retail stores have already come up in the city, viz. Pantaloons, Westside, Shopper's Stop and so on. Similar large retail stores and commercial plazas can also come up in the large and medium towns of KMA in a planned and regulated manner to meet the emerging clientele'…. 'The banking and insurance sectors have been playing an important role in financing the trade, commerce and industry in KMA and the State' www.jnnurmwestbengal.gov.in, 4). 'Kolkata is now a happening city, facilitated both by external and internal factors' (www.jnnurmwestbengal.gov.in, 13).

Today, the city exists within a time defining change, both structurally, into the neoliberal frame of existence and administratively, out of the left regime. The current chief minister, Mamata Banerjee, in her attempt to appear extremely promising has ended up promising extremes. One of her statements declare, 'Kolkata will be London and Darjeeling will be Switzerland' (Sharma, 2014; 152), also 'Industrial revolution is coming to the state' (Sharma, 2014; 152). 'Notwithstanding the problems and constraints, Kolkata envisions to become a world class city and attend competitive age in this era of globalization' (www.jnnurmwestbengal.gov.in) today.

A real boom in the real estate market has been a further fuel to this entire development spree. The fringes of the city especially those towards the east have proved to be the fertile breeding grounds. A superlative quality of marketing that promises exactly what the affording class needs, a good living environment and distance from the city's congestion, generating waves of polarisation in the process. Today, as glaring is wealth as was poverty alone once on the streets of Kolkata. The slums and squatters and the gated communities bear testament to these neatly divided quarters.

Partha Chatterjee (2011) opines that a city is meant to have people with differences and urban coexistence is supposed to be complicated involving a lot of tolerance. In fact, the precise hitch with contemporary Kolkata or any other city for that matter is 'democracy' that raises the bar and calls for an abnormal, untimely and unfitting equality of sorts. And it is democracy's interference into the otherwise peacefully existing city structure created and sustained by the city's rich that puts this very category in a position that is uneasy. And, they therefore make all the efforts to push the poor towards the margins. The state has been blamed to take the position of the former and the infrastructure of the city gets planned and executed in a manner in which the inequalities get all the more skewed (Chatterjee, 2011). The above quoted Buddhadeb Bhattacharya's statement is an evidence for Kolkata.

This precisely gets manifested when somebody living in a shanty along the railway lines near Jadavpur Station gets evicted by the railway authorities to facilitate the construction of the Sukanta Bridge, or some families by the port authorities gets evicted from their Chetla squatters, also when precarious homes in Patuli gets turned into dirt by the action of government bulldozers or the popular Nonadanga evictions for that matter. Sometimes, the city squatters experience chains of eviction. People squatting on pavements of the city proper are first moved to the fringes owing to gentrification and then from the fringes owing to city expansion. Hawkers get removed from the central city to rid the city of congestion and eye sores and squatting families get removed to accommodate temporary markets for these hawkers somewhere else (Roy, 2008).

There is no denial to the understanding that a city totally can and rather must have heterogeneities to realise the complexities of an urban character and each is entitled to their own rights to the same city. But because an individual's right comes in the way of another and because there is no Pareto optimality

kind of situation existent in reality and because the only way for someone to gain something is by taking away a bit from someone else, the Right to the City kind of claims are born and find justification in a city like Kolkata. When the farmers in the eastern fringes of the city are made to give up agricultural land for a City Centre or a Hiland Park to come up, which means nothing to them, apparent development occurs at the cost of people who experience dispossession and complete alienation and are direct non beneficiaries to this nature of development.

Indirectly though, this construction fetish that has hypnotised the city appeals to the urban poor as well. Though they are completely aware of their inaccessibility to any of these homes, shops, parks and so on, yet they find happiness in the realisation that it is an opportunity for them to find work (both in their construction and maintenance) precisely the reason as to why most of them are there in this city. They also live with the simultaneous awareness that it means becoming homeless (Roy, 2008).

The urban poor, though not a homogeneous category by any means believe that they all have an equal standing as far as rights are concerned since no one enjoys any. However, there have been instances where the squatters having risen to the status of slum dwellers look down upon their disadvantaged counterparts and resent shanties mushrooming in the vicinities of their homes. Given these complexities and contradictions, it shall therefore be an interesting exercise to understand the claims to the city these vulnerable groups harbour, their perception of Kolkata as home space and work space and their rights to the same therefore as perceived by them. If the poor are the voters, if at all, the rich are the tax payers and it is in the interest of any government to take care of that segment of the citizenry as well, in fact, more so as they are the proper citizens, the civil society 'who supposedly have lawful property relations with the state' (Holston, 2012; xi) unlike the homeless. As one of Roy's respondents innocently remarks, 'If one is a citizen, one can't be homeless' (Roy, 2008; 77) and which the author interprets more meaningfully as, 'if one is homeless, one can't be a citizen' in Kolkata or may be anywhere in India, the country is bursting with examples.

And therefore the big question: Is everything so incorrect with a developing Kolkata? How can all the 're'-industrialisation and the rapid urbanisation not be a positive move? The development of the IT sector in salt lake sector V has been a dream fulfilment, it has generated employment, it has created a new hopeful image of the city; it has successfully diverted many a skilled migrant away from Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi and Ahmedabad and so on towards Kolkata. Isn't that great news? This, as Roy explains is an attempt to 'reclaim' the *Bhodrolok*'s city of Kolkata (Roy, 2008). But is Kolkata still and solely a gentleman's city? The Kolkata that exists today belongs to whom? Who contributes? Who claims? Who are the stakeholders? And who are the beneficiaries? The next big question is: Does one know an alternative pathway to develop? May be not, but one surely knows that there is no alternative to development. And development as a process will charge social cost and an economy that wishes to grow must convince its society to pay up. But to what extent one is willing to take this bid forward? This is because at some point the disadvantaged will convert their consciousness into cries.

Right to the city is a similar consciousness first that gets translated into a movement later. Roy, towards the end of the last decade had explained Kolkata to be that platform where issues are rampant but there is no movement yet. Possibly because the consciousness of Kolkata as that space on which claims could be established has not concretised completely among people too busy flaunting their *para* and *adda* cultures. 'The Bengali is also intensely proud of his Bengaliness, and considers himself to be a cut above the rest

of the country in terms of intelligence and cultural sophistication' (Sharma, 2014; 3). Or is it because 'the average Bengali … [has] been bludgeoned into passivity over years of dispossession' (Sharma, 2014; 3)?

In contrast to this image exists another which is adorned by awareness and the gift of the gab. 'An inadequately appointed school for his child; a road that has not been repaired for ages; an officially electrified village that does not receive power – the average Bengali learns to improvise and make do' (Sharma, 2014; 3), refusing to let go anything and fight for everything. But that happens only when one is pushed into a corner. And that is how Bengal has been able to produce freedom fighters during India's battle for independence, student leaders during the country's encounter with Naxalism and more recently with respect to the Singur-Nandigram and the Gorkhaland movements which are definitely right claiming ones. In fact, some scholars view the overthrow of the left to be an outcome of a concretised consciousness and a resultant movement for that matter. However, to each is his consciousness and his claim for rights.

The claims to the city and their justifications thereafter gets conditioned by an individual's imaginations, perceptions and expectations from the city which can only be covered with half honesty from a review of governmental and non governmental reports, policy documents, data sources, and surveys and so on. This study is therefore a conscious attempt to abstain from an evaluation of this nature though there is no denial to the fact that these are state concerns directly and the solutions possibly lie exactly there. Yet, it is instead, an attempt to capture the realisations of belongingness to the city of Kolkata, its eligibility as home space and work space in the imaginations of its residents for themselves and their city-mates and the rights that they therefore desire to claim or are currently claiming given the intersectionalities of their social standings. The city is expected to behave differently with different segments of its residents, who in turn are going to have differential claims to and expectations from the same city. Their rights to the same city are expected to differ which the global debates on the Right to the City somewhere fails to capture. It fails to perceive the city as a player and assumes it to be an isotropic plane, which it is not.

The Right to the city claims are also assumed to be peripheral. And the study assumes the constitution of these peripheries along with the assumption that intersectionalities are objective realities. However, it must be clarified that only vulnerabilities are assumptions, outcomes are not. When Ananya Roy (2008) concludes from her study that poor women commuters reproduce the city space of Kolkata everyday much more than their male counterparts do because the men are primarily unemployed and therefore, the claims of the women at least in the public domain are stronger, very subtly she rejects the hypothesis of constructed gendered positions.

The recently rising IT sector has been claimed to bring about a change in the gendered claims to both the public and the private domains within Kolkata. Women constituted around one fifth of the total workforce in the IT sector in Kolkata in 2004 and expected to approach an almost fifty per cent mark by the end of the decade. Stereotypically it was believed that the IT sector would benefit more from women because they naturally have a more attractive communicative voice, they are cheap labour, more docile and therefore less likely to unionise, and women would benefit by becoming more assertive and have a better bargaining power at home given their employed status. Both have proved to be true over time. However the stronger patriarchal gender relations are still in place. Women work doubly harder to manage between home and work. Their optimising tendencies are getting replaced by a satisficing one and rich working women of the city are getting substituted by poor commuting or squatting women as far as the household chores are concerned (Hussain and Dutta, 2008). Contradictorily, an average Bengali on the streets of

Kolkata, even few years ago, would have claimed the city to be the safest for women when compared to the other metropolises in the country; but, not anymore. The city accounts for '12.67 per cent of the country's sex crimes. The reinvented Kolkata became the India's third most unsafe city for women. And this under Bengal's first woman chief minister' (Sharma, 2014; x).
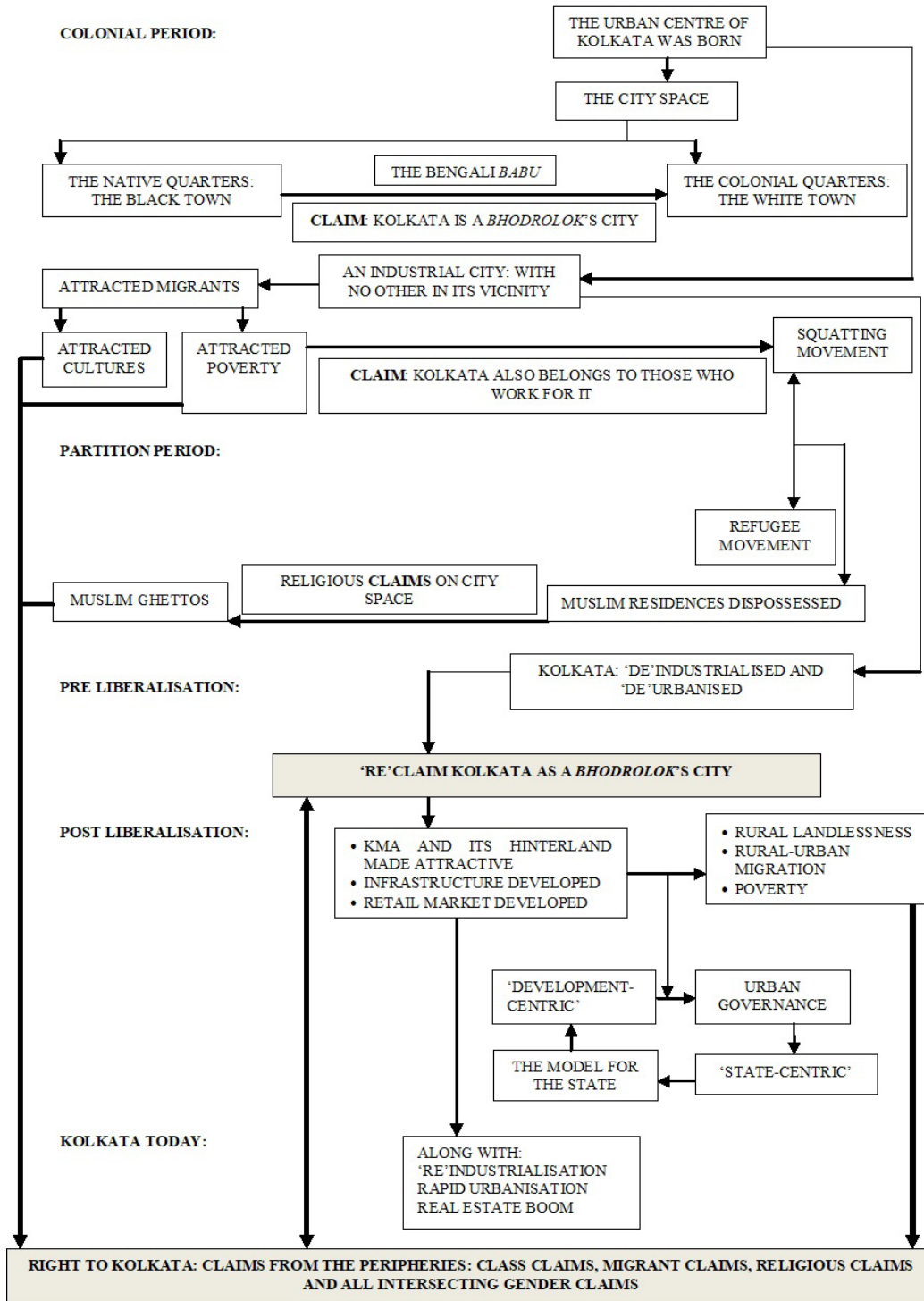
Figure 1: Claiming Kolkata through Time

Kolkata: the Post Global urban Heterotopia

Therefore, after a decade and more of operating within the neoliberal market regime, not the way the world understands it or has defined it, instead the way Kolkata has interpreted it and adopted it through left and right politics; Kolkata has emerged with an image that is dynamic – one of changing landscapes. Many claims that progress has been only apparent and the price paid heavy – 'A continuous cycle of evictions, expropriations, ecological degradation and social protest' (Bose, 2013; 127). What future thus awaits a city where progress and contestations exist as flip sides of a coin or is that the norm always and at all places? Answers can best be sought through an understanding of the lived experiences of the city.

There is possibly no stronger evidence of the rights and denials conferred by a city than the everyday life experiences of the citizens. An historical account of the same clarifies that the urban poor, the outsiders, the Muslims and the overarching category of women form the peripheral or the marginal segment of society in Kolkata. Therefore, their claims vis-a-vis their counters have been tabulated below using a few simple yet intriguing questions. Binary logistic regressions reveal the probability of a section's experience when compared against the 'other' and a paints a vivid picture of how a contemporary post global Kolkata with all its cosmopolitanisms, prejudices, and regionalisms treats its residents.

Who feels discriminated against and who feels free to protest?

Table 1 **Who Feels Discriminated Against?**			**Table 2** **Who Feels Free to Protest?**		
Category		*Expected (B)*	*Category*		*Expected (B)*
Age Group	<30 Years	1.000	Age Group	<30 Years	1.000
	30-60 Years	0.563		30-60 Years	1.062
	>60 Years	0.562		>60 Years	0.787
Sex	Male	1.000	Sex	Male	1.000
	Female	1.091		Female	0.840
MPCE	Poorest	1.000	MPCE	Poorest	1.000
	Poor	0.303		Poor	1.217
	Medium	0.838		Medium	2.021
	Rich	0.521		Rich	1.133
	Richest	1.001		Richest	2.301
Religion	Hindus	1.000	Religion	Hindus	1.000
	Muslims	0.780		Muslims	0.709

Source: Computed by researcher from field survey data.

- The young mostly are chanced to experience discrimination, but it is the middle aged whose chance to feel free to protest is the highest.

- The probability of women facing discrimination is more but their chances of protesting or feeling free to protest is less as compared to men implying a double denial.

- Quite interestingly, the poorest and the richest have the highest probability of facing discrimination, but it is the richest among whom the chance of feeling free to protest is the highest.

Who Feels Free to Bring about a Change and Who is Planning to Leave the City?

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">Table 3
Who Feels Free to Bring About a Change?</td><td colspan="3" align="center">Table 4
Who is Planning to Leave The City?</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>*Category*</td><td>*Expected (B)*</td><td></td><td>*Category*</td><td>*Expected (B)*</td></tr>
<tr><td>Age Group</td><td><30 Years</td><td>1.000</td><td>Age Group</td><td><30 Years</td><td>1.000</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>30-60 Years</td><td>0.149</td><td></td><td>30-60 Years</td><td>0.437</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>>60 Years</td><td>0.283</td><td></td><td>>60 Years</td><td>1.027</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sex</td><td>Male</td><td>1.000</td><td>Sex</td><td>Male</td><td>1.000</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Female</td><td>0.438</td><td></td><td>Female</td><td>0.592</td></tr>
<tr><td>MPCE</td><td>Poorest</td><td>1.000</td><td>MPCE</td><td>Poorest</td><td>1.000</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Poor</td><td>0.765</td><td></td><td>Poor</td><td>6.123</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Medium</td><td>1.507</td><td></td><td>Medium</td><td>4.803</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Rich</td><td>1.440</td><td></td><td>Rich</td><td>3.130</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Richest</td><td>2.397</td><td></td><td>Richest</td><td>1.676</td></tr>
<tr><td>Religion</td><td>Hindus</td><td>1.000</td><td>Religion</td><td>Hindus</td><td>1.000</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Muslims</td><td>1.306</td><td></td><td>Muslims</td><td>0.739</td></tr>
</table>

Source: Computed by researcher from field survey data.

- The young mostly feel free to bring about a change, but they are also the ones who are planning to leave the city. It is the zeal of the youth and their urge to achieve that probably explains both these responses.

- The old also have a high probability to leave the city, possibly more by compulsion and less by choice.

- The men feel freer to bring about a change, but they are also more likely to move out. The women seem more passive in this case.

- The Muslims are more likely to bring about a change, where are Hindus are more likely to leave the city – this finding questions very many stereotypes; also 'change' is obviously desired when there is dissatisfaction and non acceptance.

Who thinks Kolkata is Home?

The city undoubtedly is the space of current inhabitancy for all those included in the survey. Yet, there are differences in terms of perceiving the same as 'home'. These differences could possibly be guided by one's chances of mobility, with of course a variable sense of attachment and belongingness. The young, the women, the richest and the Muslims share a higher chance of feeling a stronger sense of home within the city as compared to the others. This finding could finally be indicative of the fact that one's perception of a Right to the City of one's inhabitancy, work, accessibilities and belongingness is an interaction of one's various memberships along with one's individual life experiences generating a pattern that is both unique and unexplained to some extent.

Table 5
Who Feels Free To Call Kolkata 'Home'?

	Category	Expected (B)
Age Group	<30 Years	1.000
	30-60 Years	0.550
	>60 Years	0.763
Sex	Male	1.000
	Female	1.779
MPCE	Poorest	1.000
	Poor	3.231
	Medium	1.035
	Rich	4.133
	Richest	4.336
Religion	Hindus	1.000
	Muslims	2.110

Source: Computed by researcher from field survey data

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, therefore it can be logically analysed that the city that Kolkata images today, that is, within times of enhanced inequalities, appears to be a manifestation of spatial and temporal heterotopias born to complicate the social construction of spaces and the spatial construction of social identities that have concretised through a prolonged history of claims and denials. The segment of city space, quite literally and perceptively as well, occupied, lived through, used, participated into and belonged to seem to have shaped the senses of accessibilities and denials, acceptances and rejections, freedoms and un-freedoms of the city dwellers across time stretches through everyday(s). The claims to the city and their justifications thereafter get conditioned by an individual's imaginations, perceptions and expectations from the same city built through multiple spatial and temporal processes of accommodation and otherness up to a point in time when the othering has attained such common sense that it appears synonymous to mere differences. The city, as an entity therefore, also behaves differently with different segments of city dwellers whose rights to the same are thus expected to differ since the sameness of the city is not even an imagination.

Acknowledgement

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