

**The Other Information Society: An Ethnography of Delhi's
Electronic Bazaars**

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Chapter I

Introduction

Electronic Bazaars in Delhi: The Third Model of the Information Society in India

Over the last couple of decades, India has carved a niche for itself in building a domestic computer industry creating hardware and ‘software for export’ (Dendrik and Kraemer 1993). The growth of information technology in India is no less than a miracle. For a newly independent country, the initial ambition of ‘import substitution’ faced major setbacks. Resource constraints and an imbalance between different sectors of the economy were creating a gap between the objectives of the Five-Year Plan and its implementation (Nayar 2006). In effect, the ‘twin aim of building socialism and economic independence’ came to be reassessed in the latter half of 1970s, especially the regulations introduced by the state. What is infamously known as the ‘license raj’ depicts the flip side of the excessive authority vested in the state officials (Sanders 1977). Until the late 1970s, the Indian economy in general, including the information technology industry, was projected to be within the ‘Hindu rate of growth’, an average growth of 3.5% of the planned economy. In the latter half of the 1970s and 1980s, the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and later her son Rajiv Gandhi rethought the route adopted by the newly independent state. Instead of socialist planning, importance shifted to the opening of the national economy and including new actors. Along with the economy in general, for the homegrown IT industry, the decisions made were to cut down the control of the state on the production and distribution of software. The freedom in turn was given to individual firms to have their own collaborations with domestic as well as international firms (Subramanian 2006). As a result, the 1990s saw an overall change in the shape of the IT industry in India. A number of private IT companies and software parks developed, Infosys, Satyam and HCL (Hindustan Computers Limited) to name a few. Software and software-related services put India on the global map at a time when everywhere in the world the role of information technology was starting to be understood.

Any technology optimist would see the decade of the 1990s and afterwards as bringing new life to the IT industry in India. The Indian homegrown IT industry had matured at a time when globally the demand for software was on the rise. However, one crucial thing escaped the notice of mainstream economists and the state. The advantages that the software and software-related services enjoyed did not encompass the whole country and its population. The IT industry was a product amongst other things of the large number of educational and research institutes that had developed in India since independence. A large pool of graduates from the scientific and technological institutes gave a major boost to the software and hardware industry in India. One ignores the links between elite research institutes such as TIFR (the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research) and the growth of the IT industry in India. India is not only made up of the technological graduates, scientists, engineers and programmers that pushed the IT revolution in India. More than half of the population in India has no access to the Internet or information products. Pyati argues the ‘information revolution in India is limited to the urban middle and upper class in a select number of cities’. He further adds that the information society in India is ‘packaged along with logics of privatization, corporate-driven social change, and technological determinism’ (Pyati 2010: 407). The large section of the population that lies outside the educational, economic and cultural elite in India is ignored in the official discourse of an information society in India.

In my dissertation, I cover a section of the non-elite of the information society. The group of people that I focus on in the urban metropolis of Delhi is tied to the information society through the distribution of information products, namely video games. I examine the traders of video games in three informal markets in Delhi: Lajpat Rai Market, Palika Bazaar and Nehru Place. The traders are outside the creative loop of software and hardware production. However, although they are outside the elite zone of the information society, this does not mean they are excluded from it altogether. The framing of the non-elite zone of the information society as problematic through discourses of piracy is the general tendency of the Indian state and MNCs (Multinational Corporations). Those outside the elite discourse of science and technology of India are either completely ignored or vilified (Athique 2008), when in reality the non-elite zone is as much a part of the information society as the elite zone. In the non-elite zone we have hardware crackers and the small time innovators that actively participate in an information society, creating their own nodes of entry into the information society. The traders in informal markets in Delhi are crucial loops in the innovative network as well as the distributive channels of information products in India. They not only take part in small-time technical innovations but also open the information society to the mass of

consumers in India. The average consumer is not necessarily someone who has a computer at home and is accustomed to technology. He may be someone that has an impression of what an information product is and yet has never had the chance to access any information product, including video games. The informal video games markets in Delhi are crucial spaces in the information society in India that improvise on technological products and create important linkages between information products and the lowest level consumers in India.

The non-elite zone of the information society is not acknowledged in spite of the contribution that it makes to the overall economy. It reaches out to a diverse range of consumers in the country. The informal economy connects the majority of people in India to information products. These people do not have the monetary and information access to the formal network of information products. Yet so far, the only way that the informal information economy has been analyzed by the mainstream discourse is through and the lens of criminalization and suspicion, associating it with piracy. The aim of the dissertation is to give a more holistic view of the non-elite zone of the information society in India, to reveal the people who are absorbed in it, and show what role it fulfills in the overall economic and cultural space in India. The third model of the information society in India is built through a description of the traders, their contribution and terms of their participation in the information society. Further expanding the gray markets in India not merely as a place for pirated products but also cheap and recycled goods, I analyze the potential that these markets carry. In the introduction I first build on the two dominant discourses of the information society to articulate clearly the contours of the third model. I use the term 'bazaar' to talk about the third model as a space of innovation, distribution and a social space. In the rest of the introduction, I touch on the background of the traders and the average consumer that uses the bazaars, in order to examine the shifting role of the bazaar in the overall economic and cultural landscape of India. The introduction ends with a brief description of the chapters covered in the dissertation.

What is an Information Society?

In every stage of historical development, changes in the modes of production have led to a redefinition of work, consumption and leisure practices in the society at large (Fisher and Downey 2006). The latest shift in the mode of production leading to a reorganization of the society is the movement from Fordism to Post-Fordism. Fordism, which started in the second half of the nineteenth century, was primarily based on divisions between factory and society, manual and intellectual labour, and

between production and consumption. Production took place in large factories and consumption took place in the private sphere of the home. Workers organized in assembly line production were kept separate from managerial functions and the decision-making process (Arvidsson and Peitersen 2103). From roughly the 1970s onwards, we see stagnation of the economy of mass-produced goods and there was in turn a demand for decentralized production, flexibility and diverse consumer goods. Furthermore, the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 and the 'stable currency regime' led to financialization of the economy and currency speculation (Arrighi 1994, Harvey 2005). The financialization of markets, rise of consumer goods, and individuation of desires was made feasible by information technology. We then arrived at what many scholars have termed the 'Information Society/Economy', 'Networked Society', 'Post-Industrial Society' and 'Knowledge Society' (Lash 2002, Castells 2000a, Bell 1976). While there is a slight variation in the use of each term, all the definitions are interconnected. For instance, the term 'post-industrial society' is an allusion to the changes in the modes of production from largely manufacturing to service (Bell 1976). And the term 'knowledge society' suggests the kind of change that has become prominent in the new mode of production, primarily importance shifted to symbolic or 'knowledge-based inputs and outputs' (Stehr 1994: 123). Each of the terms refers to fundamental aspects of the economic and cultural systems that we find ourselves in at the present time, the all-encompassing presence of media goods, the increasing connectedness of people, and knowledge becoming an important form of property.

Assuming that the contemporary economy is 'informational' in nature, where resources are utilized through the manipulation of knowledge, I will use the term 'Information Society' to reflect on the current epoch¹. The flow of capital is based on the information gathered on a number of issues, including the global political situation, climate change, and national disturbances. The force of the information society lies in its ability to 'manipulate' the information at hand, and what for Castells would signify, 'action of knowledge upon knowledge itself' (Castells, 2000a: 17). The overall importance attached to 'scientific knowledge' and the connectivity of society through media and information products have created new

¹ The phrase 'information society' is used more as an umbrella term to encompass the changes made to the mode of production in the latter half of the twentieth century. Manuel Castells observes that 'information society' has become a redundant term as according to him what is new to the current epoch is not 'information' but the rise of 'information technologies' (Castells 2000a: 10). He instead prefers the term 'network society'. I chose to continue with the term 'information society' and extend its meaning to include the rise of information technologies, 'information goods', 'financial networks' 'cosmopolitan elites', 'immaterial labour', etc. The term 'information society' captures the essence of the present epoch, information and knowledge emerging as crucial commodities of exchange, commercial as well as social.

forms of control and governance of resources. Increasingly, we see two dominant discourses that have come to define the rationale, potential and limits of the information society (Rule and Besen 2008). One important model is the hegemonic discourse of the information society, which is the state-supported corporate regime. Both in its reach and its influence in building an almost universal legal framework to accompany its ideology, we witness the power it enjoys as a dominant discourse. Another, model is the access to knowledge movement (A2K). It is an alternative to the hegemonic discourse since it develops as a reaction to many of the assumptions of the corporate model regarding creation and sharing of knowledge.

The Hegemonic Model of the Information Society

The information society based on the upsurge of new knowledge came to be localized within certain institutions. Manuel Castells calls them the ‘network enterprise’. He sees the network enterprise as ‘made from either firms or segments of firms, ...these networks connect among themselves on specific business projects, and switch to another network as soon as the project is finished’ (Castells 2000b: 10-11). Observing the ‘network society’ as capitalist in nature, Castells places the center of the enterprises in the global financial markets where the value of firms is evaluated. Manuel Castells describes the global financial markets as inhabiting ‘spaces of flows’. He lists the layers of the ‘spaces of flows’ comprising ‘electronic exchanges’, and ‘managerial elites that exercise directional functions around which such spaces are articulated’ (Castells 2000b: 445).

The dominant network of financial capital is ‘hegemonic’; power is exercised consensually rather than by brute force (Bates 1975). The links of the powerful global finance capital with the rest of the world are almost complete now. ‘ Local economies everywhere depend “on the performance of their globalized core”, which includes, “financial markets, international trade, transnational production, and to some extent, science and technology and specialty labor”. Also, developing countries that have long labored under a trade imbalance with regard to manufacturing goods and raw materials and the unequal distribution of wealth generated by these now labor under a “new form of imbalance” regarding “the trade between high-technology and low-technology goods, and between high-knowledge services and low-knowledge services, characterized by a pattern of uneven distribution of knowledge and technology between countries and regions around the world”’ (Kapczynski 2010: 19).

The circulation of knowledge and capital among what Manuel Castells calls ‘the space of flows’ is consistent with the rise of intellectual property laws. Copyright,

trademarks and patents ensure that the circulation of knowledge and resources continues among big financial conglomerates. Economists apply strong pressure to make the intellectual property regime the primary model governing knowledge creation and lucrative investment (Maskus and Penubarti 1995). Over the years, legislation has been passed specifying the limits of IP laws. The Paris convention and the Berne Convention of the late nineteenth century are some of the laws laying out grounds for patents and copyright protection (Beniger 1986). In recent years, the TRIPs agreement of 1994 was one of the most comprehensive laws on IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) so far. The inclusion of the TRIPs agreement within the WTO regulations meant that a non-signee country faced serious trade and resource marginalization.

The penalties of operating outside of IP laws are high enough for national economies to contest these laws. In many ways, the hegemonic information economy/society is not only powerful but has its own seductive power at play. The rise of information technologies and products is now part of a symbolic environment that guarantees a certain lifestyle and aspirations. In the instance of India, a newly independent nation, the benefits of becoming part of an information economy were high. Even before, the rise of the information society as we know it today, with its mediatized reality and the Internet, India from the early years of its independence put strong emphasis on the growth of science and technology. The Nehruvian era was known for its emphasis on modernizing India with science and technological development (Banerjee 1998). A checkered development process followed the decades after independence, beginning from the 1950s. The project of building native science saw a massive boost in the 1990s with the mushrooming of many new software firms and parks.

The central government in India, since the beginning, has been euphoric about the growth of the software sector in India. The boom in the software and the related service industry in India, globally accounts for around 40% of total software exports. Validating the actual and imagined glory of an emerging economy with strong advances in science and technology, India supported the growth of the software industry massively. A high trade subsidy was offered to the software industry, which continues to exist today (Chandrasekhar 2005). India is a signee of major copyright laws, including TRIPS. Apart from the international IPR laws, many domestic laws on the creative industries have been sanctioned. One of the most crucial is the India Copyright Law 1994, which guarantees strong sanctions against copyright violation. It allows for fines and jail for those who are knowingly involved in software counterfeiting. Furthermore, in the IT Act 2000, there is provision for penalties

against pirate websites offering free downloading (Mali 2012). All in all, the legal paradigm chosen by the Indian government in the information society adheres to the corporate model of proprietorship. In official eyes, the corporate model has become a legitimate and often the basis for translating the dreams of an information society into reality (Chandrasekhar 2010). In the Indian context, the government has neglected all other aspects of the information industry and it uncritically assumes the protective regime of IPR to be the only valid model of an information society.

The Alternative to the Hegemonic Discourse of the Information Society

The domination of the corporate model of the information society is contested by many today based on its use, circulation and norms of reproduction of information and information products. Yochai Benkler is a pioneer of the ‘nonmarket, non-proprietary organization and motivation forms’ (Benkler 2006: 4). Benkler’s emphasis is that ‘social production’ is ““emerging alongside contract and market-based, managerial firm-based and state-based production”....it is marked by three main characteristics: (1) decentralization-“the authority to act resides with individual agents faced with opportunities for action, rather than in the hands of a central organizer, like the manager of a firm or a bureaucrat”; (2) a frequent use of common resources and public goods; and (3) the prevalence of non-monetary motivations’ (Arvidsson and Peitersen 2013: 83).

Over the years the alternative to the hegemonic discourse of knowledge production has become a systematic movement. Use of terms such as ‘A2K (access to knowledge) movement’, represents a palpable change in that direction, demonstrating activists’ call to challenge the ‘contours of intellectual property laws’. Even though the beginning of the resistance to the intellectual property regime saw free software and open source movements, who held different values regarding sharing materials to the public, over the years the members of these movements have acknowledged that the difference they have made is inconsequential when compared to the private property regime that they are fighting against (Gay 2002). The alternatives to the hegemonic discourse of knowledge production, whether it be a free software movement, open source or open-biotech, or peer-to-peer production find common ground in contesting the production and distribution loop that the corporate model holds sacred. Amy Kapczynski locates ‘A2K in two ways: as a reaction to structural trends in technologies of information processing and in law, and as an emerging conceptual critique of the narrative that legitimates the dramatic expansion in intellectual property rights that we have witnessed over the past several decades’ (Kapczynski 2010: 17).

The A2K movement experiments with innovative ways of sharing. New knowledge can be available in the public domain, where there exists no law for sharing and distribution of materials to citizens. Knowledge is freely available to everyone. The A2K movement mainly espouses the ‘commons’ model, in making its knowledge available to the public (Arvidsson and Peitersen 2013). The commons creative licenses insist that the restrictions are extended to those who decide to use the shared knowledge. Often, the provision is that the new knowledge is not put to commercial use. The popular licenses for free software, GNU General Public License or GPL ‘turns copyright on its head by mandating sharing, rather than exclusivity-it permits users to modify, copy and share the covered work as long as they pass along to others these same freedoms’ (Kapczynski 2010: 33). The A2K movement functions within some notion of intellectual property laws although the very logic of these laws is completely antithetical to the hegemonic discourse. Rather than individuals governing new knowledge, initiating monopolies of profit, the A2K movement emphasizes that the new knowledge is shared and replenished by those who benefit from it.

The visions of an alternative to the market-based information economy have their roots in India as well. From the time of ‘distributive networks’ of nodes acting as autonomous agents connecting ‘from any number of links’, we see the active participation of software programmers in India, for instance in bulletin boards (Bauwens 2005: 5). Christopher Kelty in his book, *Two Bits*, refers to the IT specialists in Bangalore whose participation in newsletters such as ‘Tasty Bits from the Technology Front’ made them part of a collective ethos of changing the everyday with the newly available medium of communication and technology (Kelty 2008). In my fieldwork I met an enthusiastic group of software programmers and web designers who wanted to use their knowledge for a cause. One day in the month of July in Delhi, I found myself attending ‘Hackathon’ at the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi. It was an initiative by the planning commission of India to collaborate with programmers to develop user-friendly software and make the 12th five-year plan accessible to the public. As I started talking to many of the programmers it came out quite strongly how they value the work they do. Admitting that a source of livelihood is important, they do not see that as the defining factor of their lives. Samrat, a FOSS (Free and Open-Source Software) activist, emphasized the aspect of using their knowledge, which is not available to everyone, to create awareness and a better technological infrastructure in India. It was not enough for him to simply join a cause. He valued what the other members thought of his contribution and he tried not to come across as a passive imitator. He admitted that,

as in every field, there is lot of respect to be gained in the field of software activism. That comes only with being efficient in writing code, actively engaging in debates and inspiring people. He quoted a sentence from one of the websites, which acted for him like a motto: ‘Contributors are priceless, you have to be’. There is no natural way of being a free software activist; one has to create something useful, a so-called ‘social currency’, Samrat added. The world of software activism in India reflects the global movement towards critical sharing of knowledge. Amongst software activists in India, we see the same level of awareness about the potential of information technologies and the shortcomings of the present infrastructure in the country. Software activists in India position themselves at the center of the debate on the information society in India to bridge the gap between resources and access to information products.

The responsibility of software professionals to create participatory software and Internet portals is felt by many IT specialists in India. Like the geeks that Gabriella Coleman talks about in her work, the programmers in India are also native to the computer world (Coleman 2013). Most of them were comfortable with the virtual world early on in their lives. They found immense joy and satisfaction in writing codes beautifully. Their ease with computer language and jargon make the software activists in India one of the elite groups of the information society in India. In fact, Samrat, the FOSS activist I spoke to in Delhi, was aware of the knowledge and capital divide in the country. In his interview he spoke about his long-term goal to teach basic computing and programming to interested youths in India. According to him, the pool of human resources in India is abundant but the gap between capacity and access is still very high.

The Bazaar Model of the Information Society

In the dominant discourses of the information society, whether it is the hegemonic IPR regime or the counterhegemonic regime of free software, and open source, there are certain underlying assumptions that come to the fore. Important amongst these is the relative ease with which people have transitioned into social media, especially the Internet. In much of the world, especially in the West, it is a reality, “the physical machinery necessary to participate in information and cultural production is almost universally distributed in the population of the advanced economies”: that the “primary raw materials of the old information economy, unlike the industrial economy are public goods-existing in information, knowledge and culture” (Arvidsson and Peitersen 2013: 83). The expansion of information products in the West is unprecedented. An interesting aspect is the almost equal distribution and access to information technology across society.

People that are outside the reflective spaces, or the ‘recursive public’ of the information society are considered marginalized. Manuel Castell’s distinction between ‘spaces of flows’ and ‘spaces of places’ brings out this aspect. The ‘spaces of flows’ of networks of finance capital, managers and programmers, and the ‘space of places’ of local people and history are understood in different zones of power and representation (Castells 2000b). While it is true that the ‘cosmopolitan elite’ and local people vary in the comfort and ease with which they use information technology, it is not a situation that is mutually exclusive. The locals are part of the information society and are not outside of it. The position of the locals by virtue of them being excluded from positions of power in the information society does not mean that their politics are based solely on community lines. The locals appropriate information technologies in their own specific ways and create spaces of survival and resistance.

This is why to talk about the video game bazaars in India is so important. The bazaars are not in control of information that governs the global flow of capital. However, they enter the information society by finding the spots that they can turn to their advantage. The bazaar and the *bazaaris* (traders) do not create codes and use *market devices* such as advertising and pricing mechanisms that allow them to manipulate the global flow of information. What they are good at instead is with materiality of information products. They can break, assemble and disassemble knowledge products and create new forms. The tactile form of knowledge and access comes naturally to the practitioners of the bazaars. With their lack of formal training in any particular discipline, the external world and its different facts become known to the traders through acclimatization to a situation in its most elementary form. The bazaar is the third model of the information society in practice. The traders do not conceptualize original knowledge products of the information society such as new software and hardware. What they do is enter the product world once it is created and make space for them within it. The traders in the electronic markets in Delhi connect to the ‘space of flows’ through tinkering with hardware, selling the latest ‘information product’, and using the Internet for business purposes.

The elite world of the information society is not available to all sections of the Indian society. The money and knowledge required to own new information technology is not within the reach of an average Indian (Liang and Sundaram 2011). This is where the bazaar steps in. It has the potential not only to embrace this deficiency but also to create its own workable ways to enter into a new world. The formal information society of IT professionals, MNCs, and advanced tools are out of reach of the traders in the bazaars. The traders in Delhi therefore use many channels to enter the information society. From trading in pirated and contraband goods, to bringing

cheaper consoles into the market through *modding*, the traders in the bazaars push themselves into the information society. The traders resort to tacit knowledge amongst other things to teach themselves about information products. However, they do not limit themselves to learning about information technology just for self-knowledge; they manipulate information technology and products to create sources of livelihood in a competitive urban environment. The traders sense the needs and inadequacy of those at the other end of the elite information society, the average consumer who has the desire for information products but has neither the means nor the knowledge to attain those products. The traders of the bazaar demystify a sophisticated information product such as a video game to the average Indian buyer. Right from the explanation required to initiate a neophyte into the information society to providing the product in its basic form, the traders of the bazaar cater for the different pockets in India. The bazaars do not believe that India is a full-grown IT powerhouse. The bazaars daily encounter the other end of the information society where not only a computer but also electricity is a sought after commodity. The bazaars even from time to time cater to the prosperous middle-class in India (Fernandes 2006). However, the myth of middle class and elite sections of India comprising the whole of India does not dupe the bazaars. It targets the population in urban and rural areas that are not part of the information society in actuality. According to the traders, information products are elitist; they come with skills and a price tag that is beyond the capacity of the majority of Indians.

The potential of the bazaar existing as an independent mode of innovation and circulation of information products makes way for a Foucauldian idea of looking at the interstices (Foucault 1977). The bazaar model of the information society does not come to light unless one consciously looks for it. They do not make front-page cover stories about the meteoric rise of India as software giant. If at all in recent times, the bazaars have made headlines when their negative characteristics have been highlighted. The electronic bazaars in Delhi have been in the news in recent times for dealing with pornographic and pirated materials. The potential of the electronic bazaars in Delhi has not attracted sufficient attention from scholars or state officials. There are studies in other parts of the world that have concentrated on looking at how global products and information reach the lower end of the society. Terms such as 'lower end globalization', 'globalization from below' have been used to talk about the other end of the information society. Rather than looking at the surge of globalization and the rise of consumer goods from a top-down perspective, Gordon Mathews analyzes 'lower end globalization' as the 'transnational flow of people and goods involving relatively small amounts of capital and informal, sometimes quasi-legal or illegal transactions, commonly associated within the

developing world' (Mathews 2007: 170). Gordon Mathews et al. analyze the hegemonic discourse and its 'spaces of flows' as 'high-end globalization', 'typified by the multinational corporations whose names everyone knows, from Apple to Nokia to MacDonald's to Coca Cola to Samsung, and by institutions such as the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO. It is globalization as championed by nation-states, as well as by such media outlets as the Wall Street Journal and the Economist. It operates, at least in theory, in a legal and transparent way. "Lower-end globalization" on the other hand, operates under the radar of the law. It may involve obtaining knock-off goods, whose logos have been appropriated from the brand of "high-end globalization", and smuggling those goods across borders for sale by street vendors in cities across the globe' (Mathews and Yang 2012: 97-98).

I use the broad term 'bazaar' to talk about the third wave of the information society in India. Not limiting my analysis of the street level economy of video games to merely a space of consumption, I use the term 'bazaar' to examine the role of informal/semi-legal markets as commercial places, social spaces, places of co-creation and important distribution nodes in India. My research has covered the three gray markets in Delhi: Lajpat Rai Market, Palika Bazaar and Nehru Place. Lajpat Rai market, positioned in Old Delhi, is primarily a market of wholesale original and knockoff video games. Palika Bazaar is a retail market of video games. And in Nehru Place the market of video games is largely limited to the street vendors that sell pirated DVDs/CDs of computer games. The gray markets of electronic products in Delhi have been examined through the concept of the 'illegal economy', 'pirate economy' and through the lens of 'informality' (Gandhi 2012, Sundaram 2009a).². Although the electronic markets are informal in nature in relation to labor recruitment, labor protection etc., a broader term is necessary to describe the non-judicial everyday interactions in the market. In doing so, the potential of an informal market place is not reduced to its frame of organization but can be seen in terms of its larger interaction with the formal economy and the society at large. That is why the use of the term 'bazaar' to cover the different facets of the informal economy of

² There is considerable debate surrounding the meaning and significance of the term 'informal economy' (Bremen 1996). Originally coined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to refer to the rapidly growing local markets in Kenya, outside of the planned economy, 'informal economy' has come to include the unorganized sector, which is low capital intensive, 'ingenious' with no or minimum labour protection. Some of the defining features of the informal economy are 'official non-status, lacks solid legal status and is unprotected or unregulated by the state'. Around 80-90% of the workforce in India is absorbed in the informal economy. Within the non-agriculture workforce, the size of the informal economy in India was 61.7% of the workforce in the early 2000s (Amin 2000). The non-agricultural informal economy in India range from small size enterprises such as shops and restaurants that are either self-employed or owned by family networks. These places usually employ fewer than 10 people. The traders that I studied in Delhi were in the non-agricultural informal economy.

video games is significant.

The bazaar (or ‘bazar’, using the Persian word) is a ‘traditional markets that is at once an economic institution, a way of life, and a general mode of commercial activity reaching into all aspects of ...society’ (Geertz 1963: 30). The bazaar in the literature is examined as a traditional market place in the context of India as well. Both in colonial times and continuing until now, bazaars have acted as meeting grounds for people and at the same time as places to exchange their wares. Interestingly, ‘bazaars’ have become an important way to refute the orientalist notion of the isolated and self-sufficient village economy (Yang 1998). Since colonial times, bazaars have been about ‘the links, networks and extensions’ in the rural society and in small towns. The electronic bazaars in Delhi continue to be places for different people to socialize and conduct business. Many neophytes of video games come to the bazaars to get tutorials on how to play a game. The consumers and the traders talk about the technical defects of consoles and the potential of a new game. While the sharing of information is part of any market, what stands out in the bazaars is the ambience created in the process of sharing information (Geertz 1978). The interactions in the bazaar are not distant and formal. Most conversations are not time-bound. Usually, any number of people can walk into a shop and contribute to the ensuing discussion about games and other social and political issues. More often than not, snacks and tea accompany the discussions. The bustle and din of the bazaar and the sound of bargaining co-exist alongside the ease with which any consumer can walk into the bazaar and find an eager listener (Orr 2007). Many traders and consumers were found to compare the welcoming nature of the markets to the closed nature of the malls. The overbearing presence of security guards at the entrance of the malls and the general demeanour of the people that go to the shopping complexes stand in sharp contrast to the open spaces of the bazaars. In recent times in Delhi, the urbanization process has been noted for its zoning of the population into neighborhoods and creating segregated work and leisure spaces (Bishop et.al 2003, Sundaram 2010). In such an environment, the gray electronic markets in Delhi capture the essence of traditional bazaars in India that act as a community space of interaction and economic exchange.

Apart from the social function of the bazaar that the gray electronic markets in Delhi perform, the trope of the bazaar extends to the relationship that can develop with a foreign product. Kajri Jain in her work, *Gods in the Bazaar: The Economies of Indian Calendar Art* argues that since colonial times the bazaars have appropriated global goods to the local context (Jain 2007). Bazaars, Jain observes ‘as a realm of subordination and semi-autonomy vis-à-vis the colonial state and then the post-independence, English-educated technocracy...In this intermediate role, vernacular

and non-bourgeoisie, yet dominant, the bazaar problematizes bi-polar accounts which counterpose the Indian “popular” to the “colonial”/ “Western” or “capitalist”, thereby causing these domains to coagulate into singular, fixed entities’ (Jain 2003: 45). Jain, through the context of popular calendar art, shows the fluidity and circulation that a consumer product attains with the aid of bazaars. The adaptation to a global product and themes does not entail linear reproduction of the project of modernity, westernization and so forth. The local context in the case of calendar art, religious motifs and nationalism benefitted from the Western model of industrial/mass production. A bazaar in this light develops as a space that senses the pulse of the masses. The bazaars provide the connection required by global goods to satisfy the needs of the masses. In the case of video game bazaars in Delhi, we see this aspect of assistance in many regards. Apart from the openness that the bazaars show in accepting any number of consumers, the different price ranges of video games help to connect the average consumer with an information product. Lajpat Rai Market, Palika Bazaar and Nehru Place not only sell the latest versions of games and consoles, but also trade in obsolete hand-held games with cartridges, refurbished video gaming consoles, and pirated CDs/DVDs of computer games. In doing so, the bazaars integrate an information product into the larger market of video games in India and also meet the requirements of individual gamers.

The revolutionary potential of the video game bazaars in India lies in the ‘thickness’ of diversity of their products and ‘cultural centrality’. Although it may sound attractive, the bazaar model is not similar to the way in which Eric S. Raymond uses it in his famous essay, ‘The Cathedral and the Bazaar’. In his essay, Raymond opposes the Linux model of open source software creation to the software created for commercial use. Raymond describes the benefits of co-working and addresses issues of inclusion: collective fixing of bugs, and emphasis on a reputation-based product and not one that hinges on proprietorship. The video game bazaars in Delhi are part of a creative loop. This loop is however, not linked to programming and writing of codes as much to the improvising of hardware for consoles. The way in which Raymond proposed the bazaar model of writing codes collectively on the Internet assumes a space that consists of people adept in information technology. The openness of the bazaar model that Raymond talks about therefore depends on the democratization of software and not democratization of an information society. Raymond’s model of the bazaar can only work in a society where not only are computers parts of everybody’s reality but people are also endowed with the necessary skills to program. However, at the present time in India, where the majority of the households do not have computers, it is unlikely that many people will learn programming and share their interest in it anytime soon. The video game

bazaars in Delhi, on the contrary, celebrate openness without necessarily being dependent on personal computers. Furthermore, the bazaars do not align with any global esoteric model of computer programming. They connect to the hegemonic information society with the computers in the marketplace. By creating and tinkering with objects that the local community demands, the bazaars are a step ahead in acclimatizing people with the technical side of information products. The bazaars in Delhi fulfill the dream of another technology activist, Michael Dertouzos, namely the popularization of information products and possibilities of individual forms of innovation.

An image flashed before me -- the Athens flea market. I knew it well. As a boy I had spent nearly every Sunday in its bustling narrow streets packed with people selling, buying, and trading every conceivable good. I was looking for electronics, especially illegal crystals with which you could build your own small radio station. Almost all of the people were friendly and talkative, tackling every conceivable topic between deals. They formed a community that stretched beyond its commercial underpinnings. There was no central authority anywhere; all the participants controlled their own pursuits. It seemed natural and inevitable to me that the future world of computers and networks would be just like the Athens flea market -- only instead of physical goods, the commodities would be information goods (Thorburn 1998).

The electronic bazaars in Delhi are all about the freedom to congregate around products and own the version that matches one's skill level and desire. They are about comfort and access. The openness that Raymond attaches to the bazaar model works only within the realm of a critical creative class. It is not open in terms of being open to society at large, to people with different skills and organizational capacity. This is where the video games bazaars of Delhi step in. They nurture a lucrative creative/innovative sphere that deals with the needs of the average consumer and does not push any single form. Empowerment occurs at the stage of individual overcoming his or her own inadequacies. The less educated traders and naïve consumers in the bazaars create forms of interaction and innovation that enable them to transition into the information society and embrace sophisticated information products at their own pace. The traders in the gray electronic markets are removed from the elite circle of the information society both in terms of the knowledge available to them and incentives that they enjoy from the state. Unlike the software professionals that are trained in engineering colleges and technical institutes in India, the traders in the bazaars are self-taught technicians of electronic products. Rather than books, their eyes and their hands are their learning devices. Moreover, the IT industry in India is highly subsidized by the government; it is the gray markets that have to bear the burnt of trading in pirated and counterfeit commodities. The traders on a regular basis have to maneuver around police and state officials that come to

raid the markets on their own or sometimes at the behest of big companies such as Microsoft.

The traders work in a situation of constraint. They lack resources, professional training, and importantly do not enjoy any state protection. However, the traders rise above the everyday difficulties and create an environment that enables them to interact with information products. One way the traders do this is by using the bazaar as a traditional sphere of chaotic interactions that attracts a diverse range of consumers. If we take the instance of popularizing video games to the average consumer in India, the gray markets play a huge role. The traders in the business of video games in India understood early on the potential of sharing of information. In a space where not a single trader is in possession of knowledge, skills or tools, sharing enables the traders to compensate for their inadequacy. The bazaar mode of openness assists the traders to overcome their individual deficiencies and creates a means of livelihood. There is therefore, some resonance with the bazaar model that Raymond talks about in practices of sharing of information and tools. But with the absence of an ideology behind sharing and being centered on the everyday functioning of the market, sharing fails to evoke the same sentiments of an alternative model to the extent that free software and open source does. There is much more organization, a goal-oriented approach and vision in the free software movement. On the other hand, everything in the electronic markets in Delhi is geared towards meeting immediate needs. The use of the term 'bazaar' therefore better captures the sentiments of traders and their desire to freely try out new things, than the idea of free as 'in free speech' (Stallman 2012: 11).

Another important aspect that the bazaar metaphor brings to light about the gray electronic markets in Delhi is the nature of the economy in which the traders function. Is it a formalist economy that classical economists talk about, where market actors try to maximize their interest? Or is it the substantivist economy that Karl Polanyi developed to highlight the inclusion of economic functions within the social fabric? Polanyi in his book, *The Great Transformation*, argues that in simple societies livelihood concerns are met by a social system of reciprocity and redistribution rather than by self-interested market exchanges (Polanyi 1975). Clifford Geertz points out that the situation in reality is much more complex, and bazaars are not devoid of economic calculation. However, there are customs and usages that shape the ways in which money is accumulated. Geertz in his study of bazaars of Modjokuto argues, 'Commercial activities are not here entangled in an awkward and complicated fabric of social prejudices and obligations which inhibit rational calculations, egoistic behavior, or technical proficiency. The bazaar economy is traditional in the sense that its functioning is regulated by fixed customs of trade

hallowed by centuries of continuous use, but not in the sense that it represents a system in which economic behavior is not very differentiated from other sorts of social behavior' (Geertz 1963: 47). The extension of the bazaar metaphor to the gray markets in Delhi captures a similar idea of economic activities gaining support from the social fabric. The ethical universe of the traders that I develop in detail in a subsequent chapter shows the different strands of the traders' beliefs that govern the economic transactions in the market. The infiltration of virtues from the Hindu moral universe that the traders belong to prevents economic activity from becoming a 'money for money's sake' enterprise.

The small traders in Delhi are not capitalist in nature. The bazaars are markets in a Braudelian sense. Throughout the thesis, I have used the terms 'markets' and 'bazaars' interchangeably, given that both terms allude to non-capitalist commercial places (Arrighi 2001). De Landa observes, 'Capitalism according to Braudel has always been anti-market, prices of its commodities have never been objectively set by demand/supply dynamics, but imposed from above by powerful economic decision-makers' (De Landa 1998). He further adds, 'In a peasant market, or even in a small town local market, everybody involved is a price taker; one shows up with merchandise, and sells it at going prices, which reflects demand and supply' (De Landa 1998).

The traders in the electronic markets in Delhi are rational economic actors. They are interested in earning a profit to ensure a steady income for the family. However, mostly due to the influence of the Hindu moral universe, it is apparent that the traders do not believe in incessant accumulation of profit. Price based on a demand/supply mechanism rather than external decision-making agents further restricts the overall profit margin of the traders. Ravi Sundaram in his work has pointed out that Braudel's understanding of markets as anti-capitalist is far-fetched in India, he also points out that the electronic bazaars in Delhi are not limited to the local (Sundaram 2010). They have transnational linkages that are similar to the ones that were used traditionally by capital to expand. However, I think that the rationale of the transnational expansion of trade in the bazaars is surrounded by survival concerns. Given that the traders in the gray markets of games participate in a transnational network of goods and people to sustain their economic endeavours in India and not to establish empires, the Braudelian idea of markets as non-capitalist applies to the bazaars in Delhi as well.

How did the Video Games Bazaars in Delhi Come into Being?

In the West, the mainstream economy of games developed in the mid-twentieth

century when hackers involved in military strategies started making games in their free time (Dyer-Witthford and de Peuter 2009a). The rise of video games as ‘ideal commodities of global information capitalism’ saw the subsequent growth of a formal economy around the video game (Dyer-Witthford and Sharman 2005: 188). In *Games of Empire*, Dyer-Witthford and Greig de Peuter argue that the hegemonic model of the gaming industry led to the accumulation of capital in a few business conglomerates such as Microsoft, Sony, Nintendo etc. through the exploitation of the ‘immaterial labour’ present in the society at large, small gaming studios, and Chinese gold farmers etc., (Dyer-Witthford and de Peuter 2009a). The formal economy of video games in India gained prominence in early 2000 as big production houses, franchises and online games made forays into the Indian market. However, the absence of formal actors in the gaming economy until about 2000 does not mean that video gaming was absent in the Indian cultural milieu. Video games were popular in India around the same time that Atari became popular for its arcade and home video gaming consoles in the West (Kent 2001). It is interesting to note that the rise of the videogame industry in India was not due to formal actors but to the bazaar economy that flourished in India in the 1970s.

The videogame bazaars in India are not part of the *Games of Empire* hyper-capitalized and legalized networks of capital. They are linked to the pirate economy that Dyer-Witthford and de Peuter see as providing access to gamers in Latin America and most of South Asia (Dyer-Witthford and de Peuter 2009b). However, piracy is not the only lens to understand the bazaar economy of video games in India. The bazaar economy of video games in India sells pirated products along with original products and games consoles. Moreover, in matters of access, informal routes such as smuggling foreign goods into India, and deceiving customs officials are crucial to the rise of the gaming economy in India. In this section I explore in detail how, until the beginning of 2000, the informal economy of pirated video games, counterfeit products and locally manufactured games was the sole agents of video games in India. Until the video game giants such as Sony and Microsoft and their official franchises such as *Milestone* officially entered the gaming scene in India in the late 1990s and early 2000, the video game bazaars popularized games in India. Apart from rare instances of individuals getting video games as gifts from relatives settled abroad, the bazaars in the early years were the primary network for acquisition and distribution of games in India.

‘Suitcase Entrepreneurs’: The Informal Mode of Acquisition of Video Games in the Bazaar

In the formal economy of games, it is very clear that a few dominant companies such

as Microsoft, Nintendo and Sony act as the creators of DVDs of video games and gaming consoles. At times, they do not create the games themselves but acquire potentially successful games from small design houses (Dyer-Witheford and de Peuter 2005). In this way, the role of these big companies is reinforced as successful publishing houses. If picked up by a big publishing house a new game can get an immense push in terms of money spent on advertising, conducting testing sessions and massive promotion done globally especially in the North American, European and the Japanese markets (Arvidsson and Sandvik 2007). These market devices, ‘material and discursive assemblages’ that the big production houses of video games use are behind the creation of a successful game (Callon 2007). The big production houses of video gaming titles and consoles not only dominate the creative, design and promotion stage of a new product; they control the circuits of distribution of these games. Emphasizing that the translation of capital into a commodity and back into capital in Marxist terms happens at a fast rate, the big production houses have their individual offices in major cities of the world. Along with that, the big production houses team up with local companies and make them the official distributors of a game for a particular area. Digital piracy does not figure in this network. As Mikkola Kjosén observes, piracy unsettles the circuit of translation of a commodity into capital through the act of simultaneity of production, distribution and reproduction. ‘It eliminates the capitalist moment of exchange, and folds transportation into the moment of (re)production’ (Kjosén2010).

The bazaar mode of acquisition of video games is separate from the formal economy. Unlike the formal economy of video games that travels through institutional channels, the bazaars acquire games through human networks. The bazaars in this process not only acquire original games but also pirated, and counterfeit games. Ravi Sundaram in his work has described as ‘suitcase entrepreneurs’ the individual importers who set out on their own to distant lands to acquire media products (Sundaram 2010). The term aptly describes the situation in the mass markets. Many traders in the bazaars point out that games became part of the informal markets through the initiative of a few courageous and smart importers. The traders in Lajpat Rai market recollect that in the 1980s a few importers would set out for Hong Kong and Bangkok without much prior preparation and come back with new products. The individual importers were the life of the electronic bazaars. On each trip they would come back with new wares that the shopkeepers could sell at a decent margin in India. In the accounts of the traders, the products that the importers brought enjoyed the same level of attraction and curiosity as those of the Western travelers in the past who came back with goods from Asia. Chandan’s story is an example of how chance, individual effort, and intuition combined to make the video game a popular product

in India.

Chandan is 58 years old. He was born in a small town in Uttar Pradesh and until the early 1970s he owned a small restaurant in his hometown. A TV repair shop was outside his restaurant. From time to time he would accompany Rakesh, the owner of the TV repair shop, to the houses of individual clients. He gradually gathered some information about repairing and his interest in electronics grew with each passing day. One day Rakesh left for Delhi to try to make his fortune there. He went on to join a TV company in Delhi. Meanwhile, Chandan found himself at a dead end in his life. He wanted a change in his career, which would allow him to make more money. He decided to meet Rakesh in Delhi and see if there were any opportunities for him. In the late 1970s, the electronic markets in Delhi were already accustomed to individual importers who would take risks monetarily and legally to bring new products such as cameras, VCRs etc., into the local market. Rakesh suggested that Chandan could try his hand at being an importer. At that time there were few people that were doing this job and there was a huge demand for it. The importers could charge the shopkeepers a high margin of profit, as there was a scarcity of imported electronic goods. Chandan found the proposal of travelling abroad to get new electronic goods alluring. He had recently obtained a passport. The fear of travelling for the first time to a foreign land and the risk involved in smuggling goods from outside did not deter him. Chandan decided to join a travel group to Hong Kong that Rakesh knew of. Chandan was short of money and he borrowed from his friends for the visa. He did not have time to go back to his hometown so he set out on his trip with whatever resources he had at hand. Once Chandan landed in Hong Kong, he was completely clueless. Only when the travel guide with whom he was travelling gave him some tips on how to move around the city, did Chandan find the courage to explore on his own. Chandan memorized the routes to the electronic market, Shamshuipo in Hong Kong. Out of a range of products, video games caught his eye. At that time, they were already popular in Hong Kong and there were many parlours of arcade games in the city. The handheld video games were something new to Chandan. It was easy for him to carry them and they had that element of novelty, which he thought could work in the local markets in Delhi. Chandan trusted his instincts and brought with him a few handheld video games apart from the usual products like garments. As he predicted, video games did very well in the market, so much so that on all the subsequent trips he took, Chandan focused on getting video games and game accessories. In the 80s, Chandan recalls that a Samurai TV game manufactured in Japan used to sell for as much as 3500 rupees (roughly about 70 dollars) in India. Chandan's trade met with great success. His passport was filled with visa stamps and there were no empty pages left in it. In the 1980s and 90s Chandan travelled to a number of destinations, Hong Kong, Bangkok and Dubai, that acted as centers for collecting games manufactured in Japan and the West. With time, he gained the necessary confidence and became a pro at avoiding customs duties, and made necessary 'settings' (arrangements) with customs officials. The range of goods he imported also widened. Chandan got TV games, portable video games, games cartridges and adaptors. Chandan enjoyed a successful stint as an importer until the 2000s when he unfortunately lost his eyesight to an illness.

The network of individual importers gave a considerable push to the informal economy of games in India. Their ingenuity and entrepreneurial skills in making the right contacts in a foreign market, and moving past language and physical barriers provided the diversity that the bazaars needed to attract consumers from all sections of the society. Another important aspect that was crucial in making the bazaars hubs of video games in the 1980s and 90s was the 'settings' that were made by the individual importers with state officials. 'Setting' in colloquial terms means to make the right connection and arrangement. It can be exchanged for the popular term

‘Jugaad’. While Jugaad is a ‘unique way of thinking and acting in response to challenges’, ‘setting’ would entail making arrangements with the right personnel to get certain work done (Rajdou et. al 2012). In a highly bureaucratic country like India, ‘setting’ has come to signify underhand dealings to forward an individual’s interest (Gupta 2012). Until the mid-1990s, India had highly regulated markets, electronics included. During those days, traders recollect that importers had to officially pay as high as 300% of the price of the goods on import duties. Post liberalization, the average tax on imported goods is about 11%. There is further relaxation of import duties on laptops and electronic products.³

In the 1980s and early 1990s when there were high surcharges on imported products, the only way in which gaming could become part of the Indian cultural landscape was through the important alliances that importers made with state officials. The high import rate made it almost impossible in the initial years for traders to acquire goods legally. To get a bulk supply of electronic products, smuggling was one of the few options left for the importers. The importers were clever enough to establish contacts with the right officials to reduce customs charges. Over time, the customs officials came to know the individual importers personally and compensation was made based on exchange of money and favors. It was the informal networks that made the video game bazaars in India possible. One important pillar was the ‘gutsy’ suitcase entrepreneur. The right ‘setting’ with state officials made another contribution to smoothing the process of entry of video games into India. If it were not for the informal links and alliances, the video game would have had to wait until as late as the 2000s to become a popular cultural object.

If it were not for the informal human networks, the gamers in India would not be playing the same games as those in the West. At a time that was known as the golden age of arcade games, the 1980s, Indian gamers were playing these games in India by using smuggled cartridges and machines. In the 1970s and 80s, particularly the US and Japan were big manufacturers of games. Atari was a hugely successful franchise in the US and Nintendo had started producing successful games in Japan such as Super Mario. Indian gamers were playing similar games in India. The only difference was that most of them had not acquired games and handsets through organized channels; they were playing games on smuggled handsets and TVs.

Video game bazaars in India are now at an interesting junction. In the initial years in the 1980s and 90s, they popularised games in India when the formal network of acquisition of games was almost invisible. The case of video games shows that the

³ <http://www.dutycalculator.com/country-guides/Import-duty-taxes-when-importing-into-India/>

relationship between the formal and the informal economy is not simplistic. Jens Beckert and Frank Wehinger in their work emphasize that the scope of economic sociology can be expanded and enriched if we can focus on the nuances of the links between the formal and informal economy (Beckert and Wehinger 2011). With regard to video games in India, we see that the informal networks of acquisition of games preceded formal networks. Not only that, the terms ‘informal’ and ‘formal’ are only significant when both the processes are in play. What we see in the instance of the video gaming industry in India is that in the initial years, the absence of formal networks neutralized practices that otherwise would be considered illegal. For instance, when the traders in the bazaars talk about the processes of games entering into the country, the emphasis is on the difficulties rather than on the moral dilemma of stepping into an illegal area. The import of contraband goods was not seen as morally wrong; it was rather seen as physically testing. The traders were worried about the prospect of getting caught and what would follow. This lack of value judgment towards legal issues, I argue, is possible as there were no alternative channels to bring in the bulk of foreign goods. The same debate applied to the discourse on piracy. The bazaars found themselves selling freely pirated game DVDs/CDs until 2000 when the official distributors of games such as Microsoft entered the market.

Bazaars and the Informal Network of Distribution of Video Games

The bazaars in Delhi came into existence through the zeal and entrepreneurial attitude of individual importers that flooded the markets with foreign games. In the years that video gaming started to become a popular pastime activity in the late 1970s and 1980s, each of the gray electronic markets developed their own particular character. In the late 1970s, Lajpat Rai Market situated in Old Delhi developed largely as a wholesale market of video games. Around the same time, Palika Bazaar emerged as a retail center for video games. Meanwhile, in the 1990s, Nehru Place, which was developing as a hub for computers and computers parts, was where street vendors selling pirated software and games congregated. An interesting aspect is that the video game bazaars were interconnected and came to fulfill a certain role in the informal games economy in India. Although it is difficult to ascertain that the development of one market in a particular fashion led to the development of another in a particular way, the exchanges amongst the markets strengthened the informal networks of games. Each market supported the other through the exchange of goods and information.

The traders of Lajpat Rai market recollect that in the 1980s, the importers of video games would distribute games to the different shops in the market. As a result, some

of the shops developed as wholesalers of games and accessories. Lajpat Rai market would distribute games to local markets in Delhi such as Palika Bazaar and to markets in smaller towns in India. Palika Bazaar developed largely as a retail market where goods were directly sold to consumers. Sometimes, the shopkeepers also had dealings with shops in smaller towns in India to whom the traders distributed games. Nehru Place meanwhile developed as a cheap market of pirated video game DVDs/CDs. Many of the pirated DVDs/CDs came from the Chandni Chowk area in Delhi where Lajpat Rai market is located. While Nehru Place developed as a distributing zone of pirated computer games, Chandni Chowk was a manufacturer as well as a distributor of pirated games.

The intimate fashion in which the video game bazaars are tied to one another through the exchange of goods, people and information enables the traders to nurture long-term consumer groups. Of the three electronics markets, Lajpat Rai market has developed as the core of the informal video gaming economy in India. Lajpat Rai market occupies a special place in terms of its status as a wholesale market and because of the presence of old technicians/repairpersons of games. The traders at Palika Bazaar make regular visits to Lajpat Rai market to see what kinds of goods have arrived, for instance, from China. Analyzing the goods that a particular shop has, the traders from Palika place orders for a certain number of games and accessories. Over time, markets such as Palika Bazaar have developed numerous other channels of acquisition of goods, from private distributors to official distributors such as Microsoft. Yet Lajpat Rai market continues to enjoy the position of a market that can spark inspiration for the next big trend. There are stories in Palika Bazaar of how a trader, having picked a particular version of a handheld game in Lajpat Rai market, then keeping the source secret for some time enjoyed handsome profit. In the bazaars where most traders sell homogenous products, Lajpat Rai market has information about new products that quickly provide a high profit. Traders from other markets that have the eye for picking the right product from a horde of products in Lajpat Rai market have done well in their respective markets. Apart from the range of goods Lajpat Rai market stocks, it also has many adept technicians, who have been part of the repair tradition for a long time. Experts in modifying old PlayStation and Xbox consoles to play new games, and fixing hardware problems, the skilled technicians in Lajpat Rai market have trained many young repairpersons. Many of the young repairpersons now have shops in other markets. Lalit who has a repair shop at Palika has previously trained under a technician at Lajpat Rai market. The charm of Lajpat Rai market as a quaint marketplace for all kinds of video games, consoles, accessories and a source of skilled technicians, although diminished over time has not disappeared altogether.

Palika Bazaar, situated at the center of the city and being one of the first air-conditioned markets, has always been a tourist attraction. Its prime location and glitzy shops that are accessible to a range of consumers fortifies its position as a bazaar of video games. Nehru Place continues to attract a range of gamers that due to their lack of resources cannot afford to buy original DVDs of video games. The three games bazaars in Delhi complement each other in terms of range of the products they sell and the consumers they attract. By virtue of their location, links to the distribution networks, and types of product, each bazaar targets different audiences. Lajpat Rai market, as a wholesale market, targets distributors that can sell to other wholesale and retail markets. Palika Bazaar, which is primarily a retail market, targets direct consumers. Nehru Place targets mainly lower income group buyers. Not only do the three bazaars have different target groups, but they also help each other to strengthen their position. Apart from the exchange of information, goods and skills, the three bazaars reinforce each other's popularity. For instance, Palika Bazaar builds its product range through Lajpat Rai market. Lajpat Rai market enjoys a reputation as the best wholesale market in the Delhi scene, while Palika creates a space of interest to video game consumers. Finally, the gray markets in Delhi subsist through bazaars such as Nehru place that cater to the lowest level of consumers in India, allowing gaming to infiltrate as a cultural product in the Indian society.

Who are the Traders in these Bazaars?

There are approximately 20 video game shops in Lajpat Rai Market, 18 in Palika Bazaar and about 50 street vendors in Nehru Place that trade in pirated software and computer games. The shops in Lajpat Rai market are the oldest. This market was set up by the Department of Rehabilitation to accommodate Sikh and Hindu refugees after partition (Sundaram 2010). Many of the traders of video games that I interviewed in Lajpat Rai market inherited their shops from their parents and grandparents after independence. One of the traders at Lajpat Rai market remarks the composition of the market on the basis of religion and regional lines exists till date. The market according to him is largely comprised of Hindu traders. He adds that after independence the market mainly had Punjabi traders until a few traders sold out their shops to Jains and those belonging to the Baniya caste. The family business element is present in Lajpat Rai market as generations have been part of the same market. Over the years one notices the changes in the product being traded, for instance, transistors have given way to video games.

Unlike Lajpat Rai market, most video games traders in Palika Bazaar are first generation shopkeepers. Many of them opened their shops in the 80s and early 1990s. The backgrounds of the traders are varied. There are one or two stories about

a few traders ending up in Palika Bazaar after having opened their businesses in another market. A shopkeeper in Palika had a shop with his brother in Karol Bagh, another market in Delhi. When he saw that Palika Bazaar was growing as a market of electronic products, he decided to open his own shop there. In the many stories about the background of the traders, the element of chance plays a crucial role. Some traders opened their shops in Palika after coming to the market as visitors. Again, a few traders' initial interest in games encouraged them to open a shop at Palika. Most of the accounts of the traders about their backgrounds and beginnings in the market were of struggle and determination. The owners of most shops established their businesses with their own resources and did not come from affluent families. In the early years, the traders recalled that rents at Palika were highly subsidized and it was not very difficult to find a place. Of the street vendors that I spoke to in Nehru Place, the majority was from the slum rehabilitation colony in the Madanpur Khaddar area, close to the market.

It is difficult to ascertain where the traders belong in the economic and status hierarchy. However, their self-perceptions show that they feel they belong to the middle rung of society. The traders in the bazaars see themselves as distinct from those at the top and bottom of the economic and social hierarchy. Because of their urban existence, the opportunities that they have, and their active participation in the urban economy, the traders claim that they are not the lowest category of urban dwellers. The traders see the lowest section of the society as those dependent on other people for their wellbeing. The traders point out that they have their own businesses and use their labour to the best advantage. They also claim that they are stakeholders in the urban economy and are not out of it. They do not form part of the unemployed urban masses, with no means to earn a living and no place to work, and they have important links to the urban sphere. On the other hand, the traders believe that their marginal incomes, restrictive spaces of business and their lifestyles do not qualify them to be top level businessmen. Traders do not see themselves as trendsetters in the urban economy; they are highly marginalized in terms of their rights to the urban spaces and the commodities they could sell. Furthermore, they are not part of the larger decision-making process affecting policy change. The self-perceptions of the traders and their position in the economic and social hierarchy help to illustrate the bargaining power that they have in the urban sphere and development of their native politics.

July is an extremely hot month in Delhi. Inside Palika Bazaar, which is an air-conditioned market, the number of people taking a respite from the scorching sun increases during the summer months. One day I found Govind's shop was

particularly crowded. Even with the air conditioning on, the shop was stuffy and hot. I was wondering what the commotion was all about and at that moment, Govind spoke up, putting my curiosity at rest, ‘Maitrayee ji aapko kal anna padega dharna ke liye, yeh patri walloh ka kuch karna padega’ (Maitrayee you have to come for the protest tomorrow. We have to do something about the people who are trading on the pavements outside of Palika Bazaar). I saw a leaflet circulating in the shop, ‘Palika Bazaar ke sipahiyon taiyyar ho jao’ (Soldiers of Palika Bazaar get ready!). The leaflet described how in the last few years, the business of Palika Bazaar had waned and every trader was worried about his future. The protest was an invitation to ‘all soldiers, traders, managers, salesmen and suppliers’ to protect their *karmabhumi* (place of work). A recent challenge to their business had been seen when roughly 200 vendors had squatted in the area around Palika. The leaflet emphasized that the street vendors were able to keep prices low and in turn were serious competitors to the traders. Unlike, the traders in the shops, the leaflet pointed out, the vendors did not pay electricity bills or rent, and sold all kinds of commodities without *rok –tok* (interference). The main grudges outlined were the swelling number of the vendors and the fact that no regulations had been introduced to keep their numbers in check. Although the supreme court of India under the ‘Thareja Committee Report’ of 1989 allowed around 97 vendors in that area, the number of vendors operating, according to the leaflet, was now close to 200.

In Palika Bazaar, those who are below the ranks of the traders both socially and economically are the street vendors squatting on the pavements outside the marketplace. Street hawking in Delhi has a long history. After introducing numerous regulations, the Supreme Court presently recognizes the right of the hawkers to squat in public spaces as long as they are not hindering the movement of pedestrians and are authorized (Schindler 2013). In Palika Bazaar, traders with shops imagine the street hawkers to be below them socially and economically. Working in a shop is different from working on the pavements of the city. Lalit, a trader from Palika Bazaar thinks that people working on the pavements are the poorer immigrants in the city, living mostly in the slums. His conception of vendors is as people who cannot survive in the city without the assistance of the government and who take unwarranted advantage of any situation. The street vendors, unlike the traders, are imagined to be a dependent population unable to find a footing in the city. One of the ways in which the poorest section of the urban economy was marked was through their parasitical position. The ease with which apparently the people in the slum slide into the position of seeking favors from other people cast them in a negative light in the traders’ opinion.

Lalit, a trader at Palika, remarks that the slum dwellers in India are known to have a freeloading relationship with the state. He thinks that people in the slums have different arrangements to earn privileges from the government. He points out that slum dwellers act as an important vote bank, and with that logic are on most occasions the first to get illegal electricity and water connections in the city. Lalit says even if the state officials found out the slums were using illegal connections they would not take any action. Lalit observes that his situation and those of the people living under the similar conditions in the urban area is very inconvenient. He goes on to talk about a particular incident. His neighbor ‘a regular law abiding citizen like him’ built an extra roof for his house. The police did not say anything in the beginning. They waited for the roof to be finished. Then, Lalit says, the police came one day and announced, ‘You do not have permission for this roof’. Next day they brought along MCD (Municipal Corporation of Delhi) workers and demolished the extra roof. Lalit emphasizes that for people like him, this kind of minor harassment from the police and state officials is a regular affair. Their state of affairs is contrasted with the slum dwellers getting away with flouting many rules. The traders felt that for those surviving on the margins, their illegal actions are tolerated and the state officials do not rebuke them. In a paradoxical way, invoking both pity and disgust, the traders in Palika Bazaar and Lajpat Rai market distinguish themselves from the street vendors. The traders see the street vendors as dependent labourers whose day-to-day existence is marked by the unwarranted privileges they acquire from the state.

What about Nehru Place? Do the street vendors of pirated games and software have anyone below them to talk about? It was interesting to find that the street vendors in Nehru Place do not see themselves as the poorest of the poor in the urban landscape. About 90% of the street vendors that I interviewed in Nehru Place were from the slums around Alakananda, and Kalkaji. After the demolition of the slums in this area in 2001 to build a spiritual park (Batra and Mehra 2008) most of the families were rehabilitated in the Madanpur Khadar area. Apart from the building of a ‘spiritual park’ in Nehru Place, the street vendors selling games remember the building of the Delhi Metro in the early 2000s as a principle factor changing the local geography. The area expanded as a commercial center. Shyam and the rest of the young men I interviewed in Nehru Place recognize that they are part of a market that is popular all over Asia for its electronic products. Their first contact with Nehru Place was not as a market place. The close proximity of the market to the slums, in which they lived, created the market place as a playground. There were numerous accounts of how many of the young street vendors ran away from the government school in the vicinity and spent their afternoons in the market. The images of growing up in the

market are flooded with stories of climbing mango trees within the market place and breaking one's hand in the course of doing so. With the passage of time, many of them understood that the market, which so far they had seen as an open playground, was developing into a booming business center. Every day, the young men were witnessing hundreds of people entering the market by the Satyam Cinema entrance and dispersing all over it. People came to buy computers, hardware, software, mobile phones, clothes and food. The young men told me that things started changing rapidly in the market after the 1990s. Nehru Place was no longer a bus terminus where people got off to visit the nearby Kalkaji Mandir. The market developed as a popular space to sell computers and computer parts.

In such a lively business environment, it was not surprising that many of the young street vendors who were doing 'timepass' in the market, soon became engaged in commercial activities (Jeffrey 2010).⁴ One of the street vendors recollects that it all began very suddenly. One day, a shopkeeper in the market approached a young man to help him at his shop. The young man was asked to attract consumers to the shop by calling out to them. The sight of their friend making money at a young age without qualification opened the door for many of the young men to enter the market. They realized that the market was not just there as 'masti karne waali jagah' (place to have fun) but was also a place, which could give them some form of financial independence. The contacts they developed over time in the market helped in the process. The shopkeepers in Nehru Place knew the young men, where they lived and whether or not they were reliable. The proximity of the young men to the market eased the process of them getting absorbed in the business. The young street vendors at Nehru Place are aware of the fact that their entry into the market was possible because of the networks they developed over the years. People from the slums were part of the informal economy in Nehru Place in a different capacity. Many people working on the pavements, selling clothes mobile phones, software and games, are from the rehabilitated slum area. This fact came out through the details of who formed the social circles of the young men. The street vendors spend most of their time in the market. They usually come every day around 10 o'clock in the morning and stay in the market till about nine in the evening. Whenever the street vendors get free time, for instance, on Monday when the market is closed or when they meet on some special occasion for someone's birthday, the group of friends is from the market. Although, the market officially allows free entry of new businesses, in

⁴ Craig Jeffrey in his work employs the concept of 'timepass' to denote the informal meetings and gossiping at tea stalls that the young men at Meerut use to cope with their unemployed status. In a similar fashion, the traders in Delhi at different times engage in 'timepass' to use up their free time and reduce the anxiety of waiting for customers (Jeffrey 2010).

practice we see that in reality the entry of new actors is contingent on the familiarity and contacts that one builds with the people operating there. In the case of Nehru Place, we see that the physical proximity of a neighborhood to the market develops important linkages between the residents and the market. The transformation of social ties to economic ties is immediate and sustainable.

The street vendors who grew up in the slums around Nehru Place and who have been recently relocated to the Madanpur Khadar area acknowledge the fact that they could enter the market easily as they already knew people and the place from their boyhood days. Shyam tells me about his entry into the market as a 16-year-old: 'It was not difficult for me to enter the market. I had friends from my *colony* (neighbourhood) who were already working in the market. Moreover, the shopkeeper who hired me initially knew my family. He had seen me coming to the market as a young boy. It was not difficult for him to trust me as he knew where I lived and who my friends were'. The long association that many of the young men selling pirated games and software have with Nehru Place is recognized as an advantage. Compared to the street vendors who grew up in slums close to the market, other people living in slums on the outskirts of the city do not enjoy the same benefits. Shyam adds, 'We were lucky that we grew up close to the market and not in some slum which had no business growing around it'. The street vendors in Nehru Place saw themselves as better off than ones who had no previous links to the city or especially to a commercial place.

While the market actors in the three bazaars Lajpat Rai Market, Palika Bazaar and Nehru Place distinguished themselves from those on the margins in the light of the economic opportunities and status that they enjoyed, there was a sharp separation from those at the top. In 2013, the urban sphere in Delhi had taken on a particular character. Especially after the commonwealth games of 2010, the city saw a remarkable change in terms of the inhabitants who began to enjoy the recent changes made to the urban space (Ghertner 2011). The development of high-end malls, gated residential complexes and parks has given Delhi the character of a world-class city, similar to cities such as London (Liang 2005). The Delhi Master Plans of 1962 along with other plans since then have continued to arrange the city into zones. Ravi Sundaram, amongst others, observed that the zoning of the city forcefully created an orderliness to the city that historically was chaotic and syncretic (Sundaram 2010). The informal economy of the bazaar survives in the interstices of the elite zones of the city, which are out of reach of the traders of the informal economy. In the bazaars, the rich and successful are constructed through tales and urban myths. One day in Laljpat Rai market, at Bharat's shop, I found myself in the midst of an

interesting discussion. Sardarji who has a video games shop on the other side of the market often comes to Bharat's shop to chat. His son now takes care of the business, which gives Sardarji ample time to move around the market. That day, the topic of discussion was to find why the rich in India spend so much money on a single commodity. Bharat says, 'I think that the rich prefer to buy a mobile cover for 1000 rupees (20\$) in Khan Market that is otherwise available for 50 rupees (1\$) in Palika Bazaar because they care about quality'. Sardarji immediately countered this view, saying 'That is not the case. The rich in India spend so much not because of quality but because they do not have information. They will stay in their AC houses in Gurgaon and go to shop in AC cars in posh markets such as Khan market. The rich do not know that bargaining markets exist'. Bharat and Sardarji continued their argument. Bharat emphasized that the rich have the money to spare on better products. Sardarji on the other hand thought that the rich people do not care and most of the time they do not have sufficient information. As they both debated the characteristics of the rich it seemed that they were talking about people from another planet whose habits and customs could be guessed but never completely known. The rich in the bazaars were surrounded by myths and they emerged as peculiar creatures whose lifestyle and rationale were completely disconnected from those in the markets. It was interesting how the denomination associated with a rich life in Delhi was built around certain cultural symbols of living in Gurgaon and shopping in Khan market. Satellites cities in Delhi, such as Noida and Gurgaon, have in recent years developed as an insular heaven for the rich with their self-sufficient residential complexes. According to the traders, the crisp English used when selling commodities at Khan market creates an air of distinction suited to the sensibilities of the rich. The rich as social actors were marked as different from the traders through their access to luxurious places and products. The rich as economic actors however, were viewed as distinct but were not seen as disconnected from the informal economy. The big business houses in India are identified as the group that takes away the lion's share of profit of the Indian economy, placing the rest of the society at the receiving end. In recent academic literature, the big family business houses, both old and new, such as Tata, Ambanis, Birla and Jindals etc., are the leaders of the revived Indian economy (Damodaran 2008).

The big corporate houses in India extensively enjoy the fruits of the neoliberal policies and the euphoria associated with them. Lalit, a trader from Palika Bazaar says, 'it is very difficult now in India to survive with a small business. Take any commodity. Suppose you have a small factory producing sugar and doing well in the market. However, in India it is difficult for small companies to maintain a margin of profit for a considerable amount of time. Seeing that the sugar business is doing well

in the market, a giant company such as Reliance would enter the market and change everything. It can immediately capture the market by reducing the price of sugar dramatically. The big companies have the capacity to sustain losses and as result can suffer the blow of bringing the prices down. Such action kills their competitors and they survive alone in the market. This is the problem in India. The small business does not enjoy any protection or subsidies from the government'. Lalit in his account highlights the parties, which have it easier in the present economic environment, namely the big businesses. He emphasizes that the economic decisions of the big businesses affect the prospects of trade of small businesses like his. They do not enjoy the large income and capital pool necessary to survive the fluctuating movements of the market. He further adds that the state is not interested in improving their conditions and turns a blind eye to the problems of small traders. The rich and their privileges highlights the problems faced by the small traders in the bazaars.

The traders in the bazaars can be roughly categorized as middle class. In the context of India 'middle class' is an amorphous category in which white-collar professionals, the intelligentsia, the 'corporate middle-class' and the erstwhile rural and now urban middle class are clubbed together (Banerjee 2011). In recent literature, Meena Savaala for instance tries to overcome the difficulty of defining the middle class by excluding those who do not belong to the category. She attempts to give a boundary to the middle class by excluding those who work manually, and are not part of executive or decision-making processes or do not possess sufficient capital to live on its interest alone (Saavala 2010). Using such attributes to define the middle class in India, we see that the small traders fall into the 'middle class' in the way that Meena Saavala imagines it to be; that is they are part of a class of people that are neither involved in manual labour not in any sort of decision-making process. However, the traders do not fulfill the requirements of middle class observed by other scholars, as the small traders are neither the 'corporate middle-class' nor white-collar professionals. In that sense, it is more useful to define the traders in the bazaars as a group engaged in similar economic activities. And that group's self-perception about themselves places them in a participatory position in the urban economy; they are neither business leaders nor are they parasites. The significance of the group being neither at the top nor at the bottom is that their activities cannot be ignored as they are not dependent members of the society and make contributions to the economy. Further proclaiming they are not at the top, the traders indicate their underprivileged status in the urban economy.

Who are the Consumers of the Bazaars?

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, when the video game bazaars started becoming popular, they attracted all kinds of consumers from Delhi and all over the country. In the initial years of penetration of games into the Indian cultural milieu, the bazaars provided the most important support required. The bazaars were the crucial link between demand and supply. Before the bazaars developed as important spaces for the circulation of games, my interviewees remarked that people in India were aware of games through magazines such as PC World and relatives settled abroad. However, games were only played within the limits of an individual household and never become a social pastime. The traders pointed out that only when the Arcade cafés and the bazaars came into being then the connection between aspiration and the reality of playing games materialized for a large number of people. Gamers in Delhi that I interviewed remembered that their interest in games developed through the *mohalla* (neighborhood) café that had arcade games. Another important entry point was the bazaars. Many gamers spoke about how their parents took them to Palika Bazaar and gifted them their first handheld games, bought from there.

In an interesting fashion, bazaars created an interest in video games among users and also went on to a large extent to sustain that interest. While it is true that individual gamers knew about video games in India, their numbers were small. Most gamers were from urban households that had access to local and international techie magazines and products. Video gaming was not a popular pastime activity until the bazaars discovered the games and made them into an everyday leisure product. The advantages that the bazaars enjoyed in the initial years were the contacts they had with importers and state officials, the ease with which they could navigate in the gray zone of acquiring smuggled products, finding spaces for the display of games, selling and circulation. However, the biggest plus point that the bazaars had was their flexibility. Bazaars by nature, especially of electronic goods, are constantly changing. Traders in all the three markets admitted that the dynamics of electronic products mean that what is trendy is always changing and as traders they always have the possibility to reinvent themselves. The traders are not scared to start trading in a new range of goods. Many of the traders of video games previously sold cameras, VCRs and other electronic products. When video games began to arrive on the market with a good margin of profit, the traders started including them in their range of products. The video gaming economy in India owes its success to the bazaars and the traders, who kept an open and flexible outlook when it came to new products and remodeling of the shops.

1980s and 90s: The Golden Era of the Video Game Bazaars, and the Rush of Consumers

Lajpat Rai Market

Lajpat Rai market developed primarily as a wholesale market of video games. In the 80s and 90s, there were traders in the bazaar that acted as principal supply link to other markets in Delhi and other parts of Delhi. Chauhan, a trader in Lajpat Rai market was a TV mechanic until he joined the market in 1986. At that time, the demand for games was tremendous. He recollects that his shop was one of the few distributors in Delhi and the business was at an all-time high. Samurai games, a Japanese product, were one of the initial original products available. As borders were closed, it was difficult for individual traders to establish import links and they were dependent on the contacts made by Lajpat Rai market with different importers. Chauhan says by managing to develop crucial links with a handful of importers and controlling the supply chain to different markets, Lajpat Rai market in the 1980s and 90s became an important hub for the circulation of games. It was not in everybody's capacity to go to a foreign land, acquire games and trick the custom officials to smuggle products into the country. The few people who managed to do so came to the traders at Lajpat Rai market and sold their products to them. Through the stories told by the traders, it seems that by chance Lajpat Rai market developed as a wholesale market. It may be that one trader knew an importer of games. When that importer started to supply video games to his friend, other traders contacted him. Soon, the different wholesale traders of electronics started to keep games. And with the increase in numbers of individual importers over the years, Lajpat Rai market established itself as a market mainly for video games.

Palika Bazaar

Palika Bazaar prospered with the initial popularity of video games in India. Established in 1978, Palika Bazaar was India's first underground air-conditioned market in 'Delhi's central district'. The traders in the market recall that it was a huge tourist attraction in the earlier years. Both foreign and local tourists would flock to the market to get different goods, clothes and electronics. The location of the market and the reputation of it as a modern market in the 80s and 90s brought all kind of consumers to the market. The rich and the middle-income group consumers interested in video games were ready to pay a lot of money to purchase a sought after recreational product. At that time, video games were a scarce commodity and the traders observe that consumers used to invest in the latest product. For the tourist, as well, to pick up video games as souvenirs and as gifts made sense, as the markets in smaller towns did not have many video games. The traders in Palika recount that the

consumers in the bazaar were from different economic backgrounds and from different parts of the country. The rush of consumers was such that in the 80s and early 90s, the traders recollect, there used to be long queue leading to the shops waiting for them to open for business. At most times, there used to be no space at the counter for people to stand and the traders would be busy serving consumers throughout the day.

Nehru Place

Built in the 1970s, Nehru Place located in South Delhi went on to become the hub of computer hardware and software. In the 1990s, riding high on the boom of computers, pirated software and PC games were in huge demand. Many of the young street vendors recollected that software and games were so highly priced in the beginning that piracy seemed to be the only way for people to acquire them. At that time, piracy was not looked down upon. If someone wanted games and software without wanting to pay much then Nehru Place was the preferred market. A range of consumers came to the market - software professionals, web designers, neophytes and avid gamers. According to the street vendors, consumers that mostly came to the market to buy computers provided the push to the market of video games in the 80s and 90s. Being one of the few markets for computers in India, and some say even in Asia, many customers came to the market every day to get their personal computers. According to the street vendors, after buying a new system, a customer likes to equip his system with all the necessary software and accessories. This is how the pirated DVDS/CDs of games got a huge boost. The street vendors lined the corridors of the buildings of Nehru Place, and on the pavement attracted the attention of buyers of computers. The street vendors maintain that the customers in the early years liked the idea that they could buy everything they needed at the same place - software for work and games for leisure. The presence of many showrooms to buy company products further meant that in the 1990s, Nehru Place also had consumers who cared about quality. The advanced consumer in the earlier years looked for cheaper options in games. According to the street vendors, there were times when people spending a considerable amount on buying a brand new computer would look for cheaper opportunities to buy software and PC games. The consumers of pirated DVDs/CDs of PC games were compatible with buyers who came to buy personal computers and desktops in the market. Until the 1990s, Nehru Place was a popular market for computer and computer hardware, and as such the pirated software and PC games were equally popular, the street vendors recollect nostalgically.

2000s and 2010s: Decline of the Elite Consumer in the Bazaar and the Character of a Mass Market

Since the reform policies of the 1990s, a lot has changed in the Indian economic and cultural scenario. Trade liberalization and opening of the borders flooded the Indian market with foreign goods. The situation for business altered not only through the range of goods now freely available but was also significantly affected by the changes made to the physical landscape. Much of this was visible in the capital city, Delhi, as it revealed the dreams and aspirations of what a neo-liberal India would look like. High-rise buildings, mega-malls and refashioning of the commercial centers in different neighborhoods led to progress being associated with rapid urbanization (Bhan 2009). Like every other sphere – domestic, work, or market - the opening of borders and the emergence of new spaces to accommodate the overflow of consumer products also affected the gaming economy.

In the current decade, the days of a rush of all kinds of consumers to the bazaars are over. According to the traders, there are too many new elements in the market and as a result the bazaars find themselves increasingly marginalized and stigmatized. The character of the bazaar is that of a social and open space, where anybody can walk in and buy the cheapest to the most expensive product, and it has now come to define the non-elite zone in India. The traders talk about new entrees to the gaming economy, official distributors of games, the local franchises of international game manufactures such as EA (Electronic Arts), Rockstar and Ubisoft, mobile gaming and the online market. The new actors, according to the traders, have absorbed the gamers that have the money and access to knowledge and the Internet. Along with that, the rise of the malls and mushrooming of games showrooms in neighborhood commercial complexes have further led to a segmentation of customers to the bazaars in the late 2000s and in the current decade.

Lajpat Rai Market, which was once the principal node of circulation of video games in the country, now finds itself marginalized by the onslaught of the official distributors of games. Traders in Lajpat Rai market are holding onto the last penny of profit to survive in the competitive environment. In a bid to do so, they have diverted money and resources to the small town market of games, and are making sales to gaming parlors and shops in the less developed areas in Delhi, many of which are the slums. According to the rationale of the traders, the formal economy of games has captured the elite customers in Delhi and most of the big cities. However, Delhi is not just the glitzy malls and Connaught Place, and neither is India all about development, the traders add. According to them there are still places in Delhi where the standard of living is abysmal and many places in India where electricity supply is infrequent. The traders think that the formal economy would never be able to grasp the magnitude of demand of video games in different parts of the country. Bharat, one of the traders of video games in Lajpat Rai market, says that even if a company

such as Microsoft understands the extent of demand for games in different parts of India, they do not have the means to reach out to that section in terms of the price, types of games, and the quantity in which they are required. For instance, Bharat says that many of the people in smaller towns in India are still playing TV games and have not upgraded to the console generation. Due to the lack of resources and information, console games are out of reach of many gamers in India. A company such as Microsoft, according to Bharat, is not cut out to supply old games at a reasonable price. This is where Bharat says the video game bazaars come in. Bazaars such as Lajpat Rai Market have strong links with the video game markets in India and in China that still produce old and new games of varying quality and price. More than PlayStation and Xbox consoles and games, Bharat says that the traders in the market stock TV games, handheld games using cartridges, and different versions of portable games. What Bharat says about Lajpat Rai market is interesting. In the present day if one walks into a games shop in the market, one would be surprised and overwhelmed by the obsolete games stacked on the shelves. The shops have machines and cassettes of the oldest video games on the market - Contra to Road Runner to Duck Hunter. The shift to simpler games and a reasonable price range have kept Lajpat Rai market afloat in the current situation in which new and formal actors are entering the games market.

Like Lajpat Rai market, Palika Bazaar has also over the years become a non-elite zone of games. Palika Bazaar, which started off as one of the most popular retail spots for games in India, has with time come to accept its new position. What is striking in the case of Palika and for that matter all the video game bazaars is that they have not changed dramatically in terms of the goods and services they offer. It is only because the external environment has changed to a large extent that by default the bazaars have become second-rate markets selling fake goods. The chaotic spaces and eclectic range of products have always been characteristics of the bazaars. However, with the rise of posh showrooms, bazaars such as Palika, reeking with the smell of old air-conditioning and with spit-stained walls, have automatically come to be associated with all that has not advanced into the decade of 'India Shining' and growth⁵. Palika Bazaar traders are miffed at the loss of their previous status. As a market that had customers from all sections of the society and from every parts of the country, now it is mostly catering to customers who do not have the resources and the information to go elsewhere. The traders point out that for people who have money and resources, options are endless. A gamer can choose to play a game

⁵ 'Indian Shining' is a caption used by the national political party BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) in their election campaigns in 2004. It refers to the progress that the country is apparently making and is bound to make under the BJP's rule. After the defeat of the party in the election, both the media and the public uses the caption to highlight the futility of imagining India 'Shining' with all its economic and social problems.

online, buy consoles and games online, download them or go to the nearest market of video games. They needed not come to Palika for any of these activities. In the current difficult times, Palika continues to sell a range of video games products, DVD/CDs of console games, computer games, games console and games accessories such as mice and adaptors. Furthermore, it has streamlined its business of selling recycled games DVDs/CDs. The business of second-hand games has managed to salvage some of the old customer range for Palika. The traders mention that a rich consumer ideally prefers to go to a store in Khan Market or a mall. According to the traders, the prevalence of gray goods and the ambience create the impression that Palika does not deal in quality goods. As a result, elite consumers come to the market only when they are unable to find a game DVD game anywhere else. Otherwise, according to the traders, the market is attractive to the middle and lower income groups that can compare a range of products in terms of pricing before making a purchase.

The neoliberal policy has also hit Nehru Place. Computers were luxury products until the 1990s, but now with the opening of markets and the entry of numerous companies, local as well as international, consumers need not come to Nehru Place to buy cheap and assembled computers. According to the street vendors, the customers that come to Nehru Place today are mostly people who cannot afford to buy a branded product and are looking for assembled and recycled products. They are customers who do not have the means or information to find better deals on purchases, for instance, online. The street vendors mention that the majority of customers to the market are unaware of the basics of computers and are comfortable coming to a big market where they can haggle about the price of a product from one shop to another. They are ready to buy a computer with fewer features as long as it is reasonably priced. The street vendors admit that Nehru Place also gets affluent and mature consumers visiting showrooms and looking to buy software; however, their numbers over the years have decreased. Since the business of the street vendors depends on the number of consumers the market attracts, the gaming business has also borne the brunt of the falling number of consumers coming to the market. Nehru Place, as mentioned earlier, is primarily a computer and computer hardware and software market. Games and software exist on the sidelines as extra purchases that consumers make in addition to their main purchases. As rich and experienced consumers are on the decline in Nehru Place, the street vendors also attract very basic consumers. The street vendors keep mostly pirated DVDs/CDs of computer games. In the 2000 and 2010s, pirated CD/DVDs sold for less than a dollar are not in demand by most sections of society. The street vendors claim that they get completely inexperienced consumer. Shyam, a street vendor in Nehru Place says that

at times the consumer does not even know how to operate a computer. When such a consumer comes to buy a game, the street vendors have to give all the necessary instructions and often have to install the pirated games themselves. The street vendors of games in Nehru Place as such cater to students and other consumers who do not want to spend money to play games. The vendors add that the fact that the street vendors keep only computer games and not console games also goes to show that a particular type of consumer – who is inexperienced and does not want to spend money - comes to buy pirated computer games.

Organization of the Dissertation

In the introduction, I have examined how the bazaar model emerges as a third model of the information society in India. The hegemonic and alternative information society in India absorbs people and institutions that are part of elite circle of knowledge and usage of information technology. In contrast, we saw the bazaar model developing in society through the actors of the informal economy of video games. The metaphor of the bazaar captures the social nature of a commercial place. It further illustrates the features of the local economy and what are the links that the informal markets share with the larger economic structures. The development of the video games bazaar over time, along with the traders and consumers, reveal the present position that the third model of information society, occupy in India. In each chapter of the dissertation, I focus on certain aspects of the bazaar model of the information society to show the potential and constraints it faces in the present competitive environment.

In the methods chapter, I explicate the theoretical and methodological tools that I use to collect data from the field. The Latoureaan idea of ‘modes of existence’ proves to be an interesting methodological tool to understand the interconnection amongst the different elements in the bazaar without adopting a deterministic approach. The chapter delves into the complexity of conducting ethnographic research in a busy market place, and describes the range of methods used, from observation to conversations to intensive interviews. There is also an emphasis on different factors that one encounters in the field, especially in relation to one’s gender.

The third chapter of the dissertation is about knowledge production and circulation in the bazaars. Posed against the formal information society and alternation model, the chapter examines what kind of technical knowledge circulates in the bazaars. The chapter develops in detail the ways in which the bazaar model is unique in terms of the rationale of organization, transmission and ideology of creating new knowledge. Examining knowledge in the bazaar model is interesting when analyzing the

resourcefulness of the traders and how they constantly evolve. This is as much to do with the attitude of the traders as well as the flexibility of the bazaars' infrastructure. In all three bazaars, the traders link the possibility of change to progress. In fact, the traders of video games felt that one of the advantages of being in electronic products was the possibility of reinventing themselves with every new product, thereby having something new to offer to the consumers. The traders remarked that unlike themselves, a trader selling clothes always had more or less the same products at his disposal to attract consumers. The flexibility of infrastructure on the other hand is to do with the frugality of the physical infrastructure, for instance simple wooden and glass cabinets for display of goods and some footrests for people to sit on. The basic furniture in the shops can be used for any product and is also easily replaceable. If we consider the street vendors in Nehru Place then their possessions are limited to a bag that carries the pirated DVDs/CDs of software and computer games. The bazaar further shows openness in accepting change, and has flexibility of tools, and space. Its relaxed views on sharing have unintentionally created a third model of being and innovating in the information society.

The fourth chapter analyzes the ethical dimension of the traders working in the bazaar economy of an information society. Since the 1990s, the formal information society/economy has had a strong presence in the physical, cultural and ethical landscape of the country through the policies and laws adopted by the state. In such an environment, the traders find themselves increasingly marginalized by the new parameters of participation in knowledge work. The traders find themselves naturally drawn to the Hindu moral universe that they are born into. The ethical register of the Hindu moral universe negotiates with the limits of working with pirated and counterfeit products. Another strand of the ethical life of the traders is based on survival. The imminent threat to their everyday living conditions with decreasing informal commercial spaces and less number of consumer means that the traders on a day-to-day basis suspend other ethical considerations. At this level, the virtues of the Hindu moral universe and values that have permeated through the formal information society and the IPR regime are compromised in favor of making money and ensuring survival for the trader and his family.

The fifth chapter examines modernity imagined through an information product. The rise of the information society in India has given rise to privatized spaces, branded aesthetics and West centric neoliberal dreams. The bazaars, as regards consumption and aesthetics, cling on to another model. Through the presence of archaic products, gregarious shopkeepers and mass consumers, the bazaars are drawn towards an Asian modernity led by China. Unlike the formal information spaces that have US-centric consumer modernity in their malls, and branded goods, the Chinese modernity

emphasizes a situational logic, of letting things unleash without any external interference. In return, in place of branded goods, we have cheap custom-made products for the masses, and in place of the IPR laws, we see the precedence of lucrative business models. The developments portend an Asian modernity that is bottom up and of the people. This model contests the classical Fordist model of top down statist economic plans and policies in India.

The conclusion analyses how the electronic bazaars develop as an alternative information economy in India. Examining each empirical chapter of the dissertation as illustrating a particular 'modes of existence' in the bazaar, I argue how knowledge, ethics and aspirations come together in the bazaar. The different elements keep the bazaar model together while at the same time explicates a different version of an information economy in India. The interaction amongst knowledge, ethics and commercial activities in a bazaar create a non-capitalist market actor that values his immediate survival needs over an accumulation of profit. Moreover, the aspirations tilting towards a Chinese modernity in the bazaar, we further see the other information society in India bending towards communal commercial places, sustainable products and developing quick fixes to combat situations of precarity. Overall the other information economy in India feels the pulse of the mass and believes in carrying forward the modernizing dream by incorporating the lowest consumers in India.

Chapter II

The Fieldworker and her Field

In this chapter, I focus on the theoretical underpinnings of my research and the method that I found suitable to collect data from the field. I develop the field sites and the dilemmas I faced while doing fieldwork in the three electronic bazaars in Delhi, Lajpat Rai Market, Palika Bazaar and Nehru Place.

Between Theory and Method

Sociology has a long-standing tradition of analyzing the economy and economic institutions. The specific branch of Economic Sociology is about ‘sociological perspective applied to economic phenomena’ (Smelser and Swedberg 2005). In the 1980s, however, the term New Economic Sociology was coined to reinvent the role of sociology in the economy. Particularly, the Parsonian scheme of economists studying ‘value’ and sociologists studying ‘values’ was found limiting (Stark 2000). The New Economic Sociology extended the frame of closed system analysis of industrial sociology and sought to make the social structures of the economy much more obvious. The emphasis was to focus on social relations as part of economic actions. It brings the social structure analysis to ‘core economic areas of market structures, production, pricing, distribution, and consumption’ (Swedberg 1997: 163). Pioneer of the New Economic Sociology was Mark Granovetter. New Economic Sociology develops as a discipline after the publication of Granovetter’s seminal essay ‘Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness’ in 1985. Granovetter builds on Karl Polanyi’s notion of embeddedness that shows the economy as an organic part of the society (Granovetter 1985). Granovetter however, does not agree with Polanyi’s notion that once markets appear, social relations disappear. Market actors create ‘networks, reciprocity, expectations, sympathies and aversions’ similar to those in simple societies (Portes 2010). He emphasizes that ‘economic behaviour is embedded in networks of interpersonal relations’ (Granovetter 1985). ‘It is the quality of ties between actors, the general shape of social networks that they are part of, and their own position within these networks, that determine many individual and collective market outcomes, such as circulation of information, the enforcement of norms, the enforcement of norms, the capacity for creativity and innovation, and economic

performance (Fourcade 2007: 1017). Granovetter convincingly portrays the social embeddedness of markets by highlighting the importance of networks of interpersonal relations.

The embedded nature of the economy that gained prominence after Granovetter's work came to be criticized on certain grounds. The emphasis on networks was viewed as giving importance to social structures and not as much to culture. The works of Viviana Zelizer and Paul DiMaggio focused on the role of culture in the economy analysing aspects of meanings attached to economic action (DiMaggio 1994, Zelizer 1994). The embeddedness of the economy in cultural and political symbols/myths in turn became another facet of the New Economic Sociology (Beugelsdijk 2011). With time, the embeddedness nature of the economy was extended to objects, and measuring tools that enable the market actors to economize and 'make actors think differently' (Cochoy 2007). What has come to be known as 'market devices' have emphasized on the techno-social construction of the markets. 'Markets socio-technical agencements are cluttered with a variety of abstractive calculative devices; pricing techniques, accounting methods, monitoring instruments, trading protocols and benchmarking procedures', that makes things economically exchangeable as well as help actors at rationing their economic behaviour (Callon et. al 2007). The recognition of techno sociality of markets has made formerly invisible connections between human and non-human actors explicit (Callon 1998).

The New Economic Sociology encompasses the study of embeddedness of the economy in various social, cultural and technical objects. It further critically examines the fundamental assumption of neoclassical economists that market actors are atomized individuals wanting to forward their self-interest. New Economic Sociology maintains, rational actors are not as rational as they seem, economic decisions are governed by number of other factors that has nothing to do with the economy. Jens Beckert argues New Economic Sociology considers the fluidity of the notion of rationality, for instance, if we take into account the situation of 'bounded rationality' and the 'complex chain of contingencies'. Beckert puts it, 'actors do not have the calculative basis for optimizing their utility-functions in the face of bounded rationality, social interdependence and new action situations. The resulting uncertainty leads them to resort to socially anchored spirits or "conventions" that serve as a "collectively recognized reference" giving orientation to intentionally rational actors' (Beckert 2007: 10-11). Rationality of individuals is in effect based on social contexts.

My theoretical and methodological enquiries of a qualitative study on the informal markets in Delhi draw from Economic Sociology, particularly from New Economic Sociology. However, the frame of embeddedness of the economy in social, cultural and technical contexts does not justify the findings from the field in entirety. The attempt of New Economic Sociology to show the basis of macro and micro issues of the economy on various factors can be at some level deterministic. The imperative of New Economic Sociology has been to highlight the previously ignored aspects of the economy engaging with a stubborn discipline such as Economics. The result to some extent has been to highlight some factors at the cost of others. To give a holistic picture of the field, a heuristic device that shows associations amongst various aspects in the bazaars without privileging any one factor is necessary. In this regards, I found Bruno Latour's concept 'modes of existence' highly illuminating (Latour 2013b). 'Modes of existence' is a complex concept. However, the three important strands of it assisted me to organize theoretically the data collected from the field. First the concept 'modes of existence' shows the interrelationship amongst the various actors in an empirical situation. Modes of existence articulate the ontology of things and its relationship with other things to the extent that being is reflected as 'being-as-another'. Latour's idea 'I am what I am attached to' summarizes the sentiment well (Latour 2013 b). In the bazaars, the existence of different actors, human, technology, values and money borrow from one other to reinstate their identities. For instance, the traditional Hindu beliefs and new beliefs of the state sponsored neoliberal regime impact the act of making money in the electronic markets in Delhi. We observe that the pursuit of money falls short of a capitalist endeavour as the traders are influenced by the Hindu ideas of frugality (Eckhardt and Mahi 2012).

The modes of existence paradigm however, do not relativise the different aspects of an empirical situation. This second feature is important for my work. Although the different modes inform each other in the market, in the process the modes do not lose their own identities. There is a different positioning of the modes, Politics, Ethics, Organization and Economy into various realms (Latour 2011). While demarcating the realm of technology, Latour and Venn write, 'If we are unable to distinguish between a technical object and a non-technical one, we should nevertheless be able to locate the dimensions pertaining to technology in some entity' (Latour and Venn 2002: 248). The realm of a particular mode does not claim purity. Every mode is about 'alteration', 'alterity' and 'alienation' and forming its realm as a result of it. Latour sees the organizing feature of the economy in its economizing principles, according to which values are attached to objects and the larger associations are formed out of it. In the electronic bazaars in Delhi, I observe in a similar light, in the

midst of associations amongst different modes, a particular mode shows a character. The calculative feature of the economy in the face of values and norms did not disappear. Or rather the values and norms went on to reinstate the rational trait of the economy and to cope with difficult market situations. The traders in the bazaars frequently ruminate on the external situations of the market, religious symbols and the development discourse of an urban metropolis. However, those being engaged in the economy, seeking a livelihood and calculating a profit is the priority. Survival concerns of the self emerge over and above the normative considerations in the bazaars.

The third feature of the ‘modes of existence’ concept that carries resonance for my field, is Latour’s notion of ecologizing a ‘procedure that makes it possible to follow a network of quasi-objects whose relation of subordination remains uncertain (Latour 1998: 239). Posed against the idea of ‘modernizing’, ‘ecologizing’ frees itself from the assumptions of scientific and civilizational superiority of the west. The concept ecology is by nature a neutral concept and makes an appeal, ‘distinct beings that must be addressed in their own languages’ (Latour 2013a: 2). In this regard, we move away from singularity. Every empirical situation has the possibility to rewrite what we know of the world and how we perceive it. As a result, Latour avoids the use of the term ‘Capitalism’ and ‘Economy’. Capitalism for Latour becomes synonymous with an Economy that is ‘an infinite and boundless domain totally indifferent to terrestrial existence and the very notion of limits, and entirely self-centered and self-governed’ (Latour 2014: 6). The Economy perceived as such does not take into account contingencies, human and natural. It resists multiplicity and reformations.

The ecologizing axis that acknowledges multiplicity gives the modes of existence paradigm a radical posturing. According to Latour, the collectives of different ‘modes of existence’ in the empirical world can offer a restructuring of the world and enable us to confront amongst other things the climate disaster (Latour 1998). The electronic bazaars in Delhi are another mode of the information society in India. It is outside of the dominant circuit of knowledge and capital. The gray electronic markets do not configure in the official discourse of information society in India. The actors of these markets are people that are ideally supposed to disappear from the urban map as the city develops. They are what Partha Chatterjee would call ‘population’ and not ‘citizens’ whose presence in the city is tolerated as construction workers, and temporary migrants (Chatterjee 2004).

In a Latoureaan sense, the gray markets are outside the domain of the modern; it is the other (Latour 2013 a). Modernity as a phenomenon is associated with Science and

Reason with capital letters. The strict systems of deduction and written codes have differentiated the modern from the non-moderns. The non-moderns' use of practical science and medicine has been relegated to an inferior status (Nandy 1995). The practitioners in the electronic bazaars use tacit knowledge, local tools and oral guidelines that are traditionally viewed as unscientific. However, the used consoles, second hand DVDs/CDs of games, local tools and jargons are important parts of the video game economy in India. Some of the practices especially recycled products and tools carry a radical potential as imagined by Latour. The bazaars unintentionally create sustainable systems of production and acquisition of information products. The ecologizing model shows the autonomous ways of being of things and 'risk taken to keep on existing' (Latour 2013a: 11). The electronic bazaars in Delhi are resilient places and they survive against many odds, a highly competitive economy of video games and unfriendly state laws and policies.

Bruno Latour in his work argues the merits of anthropological methods to trace the 'local' and make our ontologies deeper (Latour 2013b). To study the 'modes of existence' in the electronic bazaars in Delhi, I found ethnography as a suitable method. The time and attention to details that ethnography allows through a series of mix methods is what was necessary to capture the essence of the field. Before delving on the intricacies of doing an ethnography I want to touch briefly on the physical geographies of the three electronic bazaars in Delhi.

Lajpat Rai Market

Lajpat Rai market is a heavily crowded market in Chandni Chowk Area of Old Delhi. Overlooking the historic Red fort and situated opposite to a Jain Mandir, Lajpat Rai Market has a range of shops selling different commodities from mobile phones to VCRs to TV set to electrical wires to video games. The market is placed on a higher ground with lines of shops in old buildings. According to the traders, Lajpat Rai Market was established in the 1960s to give the partition refugees some source of livelihood. The Partition of India occurred post independence of India from British rule in 1947 when the Dominion of Pakistan was created made of East and West Pakistan (Brass 2003).

Lajpat Rai Market is a rectangular shaped market with a number of alleys going inwards. The physical structure of the market is of old red-bricked buildings that have decayed over time. There are about 20 shops of video games in the market that I could account for. It is very difficult to give the exact number of shops of video games, as the physicality of the shops is different. Some shops are of a temporary

nature. These are on benches in the verandahs of other shops. The shops that are of a temporary nature are mostly absorbed in repair work. Since these temporary shops are quite a few and all over the place, it is difficult to have their exact number. Also the situation is complicated as they appear and disappear arbitrarily. Although on most days, one observes the temporary shops lined in the same places, but say for instance, the weather is bad, they disappear almost instantaneously. However, the temporary shops are part and parcel of the market and highlight the flexibility of the market place. A repairperson has the possibility to start working in the market even without renting a shop. If he has the necessary skill and manages to establish rapport with the shopkeeper, he places a bench in front of his shop.

The majority of the shops of video games are small; they appear similar to a narrow rectangular cabinet. Two or three people fit inside them. Usually a shop has a desk lined with many products, which alternate between a display zone and a counter where the owner sits. Then there are a few wooden stools in the shop, where the young assistant sits. The small shops are cluttered with goods. There are shelves on the walls with umpteen numbers of goods. A few cartons of goods are stacked in one corner. The cartons usually have goods recently delivered to the shop that have not found place in the wooden racks. Some of the small shops have a basement that acts as the storehouse of goods. The basement is also the pantry for the shop. It has a refrigerator and a microwave from where hot and cool refreshments come to the shop.

Apart from the small shops, there are a few shops that have wider space and spacious racks. The bigger shops have different varieties of goods. Unlike the small shops that have miscellaneous goods, the big shops claim to keep company products, games as well as consoles. The space of the shop is used to display packaged gaming consoles, neatly arranged one after the other. The bigger shops are often air-conditioned adding to the impression that they keep expensive company products.

In Lajpat Rai market, there is no clear way to mark the different shops of video games in the bazaar. Usually, one or two gaming shops are lined together and then a long array of other shops appear until one spots another shop of game. Most of the small shops of games are in the outer courtyard of the old building. A few big shops are in the narrow alleys that branches out from the main building. Given the architecture of the market, a quadrangular structure of old buildings that branches into many inward alleys, the market is crowded on most days. It is rare to pass through the narrow alleys of the market without bumping into other consumers and carriers with goods on their heads.

Palika Bazaar

Established in 1978, Palika Bazaar is the first underground air-conditioned market in India. It has a circular infrastructure with a number of concentric circles. Palika Bazaar has two floors. Most of the shops of video games are in the innermost circle of the building. A couple of shops and repair places are on the first floor above the innermost circle. Two shops of video games are in the outer circle of the market. Most of the shops of video games are from small to medium size. One interesting aspect of Palika is that most shops have a number of counters that sell different products within the same shop. A single shop is divided into different segments. A shop of video game would share its space with people selling mobile phones to toys to watches. There are no clear demarcation in a shop between those selling games and other products. A row of desks is lined one after another. A slight gap between desks/counters indicates the separation of owners of different goods. Number of traders selling different goods within a single shop increases the density of people and interactions in the bazaar.

In the inner most circles, there are three shops that have a big counter of games. Other ten shops have smaller counters of games. The size of the counter however, does not determine the range of commodities that a shop has. Even a small counter can be stacked with DVDs of games, accessories of games and gaming consoles. The bigger counter of games as far as I could see gave only an aesthetic impact. More space meant that the products could be arranged systematically and they got better visibility. Smaller counters meant that goods have to be accommodated within the available space. However, I noticed that even the small counters made good use of the space. Every possible corner of the shop is wisely utilized to keep the products of different shape and size.

Many of the shops of video games in the inner circle are lined one after the other giving the feel of an exclusive video gaming market. When one enters the inner circle, an onlooker can see on top of the counter, boxes stacked with pirated CDs/DVDs of computer games. There are number of counters in Palika with LCD screens. A passerby spends time playing games on these screens.

Nehru Place

At Nehru Place, the street vendors of games stand in different parts of the shopping complex. The street vendors are usually stationed on the ground and first floor of the

high rising buildings. Nehru Place has a row of perpendicular buildings with multiple entries. One prominent entry is opposite to the newly built violet line metro. Targeting, the flow of people arriving by the metro, a number of street hawkers sit on the pavement close to the entry. There are hawkers selling flowers, clothes, toys, books and a few of them do lamination work. The groups of street vendors selling games and software at Nehru Place although mobile have their marked territory within which they sell their stuff. In the whole shopping complex, there are usually three big groups of street vendors. One group is at the beginning of the metro station entrance placed between two parallel buildings. The next group congregates towards the end of the parallel buildings. The third group is at another building that is at the end of the parallel buildings. The street vendors in the first group are widely dispersed. The second group is territorial; the vendors attract consumers standing in a fixed place. The third group is stationed on the ground and first floor of a building. The leader and a couple of street vendors attract consumers from the first floor while the rest of the group targets consumers in the ground floor of the market.

The street vendors add on to the number of people in the bazaar. What would otherwise be business for the shops in the market, with the presence of the street vendors; there is also business in the corridors and courtyards of the market. The presence of the street vendors not only expands the market place but it also provides a certain edge to the market. In one of my earliest days of being in the market, I remember having to run along with a couple of street vendors to a dingy corner where they had hidden the bag of pirated games. Seeing the police, the street vendors immediately rushed to their possession. Hide and seek with the police and the noises of the energetic street vendors bring the market alive.

Doing Ethnography in a Bazaar

The first day that I walked into a crowded Palika Bazaar, I had the sensation of a classical ethnographer moving into a new field (Crapanzano 1970, Whyte 1943). Although, Palika Bazaar and for that matter, all the markets that I did field work are within the parameters of the metropolis Delhi. Yet, the bazaars stood out in their aesthetics and the energy they created. The greater density of shops and the number of people at any point in time mark out the bazaars as urban economic places. While the malls and shopping complexes in Delhi are widely populated spaces, the spatial and human geography of the bazaars are unique. Bazaars do not have the aura of glitzy urban malls with packaged goods; bazaars have small shops laden with all kinds of goods, original and contraband commodities. The population that came to the market is diverse. Many people coming to the market can be seen as the urban

underclass, new migrants to the cities and people living in the slums. I met consumers and shop assistants in the bazaar that have moved up in the social and economic ladder coming from the lowest section of the society. In the bazaar, I heard stories of consumers that are new migrants to the city. They developed an interest in video games through the different forms of employment they sought in a new city. In Nehru Place, I met two brothers that worked as deliverymen at a computer shop in NCR (National Capital Region). They understood what games were by delivering goods to homes. After developing an initial interest, they came to buy cheap pirated computer games in the market.

Apart from the diverse range of people that the bazaars attract, another aspect is the energy and noise that is part of the bazaars. As discussed above, the shops in the bazaars are closely knit and a single shop can have different traders selling a range of products. The crowded shops and the noise of bargaining make the bazaars distinct as an urban economic space. Everyday that I entered the electronic bazaars in Delhi, I sensed that I was not studying Delhi that was part of the new middle class and the urban educated people. Even if I were not studying the 'other cultures' in distant and isolated places, I was outside of the mainstream spaces of consumption in India, the high rising malls and English-speaking consumers (Beattie 1966). In one of my earliest days of doing research I was put off guard when one of the sellers at Lajpat Rai market held me by the hand to divert my attention. As I was not paying attention to his products, he felt a better strategy was to pull me towards his shop. After the initial shock and fear of getting mugged or abused, I slowly got used to the loud screams of sellers and the proximity of people. Everyday I was surrounded by a range of people, mostly men that dressed casually and spoke in vernacular languages. None of them showed that they cared much about their appearance; clothes had an easy and unkempt feel. For most of the traders the single most expensive thing at their possession was their smart phones that they used for business. It is not that the traders were not consumers. Clothes did interest them. I found traders at Palika Bazaar and Nehru Place buying cheap cloths from hawkers and comparing each other's purchases. What stood out with the attires of the traders was that they were low quality and were mostly non-branded. The traders were happy to wear fakes and as far as I could sense, their excitement was limited to buying something new and not necessarily something expensive and of superior quality.

In the deeply populated bazaars in Delhi, I spend 12 months, July, August and September in 2012, and from January to September in 2013. The months in 2012 were spent mainly at acclimatizing me with the field, introducing me to the various traders and explaining my purpose of being there. It was mostly in the months in

2013 that I spoke to the traders directly about my topic and invited their response on various issues. I carried along a notebook to record field conversations. I wrote down important pointers and later filled in impressions and conversations from the field. For a long time, the traders were not comfortable in me audio recording any of their conversations. They did not like to be taped or video graphed. It was only sometime in the month of June of 2013, that some of the traders were okay if I recorded some conversations from the field. But often I found them uneasy when they saw the recorder on. Contrary, to that writing did not produce any such unease. Whenever I was jotting down stuff, the traders curiously peeped over my notebook and enquired if I had got everything they had been talking about. I felt writing in the notebook for the trader did not carry the same threat of a voice or an image. That aspect made the traders less weary about field notes. I personally felt that taking field notes in the field has its own merits and demerits. One on hand, field notes are never as complete as audio recordings are. Recording a conversation meant that you capture almost all of it, also the pauses and the interruptions. Reproducing the impressions from the field based on memory meant that some data is likely to be lost. While this is a serious disadvantage, I noticed that transcribing data based on memory and when done verbatim, each had its own aura. The field notes that I based on recollection were more detailed about my own impressions of the field, things going on in the surrounding while I was interacting with someone. On the other hand, verbatim conversations were focused on the conversation per se and lacked the reflective aspect to an extent. I have a fix of both field notes and around 40-taped conversations.

Non –Participant Observation

Throughout my fieldwork, observation has been crucial in collecting data and familiarizing myself with the field. From the starting days of my field until the time I was accustomed to it, observing the traders at work and while they were interacting with consumers has given me rich insights. Often, my presence could be neutralized in the shop, when I stopped participating in the field and instead became a distant observer. As I stood in a corner of the shop, day in and day out, I was doing minimum damage to the natural course of activities in the shop. Usually more than half of my time in the field was spent being a silent observer. It was a successful tactic and method. When the traders were busy with consumers and other people in the shop, they were unable to engage with me. However, each conversation the traders had with other people was interesting to me. I could see how the traders dealt with consumers, how much knowledge they had about products and importantly how they went along responding to the different queries of the consumers. Observing the

traders dealing with the product and talking to other people helped me to familiarize with the nitty-gritty of the trade. I was able to locate the different products in the shop and their positioning. I could see when a new product came to the shop, where it was put to get maximum visibility. I saw how the traders wrapped the DVDs of old games with cellophane papers and gave it an impression of an almost new DVD. The organization of DVDs in some shops is done on the basis of titles of games and in others is based on the consoles in which they are played. The street vendors of Nehru Place on the contrary, had at most times a bag where they lugged the different DVDs/CDs of computer games. When a consumer made demand for a particular games or software, the vendors took it out from the bag and gave it to the consumers. One of the groups of street vendors in Nehru Place put out a small desk, on top of which were empty shoeboxes. Inside them were lined a row of pirated computer games. There was no visible order to them. I observed that whenever a consumer asked for any game, the lack of organization of the DVDs/CDs was compensated with the swiftness with which the street vendor browsed through the boxes.

The type of consumers in the shop, their age groups and the frequency of their visits became clearer to me as I spend time in the bazaars. I saw the parents of young child pouring in to the shops. They appeared to be one of most inquisitive of consumers. Right from the prices of the product, to the range of a product, the parents appeared concerned about the video game and console they are offering to their children. The parents of the young gamers did not do much research before coming to the field. They spend sufficient time in the shop going through the different games, testing them and asking different questions. The young gamers, either in schools or in colleges are much more equipped with information. With them, more than a one-sided inquiry, a discussion with the traders started about gameplay and design. There were again many consumers that were clueless. They do not come to buy any particular game and often come with very general concerns about computer games and console games. Spending time in the shops, and with the street vendors in Nehru Place, captured the dynamics of a market, how the world of the traders was intimately connected with the consumers that it gets.

In a busy market place, observation as an ethnographic method to see the subjects in their 'natural' setting is useful. It gives the researcher useful distance from the field of action. Whenever a researcher feels that she is in the way of things, she can take a step back, remain quiet in a corner and observe. In my case, this tactic has always worked. Often the traders found it to be a waste of time to continuously talk to me. They would also find my presence in their small shops overbearing. But if I sat quietly in one corner, many a times, I gathered useful data. Another important aspect

of being a non-participant observer is that it allowed me to suddenly change my role in the field. There were times, when I did not get co-operation from the traders. But more often than not, after a while they acknowledged my presence and introduced me to one of their consumers. Observation as a method allowed me to study the nuances of the field, physical layout of the field, and the disposition of the traders and the consumers. It further was a way to cope with the demands of a field that in most cases only tolerated a researcher's presence. I noticed that bazaar is by nature a social space. However, they are by no means a space for ideal gossip. The peopled atmosphere of a bazaar helps the traders to do business. Traders are content when they are busy with transactions and do not have ideal time. The possibility of ideal time and by virtue of it, time to talk to me meant that they were not making sales. This aspect forever bothered the traders. And in that light, a preferred position for both the traders and for me was to silently observe the traders at work

Participant-Observation

In each of the bazaar, there came a time, when the traders were willing to include me in their daily businesses. They let me have hands on knowledge about the different aspect of their trades. I was curious as an ethnographer to see the technical details of the trade, how the traders worked with different tools and repaired the hardware of consoles. At times, mere observation was not enough. Often, it slipped me how a small nut was fixed in the motherboard of a gaming console. On a few occasions, a trader would give me his soldering wire to press the tiny chips on the motherboard. The delicateness nature of the work demanded months of training and my attempts at trying out the repair work was more my way of understanding the different tools and the use it was put to. I did not reach the stage of becoming an adept technician.

I sometimes helped the traders at the counters. If a trader had to go out of the shop, I would sit at the counter and try to keep the consumers engaged until the trader came back. Many a times, at Palika, when I sat at Govind's shop, I found myself interacting with the consumers on their purchases. I learned how to spot quickly different games on the shelf, and talk about their regular features. Bargaining with the price of the product I always left it to the traders. The arbitrariness of the price setting was contingent on the type of consumers a shop gets. And it is the trader that is skillful in making that call.

While manning the counter as well trying out the different facets of repairing, I felt a different connection with the field. The surge and excitement of dealing with consumers and being part of a market exchange was powerful. Especially at Nehru

Place where on different occasions, I helped the street vendors to find DVD/CDs from a box of computer games, I could sense the excitement of the immediacy of transactions. The consumers usually had little patience and the trader had to keep engaging the consumers with different responses. I found it quite challenging to concentrate on the questions put by the consumer as well as to look through hundreds of DVDs. The small stint of selling goods along with the traders added a different dimension to the field. While, mere observation was making the field visible to me, participant-observation was a different sensory experience. I came face to face with the excitement of trading in a bazaar and the effort, mental and physical that each transaction demanded. The field came alive through participant observation. I was not anymore hearing the screams and bargaining between consumers and traders, but was part of it. In the days that I spend aiding the traders in selling products in the bazaar, I was closest to the field. In many ways, I broke the gap between the self and the traders. Seeing me shouting out for consumers made the traders believe that I was one of them. Especially, at Nehru Place where the street vendors are seen as the lowest rung of sellers, having me with them gave a sense of solidarity. At some level, I could feel the one sided relationship between the researcher and the subject suspended for a while. It was not anymore a relationship where one was observing and others were being observed. It became one of those moments where the field encompassed all of us.

Participant observation though with all its merits was not possible in the bazaar at all times. At Palika and Lajpat Rai market, it was risky to trust a newcomer with important transactions. I felt it my duty to not push the traders too much. If the traders were not showing much interest in directly involving me in their business, I respected that choice. With my limited knowledge, my interference whenever was felt unnecessary I withdrew. In Nehru Place, my active participation in the trade was constrained by the tense environment in which the traders operated. The street vendors spotting a policeperson at a distance would warn me that it was one of those days when they have to constantly be on guard. In such a situation, my being there was an added responsibility. When the police came, the street vendors would not leave me alone to confront the situation. They would it take as their responsibility to get me into a safe place. However, finding a place of escape when the police was after you was not an easy task. In order to make a swift exit, one had to know all the elusive passages of the market in the back of her hand. If I fell behind, I would jeopardize the whole group. Knowing the situation well, I took the cue from the street vendors and kept a safe distance from them when the local constables were around.

As a method, I found participant observation a more fulfilling personal experience than a method to collect data. Whatever time, I actively participated in the field, it brought me closer to the traders and I was able to sense the joy and frustration of market exchanges. However, given the nature of the field, a crowded bazaar, participant observation was not enough in my case to collect good data. The umpteen numbers of linkages in bazaars, amongst traders, consumers, distributors, importers, and suppliers was impossible to be covered by participant observation alone. At most times, it was not physically possible to follow the traders as he makes connections with other people in the trading network. Many of the trading negotiations also happen through phone calls and *whatsapp* messages. What was important in that case was to register the different happenings in the market and discuss them with the traders in their free time.

Conversations

I use the broad term ‘conversation’ to talk of the different discussions that I had in the bazaars. Within conversations, I include the gossips in the bazaars about the fellow traders and consumers. Conversation includes the numerous debates that spontaneously start in the bazaars. There are heated discussions on the current political situation in the country and the responses of the traders on trending news headlines. Conversations are also the small talks between the consumers and traders before they settle down for business. Of all the methods of collecting data, I found the free flowing conversations in the field most rewarding. Initially, I got worried when the people at the shop decided to speak on all kinds of issues apart from those that I was interested in. They would spend hours talking of Indian politics, corrupt leaders and scantily clad women coming to the bazaars. And they seldom spoke on how the traders gained knowledge about their trade and how they managed their everyday interactions with consumers via a sophisticated information product such as video games. I realized that my strategy to constantly ask the traders to talk on a few topics was not working. They were often distracted and found my questions on knowledge and skills too obvious to respond. After getting over my initial anxiety of traders not talking on the specific topics, I decided to go along the flow of conversation in any shop. That proved to be a fairly good strategy. The traders in the bazaar are busy people carrying an impression that they do not have the time and the interest to talk to a stranger on random topics. On the other hand, bazaars are a place where conversation never stops. It is not an exaggeration to say that as much as there are physical activities, there are non ending discussions in the bazaars. Goods and money pass hands of people in the backdrop of agitated haggling and conversations. Traders take on the conversation started with a certain consumer on to the next.

Often people dropping in the shops spoke of other shopkeepers, state of the economy and the general business in the bazaar. Over a point in time, the conversations were fulfilling because they were detailed. More importantly, I began to notice some trends amongst the fragments of stray conversations.

My thesis that started as an attempt to examine the facets of the bazaar as an alternative model of information society found its branches in many conversations. Initial focus of my thesis was on knowledge in the informal markets, the ways of organization and transmission of knowledge. I saw a few days into the field that a different type of knowledge and innovation was present in the bazaars. I wanted the traders to fill in the details and give me insights about the ways in which they do what they do and how they gather information and skill. This attempt initially proved to be an uphill task. The traders were not interested in talking about what they know and the skills they possessed. I interpreted early on the unwillingness to be a lack of interest on the part of the traders to talk systematically to a new person. However, with passage of time when I stopped posing questions and decided to be a silent spectator to the numerous conversations in the bazaars, my initial inquiry as well as the different 'modes of existence' in the bazaar, knowledge morality, and politics was becoming clearer. What began as a series of disconnected conversation threw light on my primary focus of research as well as started clarifying other spectrums that kept the bazaar model of information society together. I began to notice patterns in otherwise random conversations. I saw that conversations in the bazaar could be largely classified into gossips about the consumers, their annoying habits and the merits of some of their regular customers. Other frame of conversation includes dissatisfaction with the current state of the market. The traders spend hours complaining about the slow market situation and how they were unable to compete with the ever-increasing number of actors in the gaming economy. The grudges were as much about their present economic state as well as with the contrasting corporate lifestyle in India. Another topic that kept popping up was the failed Indian state and how China was a better country to do business compared to India.

I began to see that the lack of interest to talk about their knowledge was because the traders were unsure of the potential of their knowledge. Comparisons with the life choices of the engineers and programmers showed the reservation that the traders had vis-à-vis their own knowledge. The normative stance on knowledge pushed me to think in the direction of ethics as one of the mode of existence in the bazaar. The ethical realm provided the traders with different frames of justification. While ethics kept many of the loose ends of the bazaar together, what appeared as bouts of disapproval with the present political situation in India clarified the positive attitude

that the traders had for China. The image of China was substantiated by the supply of Chinese goods in the bazaar.

Doing ethnography in a bazaar taught me that the traditional methods of interviews and structured questionnaires might not suit a volatile and busy field. A more laid back approach proved helpful in the long run. Rather than me driving the traders to talk on specific topics, it was more useful to let the traders talk on what they like. I on most instances did not start the conversation. My role was often limited to drop words and phrases in the conversation, without hijacking it. Most of the times, I would let the conversation move in circles so that I could jot down as much details and the links became clearer to me. At other times, I would bring back cases from other bazaars and articulate what the traders reported to me there. I found that when asked indirectly, the traders would give me reply on many topics also on skills. Conversations in the bazaar taught me how to feel the pulse of the bazaar without interrupting its daily routine. I am immensely thankful to all the traders that have a wonderful gift of the gab and were all thinking individuals in their own rights.

Intensive Interviews

Over the months of fieldwork in the bazaars in Delhi, I came to a point when I could ask some of the traders to talk at length on a few topics. The proximity with a few traders developed out of their willingness to talk to me. A group of traders around seven of them not only tolerated my presence in their shops, but also allowed me to visit their establishments regularly. While conversations were part of any shop that I visited sporadically, intensive interviews were possible with a handful of traders. They showed a desire and interest in my work. These few traders whose pseudo names keep coming up in my dissertation were the anchor points of many of the discussions held in the bazaars. The few traders, with whom I developed a close relationship, always aided me to substantiate what I had observed or heard elsewhere. Bharat and Harish in Lajpat Rai Market, Lalit, Govind and Govind's father in Palika Bazaar, Shyam and Jatin in Nehru Place were some of my most intimate contacts. With these people, I have spent maximum time in the bazaar and had the possibility to have intensive interviews with them. Many of the primary contacts continued talking to me between their works and often elaborated on the different themes that I was interested in. I would roam around the different shops for the first one hour of my field visit. However, after the time spent with different people in the bazaar, I on most days went back to my regular contacts. This I did because with the different interviewees, I got fragments of different issues. It was rare that a casual acquaintance in the bazaar spend time with me elaborating issues. They would often

bring my notice to important issues in the market and when I probed further, they would not cooperate. Again, at times these traders outrightly refused to talk to me saying that they were busy that day. However, with my intimate contacts in the bazaar, I found that even though they were not always pleased to see me in the bazaar, they let me be. Over time, these primary contacts felt in a way obligated to talk to me and help me in my research. They developed stronger ties with me. The primary contacts accepted me as a part of their shops and also out of good will wanting my project to take shape. I used to share their lunches and at times sponsor their teas. With them, a camaraderie and trust was evident.

With my regular contacts, I would not have a strict questionnaire and would focus on details about particular themes once they came out from stray conversations. That way I got a rounded view about a topic. After initial impressions from observations and conversations in the bazaar, I could sense the various aspects that kept it together. It was partially to do with the skills the traders possessed, partially with their ethics and their fighting spirit and the role the bazaars had in the consumption practices in India. These three themes that form the three main chapters of my dissertation were brought up at a more leisurely fashion with a few traders. I would for instance, pick up knowledge and ask the traders to respond on the various issues covering aspects of skill and the sources of information in the markets. Then I would pick questions on ethics and on a different day consumption patterns. I kept coming back to the same themes after a while to see if I had reached a saturation point. When the traders started repeating things and were beginning to resemble each other's opinion, I would move on to other topics.

Some Problems and Concerns from the Field

Question of Gender

There has been in ethnographies, discussion about gender and how being a man or a woman in the field, affects the way data are collected and the impression cast on the interviewees (Warren and Hackney 2000). My entry into the male dominated electronic bazaars in Delhi unraveled a series of dilemmas and concerns. In the initial days, my showing an interest to talk to a trader was interpreted in different ways. Often I was asked for my phone number and was invited for a coffee to an extent that it was getting difficult to distinguish one showing genuine interest in my topic from those that were making attempts at courting. On the other hand, there were other traders who completely refused to talk to me. I was stuck between extremely eager traders and those that were completely withdrawn. As time passed, I realized that both tendencies sprung from the same factor, that I was a woman in an otherwise

male dominated space. This was brought to my notice by various incidences. Apart from the direct comment on my clothes and physical bearing, those that showed reservation against my presence in the market, commented that it was not nice to see a decent looking women roaming in this kind of place. The traders allusion to the ‘this kind of place’ was to the nature of the market. The traders on numerous occasions alerted me that all kinds of people came to the bazaar including the urban underclass that had criminal tendencies. According to the traders some people came to the market just to ogle at women. The fact that many of the shops sell pornographic materials did not help my case. The traders diverted my gaze to the men with mafia links that came to collect daily *hafta* (doles) from the traders and consumers coming to buy pornographic materials. It was rare for a woman to loiter alone in the bazaars. One of the traders was annoyed at my presence to the extent that he was baffled that I could choose such a field for my research. The trader from Palika Bazaar remarked, ‘you don’t look like the kind of woman that is desperate for men. Why do you keep coming to the market, people say all sorts of things behind your back! Find another field site. Nowadays information is on the Internet, why do you bother coming here!’

Me being a woman was a hurdle to get entry into a male centric market place. The only solution to the initial setback was to frequent the markets as much as possible. My strategy of familiarizing myself to the traders paid off. Either out of sympathy or out of curiosity, the traders slowly started taking an interest in my work. When I look back I think that while being a woman in a male dominated space had its problems, it also had its own advantages. The curiosity aspect often made many traders wanting to talk to me and know what my purpose was for being there. The fact that I stood out in the crowd also made the traders take notice of me. If it were a man in my place, he could take more time to raise an interest in the traders to talk to him. However, gender in the field was not simplistic. It slipped in and out of the conversations with the traders. After the initial time taken to get over the fact that I am a woman trying to study the traders of video games in the bazaar, there was a longer phase where my gender was not an issue. This is an important aspect. Retrospectively, me being a woman in a male space did not affect the data I collected. I felt that the traders with time could speak to me openly because they had somehow neutralized my gender. There was a decrease in the number of flirtatious comments, inclusion of me in the different gossips and importantly taking me as a member of the shop. The *performative* aspect of gender in this case was highlighted (Thapan 2007). The way I dressed and I talked could have gone behind making my sexuality less threatening. The fact that I constantly kept insisting that we spoke on the topic could have made the traders overtime think of me as another person with

whom they discussed trade such as the distributors and suppliers. I dressed in traditional Indian attires that could have further downplayed my sexuality. On some accounts, traders have compared my dressing sense to those women that come to the market wearing western clothes. Wearing short skirts to the bazaar was often relegated to inviting unwanted attention from men.

I encountered the gender issues in the field in a complex light. Whereas at the beginning of my fieldwork, my being a woman in a male space was the point of discussion, slowly my gender was neutralized as I began to closely interact with the traders. The shift in attitude in my opinion was to do with the time spend in the field, wearing relatively conservative attires and having trade related discussions. The final point is important as conversations about business usually took a somber turn and one would contribute seriously to the matter. Apart from me, the traders discussed business in the market only with other men. The distinction between the home and the place of work applied here. Women were usually in the household sphere and did not figure in the affairs of the bazaar. The family whenever was mentioned in the course of any conversation, it was brought out in the light of the traders having the responsibility to look after it. My presence as a woman in the bazaar and discussions on trade negated each other. The aspect that a woman was interested in trade related issues somewhere went on to downplay the aspect of me being a women. This is more so as traders are not accustomed to seeing a women in the bazaar. In one of the earliest interviews at Lajpat Rai Market, a trader had remarked, 'you are the first woman I have spoken to for such a long time in the market. I had almost forgotten how to approach and talk to an unknown woman. We are used to dealing with men and to suddenly talk to a woman makes us conscious'. The same trader went on to become one of my key informants. With time, the dynamic of our relationship changed. I moved from becoming an unknown woman to a confidant with whom he could discuss his future plans. Very soon, many of my interviewees allowed me to be a part of all kinds of discussions; they gossiped about people coming to the market and about fellow traders, showed me the pictures of pretty girls on their cell phones and pestered me to treat them with snacks.

In the field it made me realize that gender identities grow stronger when the traditional distinction between personal/public sphere and objectification of the body of the woman is entrenched. If one finds a common ground to interact and the performative aspect of gender is negotiated through clothing that is less sexualized, there is a possibility to interact as individuals. On one hand, it may appear that my sexuality was masculinized. However, I think rather than masculinizing my gender, the tangents of discussion, clothing and jargon created a secular space. I would never

cease to be a woman in the bazaar as comparison was drawn amongst me and those that came to the market scantily dressed. Rather than them ignoring the aspect that I was a woman, my gender identity was transformed into something that was their version of the woman that they could include in their business affairs. On hindsight, I think that establishing a formidable link with the trader by wearing conservative attires, and speaking in Hindi was my negotiations to enter a field that is distant from my life-world, a world flooded with males that I would rarely encounter in my everyday life.

Question of Ethics

A crucial element in my initial days of research was how to introduce oneself to the field. Given that these bazaars are most of the time under the scanner for dealing with pirated products and pornographic materials, I was unsure what a good way to approach the traders was. I decided to be honest and say them that I am collecting data for my PhD thesis. Luckily, for me, the traders were comfortable with my motive, and I did not have to lie about my background. The traders knew that I was collecting data for my personal research. However, they were very careful about the details that I was going to use. The traders were further worried that I was in no possibility a journalist, out there in the market doing a sting operation. I was not surprised with their suspicion. While I was still in the early days of my fieldwork, one-day new channels were flooded with footages of Palika Bazaar selling pornographic materials. When I was in the market the following day, everybody was skeptical to talk to me. I had to try hard to convince them that I don't have any ulterior motive and the data won't be given to the police or to any news channel. The traders told me that the journalist who had come the other day was about my age. She and the cameraperson pretended to be consumers. And when the trader took out the hidden pornographic materials lured by the money they were offering, it was all filmed on camera. And the next day it came on different news channel. The traders referred to the dire situation of the concerned trader who would find it difficult to continue working there.

After that incident, my bag became the object of fixation. The traders were constantly asking if I had a hidden camera inside it. Once or twice, they were inspecting the bag from outside, weighing it to see if I was lying to them. One day a trader got particularly worried. I was that day carrying a new bag that was slightly bigger in size and had mirror work on it. A trader at Palika thought that it was the lens of a camera and was jilted momentarily. It took him sometime to ward off his initial fears.

The traders working under constant surveillance of the police and media makes it difficult for them to trust anyone. In my dissertation, I have tried by best to not destroy the trust that a number of traders have unconditionally vested on me. However, I have to admit there are certain ambiguities that I find myself with. Especially with the street vendors that sell pirated software and games, they are the ones that face maximum resistance from state officials. Ideally, the street vendors would not want their identities disclosed. I have used pseudonyms for each of my interviewees. However, the fact that I would be using the names of the markets means that the street vendors become indirectly identifiable. That is a problem of security. My point of reconciliation is that the underground economy in India works through interconnections. The rationale of the underground is not that it is hidden, but it is, as Taussig would put it a 'public secret', it is more lucrative when the connections are kept discrete (Taussig 1999). In my attempt, I have tried to keep the information that are most threatening invisible and not disturb the status quo. The association of the bazaars with illegal trading is well known in India. And I by keeping the names of the interviewees unknown I have not changed the course of the bazaars radically.

Question of Time

Another aspect I had to adjust with in the initial days of fieldwork was the time when the traders are available to talk to me. The traders were not ready to talk to me at any point in time of the day. They were not only hesitant to interact with me but my mere presence was not tolerated in the shop. One of those moments was in the early hours of business on any day. In all the three bazaars, the morning hours from 11 to around 2 PM were seen as the *bahni* (first sales) time. In this phase of the day, the traders do not want any interference. It was crucial for them to make some early sales so that the pressure of making a certain number of transactions is evenly distributed in the course of the day. In fact, a good opening meant that the trader could relax a bit and need not sweat over each and every transaction. The morning hours therefore, brought both hope and frustration for the traders. Although none of the traders told me out rightly, but my presence could also be viewed as inauspicious. As in a superstitious manner, the traders could think having a stranger in the shop in the early hours of trade could disturb the natural course of things. This I guessed from their countenance. Usually, the traders showed immense sense of disappointment when they saw me at their shop in the early hours. It was mixed with anxiety of trade and the possibilities that my presence could bring bad luck.

The best hours in all the three bazaars were post lunch from around three in the afternoon to seven and eight in the evening. This was the time when the traders were okay with my presence in their shops. In some sense, I felt there was a certain sense of resignation in the afternoon hours of a day that started off with an anxious morning. If the trader had made good sales, he was in a relaxed mood. If not, then he also took that in his stride. I often found the traders submissive and bored in the afternoon hours. The general ambience of the shops was lively. Not just the consumers, other traders, distributors and suppliers gather in the shops around that time. Some came for business, others to have a chat after a busy day. Countless proposals for tea and snacks followed the afternoon hours giving a good boost for conversations. At least four times per week, I would spend time in the bazaars, alternating between the three places.

Question of Reflexivity

Ethnographic tradition in Sociology and Social Anthropology has had a rich and controversial history. Right from the ‘Ethnographer’s tent’ to putting the ‘locals’ in the center of all the discourses, ethnographic method and vision has undergone much change (Malinowski 1922). Especially after the edited work of James Clifford and George Marcus, the shift is to move from the authoritarian voice of a colonial anthropologist to one where the voice of the interviewees are given maximum space and researcher’s disposition are made public (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Geertz’s work in this regard has been seminal in giving a hermeneutic turn to ethnographic tradition (Geertz 1973). I follow the latter tradition and make an attempt to bring the bazaar model of information society come alive through the voices of different actors (Jameson 1989)⁶. The interviewees inform the arguments in my dissertation. I have tried to place them at the center of my research. In the absence of sufficient secondary sources on the informal economy of video games in India, I have used the information gathered mostly from traders in the bazaar and consumers to build a history as well the present of these bazaars in Delhi. As far as possible, I have tried to keep my personal bias at bay. The newness of the field and the absence of literature specific to the video gaming markets in India helped me in this regard. I have read on the broad literature on information society before going to the field. I went through some readings about the informal market places in Delhi. However, information about the informal gaming economy came solely from the field, without me directing

⁶ Friedrich Jameson in his seminal work, *The Political Unconscious* recognizes the power of literary texts to build a political subjectivity and emphasizes how a text is never an isolated product disconnected from its overall political and cultural environment. Voices in the bazaar similarly are a third tract that articulates a different type of development in India.

the data forcefully to any one direction. However, as Weber would see, that one couldn't have value neutrality in research at least not in the selection of topic, I see my impact on the field on many respects (Bisztray 1987).

At some levels, the willingness of the traders to talk to me can be interpreted in the role that they saw my work could bring about. Their interest in knowing that some positive changes came to their economy was visible. Although the traders were careful that I did not highlight the illegal aspect of their trade, they were interested that my work brought about some positive changes to their lives. The traders saw in their slowest hours of business, my work highlighting the increasing competition and the problems they face in the urban landscape of Delhi today. However, none of their attempts were propagandist. Talking to the traders in the travails of their day-to-day existences meant that unintentionally some issues were focused. The issues that were spoken was not necessarily to provoke me but because those issues bothered the traders greatly. In that light, I saw the objective and subjective situations of the bazaars mirroring one another and enriching my work through the countless anecdotes of the traders.

Chapter III

Beyond Ideology: Knowledge and Innovation in the Electronic Bazaars in Delhi

Modern Society develops around particular modes of production and organization of labour (Beniger 1986). From roughly the eighteenth century to the twentieth century, Western society was industrial, run by machines and factories (Carlow et. al 2006). Beginning from the mid twentieth century until now another transformation is evident. In its latest turn, knowledge is the primary good around which the mode of production is organized (Arvidsson and Peitersen 2013). The onus placed on knowledge and its translation into material forms is present in every aspect of our life. Right from the way we have come to see our ancestors through genes, our social communication through electronic feeds, and body through biological data, knowledge redefined the way we approach social relations and imagine our future. Knowledge is important in the previous epochs as well. But the difference is that a particular type of knowledge, which Daniel Bell refers to as ‘theoretical knowledge’ emphasizing scientific and technological development is paramount in contemporary society (Bell 1976). Information and information goods hold a far more significant position than physical resources.

Different regimes have their own mode of knowledge production and value creation. Increasingly however, we see a few dominant discourses that define the limits and potentials of the information society (Rule and Besen 2008). One important model is the hegemonic discourse of the information society that is the state supported corporate regime. Both in its reach and influence, a universal legal framework going along its ideology, we witness the power it enjoys as a dominant discourse. Another, model is the access to knowledge movement (A2K). It is an alternative to the hegemonic discourse. A2K movement develops as a reaction to many of the assumptions of the corporate model regarding creation and sharing of knowledge. The hegemonic and the alternative model although very different in their convictions and outlooks are the byproduct of a certain ethos of the information society. The practitioners of both these models are part of an elite public, who have the privilege to attach certain vision to the new economy. They have access to the cultural spheres

of ideas and material spheres of information goods that the new economy offers. Importantly they are educated in the language of the information society either that of the social media, computer programming and managerial skills. Their voices of conformity and dissent are established at a discursive level attracting diverging ‘publics’.

In this chapter, I throw light on a third mode of knowledge production that develops from an entirely different standpoint. Focusing on the traders of the electronic bazaars in Delhi primarily from small business families and the urban underbelly, a different approach to the information society develops. The practitioners of these models experience the information society as a way to secure their livelihoods and not as a cultural ethos. Their knowledge and innovation develop as strategies of survival in a highly competitive urban space. Disadvantaged by the hegemonic legal paradigm and a lack of professional training, the bazaar model of knowledge turns many of the assumptions of the two dominant discourses upside down. What we find are social modes of organization and transmission of knowledge. New knowledge is not attached to ideological concerns. Small time innovation and participatory framework of knowledge are based on practical situations. We observe the bazaar model of knowledge production incorporates new form of guild like social organization, use tacit knowledge and has a pragmatic approach to sharing. These practices have the potential of creating a radical way of producing and sharing knowledge. In the bazaar however, they serve to make the non-elites of India part of the information society. Practices of knowledge creation and circulation in the bazaar take up issues of material needs rather than aim at political and societal change.

In the sections that follow, I first lay out the primary characteristics of the hegemonic discourse and then the alternative discourse to knowledge production. Analyzing the principle that governs a particular model of knowledge production, I move on to how that knowledge is shaped. We observe that the form of knowledge is as much to do with the object at hand as with the subsequent mode of transmission that arises vis-à-vis the content. There is further a focus on the organization structure of knowledge and examine the ways in which power and labour is structured. Finally, I delve on the ideologies of both the dominant models in an attempt to examine the politics that is emerging around them. The bazaar model discussed at the end of the chapter has some resonances with both the dominant models. However, the bazaar model is unique attaching meaning to concepts from its own standpoint.

The Official Model of Knowledge Production Intellectual Property Regime

The rise of information technology heralded a new way of organizing work sphere and the kind of work firms and corporates do. Its influence encompasses the cultural sphere and impacts political power and dominance. In the early twentieth century, the Expos in Britain and in the United States were exhibiting spaces, glorifying the actual and imagined progress in computers, robots and rockets. Richard Barbrook argues that the surge towards the growth of information society is unimaginable without the cold war background. During the cold war years, advancement in science and technology acted as a solid indicator as to who would be at the helm of affairs in the world stage. In this regard, the national legacy was distinctly tied to the growth of information technology (Barbrook 2007).

Increasingly, it became clear that some countries were innovating more than the others. The USA very early into the route to the information society controlled the knowledge nodes crucial in sealing its position as a leader in the contemporary economy. However, in order for the dominance to continue the market that the developed countries targeted had to be expansive (Maskus and Penubarti 1995). The need for new markets is tied to the possibility of finding new consumers as well as cheap labour. The national boundaries therefore could not secure the rise and sustenance of the information society without the flow of goods, ideas and people around the globe.

With the movement of goods however, there was a fear of the protection of creative goods from software to pharmaceutical innovation to breakthrough in biotechnology. Many of the countries in which new products circulate and are produced do not share the same regime of intellectual property laws that the official discourse espouses. Notable, instance, being China that for a long time was seen as a country with massive violation of copyright laws and street level counterfeiting of media goods (Alford 1995). Intellectual Property laws became a crucial gatekeeper guaranteeing protection of creative goods through copyright laws, patents and trademarks (Maskus 2000). In the last few decades, stronger laws are passed to ascertain that the developing countries share the same values about intellectual property as the advanced ones.

Over the years, much legislation has been passed specifying the contours of the IP laws. The Paris Convention and the Berne Convention of the late nineteenth century

are some of the laws laying out the grounds for patents and copyright protection (Beniger 1986). In recent years, the TRIPs agreement of 1994 is one of the most comprehensive laws on IPR so far. The inclusion of the TRIPs agreement within the WTO regulations meant that a non-signee country faced serious trade and resource marginalization.

The hegemonic discourse of the states and markets in the information society are the harbingers of a new type of political economy that has its own seductive power at play. In the instance of India, a newly independent nation, the stakes are high in being part of an information economy. Even before, the rise of the information society with mediatized reality and the Internet; India since the early years of its independence has put strong emphasis on the growth of science and technology. The Nehruvian era was known for its emphasis on modernizing India with science and technological development (Banerjee 1998). A checkered development process followed the decades after independence till the 1980s. The project of building a native science suddenly saw a massive boost in the 1990s with the mushrooming of many new software firms and parks. The rise of engineering and research institutes and relaxation of licenses on information goods paid off. Indian software products and services were globally viable.

The central government in India is euphoric about the growth of the software sector in India. The boom in the software and the related service industry globally accounts for around 40% of the total software export. Somewhere validating the actual and imagined glory of an emerging economy with strong advancement in science and technology, India supported the growth of the software industry massively. A high trade subsidy was offered to the software industry that continues until today (Chandrasekhar 2005). India is a signee of major copyright laws including the TRIPS that provide a major boost to software firms. Apart from the international IPR laws, many domestic laws on the creative industry are sanctioned. Crucial amongst which is the India Copyright Law 1994 that guarantees strong sanctions against copyright violation. The law sanctions fines and incarceration for those involved in software counterfeiting. Furthermore, in the IT Act 2000, there are penalties for pirate websites and free downloads (Mali 2012). All in all, the legal paradigm opted by the Indian government adheres to the corporate model of proprietorship. It becomes in the official eyes, the legitimate and often the only visible way of translating the dreams of an information society into reality (Chandrasekhar 2010). In the Indian context, the government neglected all other modes of information industry. It uncritically assumes the protective regime of IPR to be the valid model of the information society in the country.

Forms of Knowledge in the Formal Information Society: Emphasis on Explicit Knowledge

Firms in an information society are concerned with the knowledge they produce (Choo and Bontis 2002). In order to be competitive, firms create an environment where new ideas are smoothly incubated and delivered. Knowledge management literature in particular, has focused on these concerns. Various initiatives like total quality management (TQM), and Six Sigma ensure that the firms reduce wastage of time and energy (Radjou et. al 2012). Importance is given to filing and standardization of innovation. Nonaka in his classic work on knowledge management shows how the transformation of tacit wisdom to explicit knowledge is crucial for new innovation. Through the different examples in Japanese firms, Nonaka illustrates once tacit knowledge was externalized it provided employees a better image of the concept helping them to transform it into a saleable product (Nonaka 1994). As long as the knowledge was embedded in an individual, the firm as a whole could not benefit. If an idea needs to be circulated to a larger public it has to be in some way codified. In many of the firms, codification occurs either in the written form through files and in the age of Internet increasingly through emails and online forums.

The importance attached to systematic and codified knowledge is fulfilled by a number of pedagogic institutes like the engineering and management colleges. In the hegemonic discourse, the development of a productive workforce is tied to the notion of training. The rise of the service sector and respective 'elite' knowledge workers relate to the growth of professional managerial and engineering institutes. One is trained in the different facets of the information society whether it is programming and learning the ability to organize the specialized workforce. Systematization of knowledge moves hand in hand with training and professionalism. If we take the instance of India, the pool of graduates of premiere engineering institutes gives push to the IT sector (Subramanian 2006). The emphasis is on innovation that emerges out of training. This aspect is highlighted in the frames of recruitment of employees and everyday functioning of the firms. Those in possession of professional courses are viewed as having productive knowledge.

Organization of Knowledge in Formal Information Society: Profitable Cooperation

The managerial structure of the industrial system has undergone change in recent times. Currently, vertical authority and assembly line production used for mass factory production is cumbersome for production of knowledge. In its place we see the development of 'lean' flexible work ethos both in relation to dissolution of hierarchies and the ability to introduce quick changes (Markantonatou 2007). Much of the management literature from the 1980s onwards emphasizes on the change from rigid work ethic to one where each individual contributes (Powell and Snellman 2004). The possibility of teamwork and worker's participation in a control free environment is increasingly practiced today. Firms have realized that the organization structure in a knowledge-based society has to combine the social relationship of the members with the needs of the market. Therefore, what Paul Adler calls 'collaborative community' becomes an interesting concept to examine the organizational structure of the formal information society (Adler and Heckscher 2006). Since ideas and knowledge germinate by sharing, community based structure has been preferred. Within a trust network, workers are comfortable in sharing knowledge and create a competitive advantage for the firm (Dupuy 2004) The freedom and flexibility that knowledge workers enjoy under the hegemonic discourse is not absolute. The employees do not work under neutral unstructured environment. Often larger decisions about the firm rest with the senior managers. Therefore, the formal information society although opts for a flexible environment for open and unhindered participation for productivity, there is important safety valves that are put in place. One of the ways of looking at the relaxation of top down control is the idea of 'self-organization' that tantamount to self-surveillance. The onus is placed on the individual to reduce costs and increase output (Fisher 2009).

Further, corporations are not philanthropic organization. Its primary motive is to make profit. When the primary good to make profit is a non-rival good like knowledge, the firms see it in their best advantage to allow knowledge to flow in profitable loops. But as soon sharing becomes a liability for the firms there are important sanctions that are enforced. The organization structure of the formal information society working under the IPR regime ascertains that the notion of the 'collaborative community' do not embrace everyone in the world and encourages cooperation within firms and lucrative partners. Profit maximization remains the principal concern of the firms in the information society. The radical managerial shifts of increasing cooperation do not diminish boundaries and dissolve only those that are defunct.

Ideology of the Formal Information Society: Freedom of Markets

In the social sciences, ideology is a debated concept. Following from the Marxist tradition of ideology as a 'false consciousness' to Gramscian understanding of ideology enabling a hegemonic discourse, it is a persuasive system of thought (Arrighi 1994). Ideology as a belief system is never devoid of the material realities. 'It is mutually constituted by the same social, political, and economic institutions it serves to shape' (Neubauer 2011-201). If we take the hegemonic discourse of the information society, it is shaped by the actual change in the organization of work from an industrial to a knowledge-based society. One of the most important changes is the redefinition of role of national and international political entities. Beginning from the 1960s, the US economy facing major oil crisis, the political belief system moved from a Keynesian welfare regime to a neoliberal one. In the Regan era, the US government took concrete measures in dismantling an old paternalistic model of government to one of market freedom. The economic model of an information society demands 'entrepreneurial freedom', 'strong private property rights' and 'free trade'. As David Harvey argues the crux of the neoliberal state is, 'the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of the market transaction' (Harvey 2005: 3).

Not only does the state provide protection to the market by subsidies but there is also an infiltration of market rationale into the everyday functioning of the state. The state works as a guarantor to the market and in discharging its everyday function it takes on board 'efficiency' as a crucial marker of its performance. Even in matters of administration, the state under a neoliberal regime aspires for the ideals of the market to reduce cost. Anything that is not cost effective and is not of any immediate benefit to enterprises is resisted. Even the Indian government, in the information age made the neoliberal ideas of the market indistinguishable from the goals of the state. In recent years, governments claimed legitimacy upholding a neoliberal fantasy. The current BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) government is a strong voice for freedom of businesses (Damodaran 2008). In India neoliberalism 'began with establishing that global competitiveness of the economy was the source, more than anything else, of greater benefits for all citizens' (Gurumurthy and Singh 2005:3). The advancement of the market is expected to have a tricking down effect for the society as a whole. The socialist beginnings of India are not completely forsaken. However, qualitative

justice is less guaranteed by the paternalist state and increasingly onus is placed on the profit maximizing markets.

Alternative Mode of Knowledge Production Resistance to IPR: Notions of Commons and Copyleft

The alternative to the hegemonic discourse of knowledge production is a systematic movement. Terms like A2K (access to knowledge) movement, is a palpable change in that direction recording activists' call to challenge the 'contours of intellectual property laws'. The beginning of the resistance saw different groups of free software and open source movements develop. Over the years, both the movements felt their difference is inconsequential with relation to the private property regime that they are fighting against (Gay 2002). The alternative to the hegemonic discourse of knowledge production whether it is the free software movement, open source or open-biotech, they are able to find a common ground of resisting the production and distribution loop of the corporate model. Amy Kapczynski locates "A2K in two ways: as a reaction to structural trends in technologies of information processing and in law, and as an emerging conceptual critique of the narrative that legitimates the dramatic expansion in intellectual property rights that we have witnessed over the past several decades' (Kapczynski 2010: 17).

The A2K movement not only resists the intellectual property law as the guardian of knowledge in an information society, but they also offer sharp alternatives to it. The bone of contention between the hegemonic discourse and the A2K is that they fundamentally differ in the ways in which they view knowledge, its production and distribution, While the hegemonic discourse sees some kind of monetary profit as a motive to produce new knowledge, the alternative discourse moves away from a 'model based on profit-driven self-interest' alone. The A2K movement experiments with innovative ways of sharing. New knowledge can be available in the public domain, freely available to everyone. The A2K movement however, mainly adheres to the property of the creative licenses of the 'commons' (Arvidsson and Peitersen 2013). Creative licenses guarantee that the restriction imposed on sharing new knowledge goes so far as the individuals using that knowledge adhere to the same norms of sharing. Many a times, the restriction is limited to the aspect that new knowledge is not put to commercial use. The popular license for free software, GNU General Public License or GPL 'turns copyright on its head by mandating sharing,

rather than exclusivity-it permits users to modify, copy and share the covered work as long as they pass along to others these same freedom' (Kapczynski 2010: 33). The A2K movement emphasizes that the new knowledge is shared and replenished by those who benefit from it.

Role of Codes

The alternative knowledge model has no fixed idea of a firm, people can be all over the globe and collaborate on the net through bulletin boards, blogs etc. However, fundamentally the alternative model is a written tradition. Whether an individual wants to 'volunteer' for the free software movement and practice open science, she is expected to have knowledge about a systematic set of ideas, computer programming or of biology. Gabriella Coleman in her book *Coding Freedom* amongst other things explores the dimension of what it means to be part of a hacking culture. She examines how many of the hackers were drawn to computers from early on their lives. They liked to read old manuals and write codes on computers. Throughout the lives of the hackers, great importance is attached to the craft that is the ability to write codes beautifully in different programming languages such as 'python' and 'perl'. In fact, many a times, newbies are rebuked for not knowing the basics of computer programming. RTFM (Reading the Fucking Manual) are constantly flooded in many of the mailing lists to bring new members up to scratch. Coding and programming for the free software movement develops as an esoteric language, as a sign of belonging to a group and a way of gaining respect amongst other members (Coleman 2013).

Organization of Collectives

One of the dilemmas that free software movements such as Debian faces is with relation to the organization structure⁷. There is always the danger of either turning into a completely anarchic organization or a highly vertical bureaucratic organization. Both have its problems. A chaotic organization meant there was no authority making it difficult to have coordination amongst the various members. A hierarchical organization with centralized authority indicated that the alternative model would replicate the traditional managerial model that it is trying to contest. O' Mahony (2006) through his study amongst the volunteers of the Debian project brings out the different stages of the development of an organizational pattern. Realizing the limits of a completely anarchic organization, the Debian project has

⁷ Debian is a free operating system that uses the Linux kernel. It is a non-profit initiative.

settled for a collective organization. Unlike the corporate model where a group of individuals have the power to decide and overrule certain decisions taken by other members, the organizational structure of the Debian project ensures that the decision of the collective is upheld. There are regular elections, where any number of members can contest. They have a well thought out constitution, which they can always depend on, in matters of dispute. Delfanti (2013) similarly notes that in the various innovative models such as ‘open online production’, ‘peer-to-peer’, etc., the emphasis is on ‘horizontality, participation, cooperation, giving, flat hierarchies and networking’ (Delfanti 2013: 50).

Ideology of Sharing, Contributing and a Participatory Future

The alternative model to knowledge develops as an ideological movement pitted against the dominant corporate model. The identification with A2K is based on the redefinition of knowledge creation and circulation in an information society. The priority is given to participation rather than monopolistic accumulation of profit. It is not significant whether the knowledge initiatives are commercially viable or not. Many of the peer-to-peer networks, such as ‘phyles’ that David de Ugarte talks about are community based enterprises (Arvidsson and Peitersen 2013). They are business models working with a ‘new ethic of capitalism’. The ideology that emerges with the alternative model is not as much to do with non-monetary gains as with the way in which a profit is extracted. There are some projects within the A2K such as the Debian, which are non-profit organization. Yet, there are other initiatives of open science and hackers that not define their ideological battle through a profit. For them, important issue is the core values that govern such projects. They are interested in how knowledge is perceived, if the new knowledge is serving the needs of the community and if it is based on inclusive networks, for instance, online communities.

The value added to knowledge work in an alternative information society is akin to that of craft. It is as Richard Sennet observes all about enjoying the process of doing something rather than concentrate on the product or the outcome alone (Sennet 2008). The practitioners of A2K all over the world are aware of the potential that knowledge by itself has in an information society. Their interest does not lie in becoming a passive consumer. Activists in India share the same ideology of the alternative model. They see knowledge under the information society giving a subjective meaning to their lives. One day in the month of July in 2013, I attended ‘Hackathon’ at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi. ‘Hackathon’ is a planning commission of India initiative to develop user-friendly software for the 12th Five Year Plan. As I started talking to many of the programmers, it came out quite

strongly how they value their work. Admitting that while a source of livelihood is important, they do not see that as a defining factor of their lives. The software activists want to ‘contribute’ to society. Samrat, a FOSS activist emphasizes on the importance of contributing to a cause. It is not enough for him to simply join a cause. He values what the other members think of his contribution. He admits like in any other field, there is lot of respect to be gained in the field of software activism. That comes only with being efficient in writing codes, actively engaging in the various debates and by inspiring people. He quotes a sentence from one of the websites that acts as an inspiration to Samrat, ‘contributors are priceless, you have to be’.

Bazaar Model of Knowledge Production

The practitioners of the bazaar model of knowledge production are small traders and street vendors in the three electronic markets in Delhi, Lajpat Rai Market, Palika Bazaar and Nehru Place. The group of traders associated with the knowledge economy through video games does not fall under the category of the professional engineers, managers and software experts of the corporate model. They are not hackers and activists related to the A2K movement. Yet, the traders cannot be categorized as the ‘information proletariat’, a popular term in the academic literature referring to the deskilling of call centre workers. The call center workers are almost indistinguishable from the automated machines that discharge electronic information (Aneesh 2006). Considering the low education and economic condition of many of the traders in the informal electronic markets, the access to the information economy is expected along the same line of mechanical work. Yet, in their everyday business environment, the traders are part of a dynamic space of new products and frugal innovation. Although many of the trading ventures are less capital intensive and face immense competition from the recently established shopping complexes and online games, the traders enjoy physical mobility and decision-making power. The traders regularly introduce new innovation to push their businesses.

The ability to take risks and establish an open-minded approach to video games occurs through the process of demystification of the product. In the informal markets in Delhi, video games are not an information product per excellence subsuming the ‘immaterial labour’ of society. They are banal products. The progress of the gaming industry in the bazaar is posed in a very clinical narrative. In all the three markets, I found traders using similar tropes to talk about the advancement of video games. ‘Pehle na Atari ata tha, phir 4-bit ka game aane laga graphic card ke saath, phir aya 8 bit games, uske baad 16-bit, aise se hi chalta raha, phir 32-bit pe aya PlayStation 1 aur 64-bit ke saath PlayStation 2, aise se hi chal raha hain. Games mein pehle se

graphics ka kafi sudhar aya hain' (First came Atari, and then came 4-bit games with graphic card, then 16-bit games. It went on like that, we have after that PlayStation 1, which was 32-bit, and PlayStation 2 that came with 64-bit. Over the years there is a lot of improvement in the graphics of games). It is interesting to note video games are not part of any cultural legacy. The traders do not fetishize the product talking about the marvels of technological development and the philosophical disposition that video games carry for labour and leisure relations. Video games are understood through their skeletal framework of 'IC board' (integrated circuit), graphic cards and 'Bit'. The reduction of video games into a technical language coincides with the tactile relationship established with the product. The technical terms and up gradation of the machine do not reach the traders through manual and books. They pick words from conversation and associate them with the parts of the gaming consoles that they dismember manually.

The traders do not establish a linear relationship with video games as packaged objects sold in the market. Video game is alive in the bazaars in its materiality. The consoles, DVDs and accessories are all worlds of discovery. The traders imagine a new use for an old product and tinker old product to give it a new life. One day I was speaking to Deepak, a trader of around mid forties at Palika Bazaar. He sees himself as a 'doctor' and the market as a whole is 'Aladdin's universe'. Deepak swiftly moves between his roles of a salesperson and a repairperson. Deepak wears the shoe of a repairperson when a customer comes with a faulty piece. In many instances, he diagnoses the problem and fixes it through the easily accessible tools. I remember on a hot summer day in May 2013, a young customer came to Deepak with a faulty console. He was narrating to Deepak that in the last couple of days whenever he was playing any DVDs on his Xbox 360, it showed error. When they tried the system in the shop, it was initially working well and then the screen turned blank. Deepak figured that the problem was with the DVD player. He suggested that the system should be upgraded. Deepak needed to change the lens so that the console could run straight from the hard disk. The customer was initially showing reservation in buying a hard disk for 2500 rupees (50\$). Deepak immediately rattled off with other benefits of the hard disk. He told the customer how he no longer has to come to the market to buy pirated DVDs of games. He could download games from Torrentz and play it directly from the hard drive. The customer was gradually convinced with the explanation and left the console for repair. Like Deepak, almost all the traders in the three markets understand the workings of the machine. They unreservedly open it, and acclimatize themselves to the different parts and their functions. These hands on relationship with the product create a huge repertoire of skills, the ability to work out practical solutions through cheap and easily available tools.

The day-to-day tinkering with any product is played out against a market that does not regard any object as obsolete. One of the reputations that Palika Bazaar enjoys as a market is its wide variety of goods. Hence Deepak refers to the market as Aladdin's world, where everything comes true. Even till date, with the upsurge of shopping malls and online market for games, the traders at Palika pride themselves with the fact that things not found anywhere else is found in the market. When a gamer would not find a particular DVD of game anywhere else, they would come to Palika. Deepak speaks how there are still shops at Palika stocked with old VCRs and tape recorders. The tendency to keep old things comes with the aspect of the market capturing customers through variety. In India as the traders mention, there are villages where there are no computers and even TV. The traders say it is foolish to expect that the market exist for a standardized set of people. The frugal innovation pattern that rests on cheap tools, practical wisdom and thinking pragmatically is sustained by a market that keeps a range of commodities, from old cassette players to spy cameras.

It is rare that when a trader needed something for repair he would need to step out of the market. Individual shops look like storehouses. Whenever I have been to any of the shops for a longer period, I felt I was let into a different universe. It felt similar to peeling an onion and each layer gave a new perspective to what the shop was. At the first look most shops in the three markets are staked with cupboards to display games, consoles, cartridges of games, remotes etc. In this regard, they were similar to any retail shops, which used the shop space to display items aesthetically. While all the cupboards are systematically arranged, the desk at which the trader sits is crowded with all kinds of repair objects. There are wires, chips, and broken parts of old consoles, soldering machine, gas lighter and tapes. From the perspective of the work desk, the shop is like a workshop. When a customer comes with a damaged console, the trader uses the paraphernalia of things at his desk to fix it. If one becomes friendly with the people, over a period of time, there is the possibility of her being invited to an adjacent room in the shop to have lunch. At other times, this room functions as the storehouse of old, and new products. The market and individual shops are organized in a way that they perform multiple functions. In fact, the attempt is to tap any profitable encounter that could arise from trading in video games. Therefore, we have shops acting out as retail outlets, as wholesalers, as storehouses and when required as repair centers.

The electronic bazaars in Delhi are built on a functional paradigm of understanding the product first hand by experimenting with it. Cheap tools sustain the casual

relationship with the product. Overall, the unorthodox method of perceiving and confronting an information product is different from the proprietorship regime of the formal information society. The demystified approach to the product also stands apart from A2K movement that juxtaposes the product with its potential to create conditions for change. ‘Piracy’ emerges as a central discourse that facilitates the bazaars to exist and make do with everyday tools and amateur technical fixes.

Piracy and the Rejection of IPR in the Bazaars

Unlike the hegemonic discourse that is based on IPR, and A2K movement that opts for a different version of protection altogether, the bazaar model resorts to ‘piracy’ as the main source of entry into the information society. Both the formal as well as the alternative mode of knowledge production has come down quite strongly on ‘piracy’. The formal economy criminalizes piracy by extending the ‘metaphors’ of a person to a company and hence enjoying the same rights as an author vis-à-vis her creation (Fisk 2013). The protection of rights of the creator therefore rests on an ethical register, putting the offender at the same level as a thief.

The alternative model to knowledge is largely silent on the everyday practices of piracy⁸. For the latter, the absence of creation in the very act of reproduction takes away from the spirit of what an open production knowledge economy should look like. Lawrence Liang (2010) argues piracy linked with commercial exchanges and mostly associated with pleasure products, creates awkwardness on the part of alternative movement to support such practices. However, the notion of the ‘public domain’, a representative space that the alternative model takes into account does not always exist. In reality, the term ‘citizen’ does not incorporate elements that have fallen off the official map, the urban poor and the underprivileged sections of society. It is only through recourse to ‘illegal’ channels that the population at the urban fringes can claim livelihood sources.

⁸ Piracy here is understood as a set of illegal practices, which arise from the violation of IP rights, especially the violation of copyright laws. However, piracy is not limited to the violation of laws, in the bazaars in Delhi refer to the different practices which exist in the nebulous space of the legal and the illegal (Skinner 2012). For instance, the cracking of PlayStation and Xbox do not fall under any direct legal measure as of now, yet the people who indulge in such acts along with the local law bearers place it in an ambiguous zone. The repairperson works daily with the assumption that tomorrow by chance if his shop were raided, he would not be shocked. He knows that the police could act out of pressure from big multinationals such as Sony and Microsoft. The rationale behind the raids of shops selling pirated DVDs could be extended to the cracking of gaming consoles as well. The fluidity of law is expressed through the incumbents of laws who have in the past served the interest of corporates. The possibility of the market to exist in the midst of a set of practices that are not strictly backed by laws gives piracy a broader terminology to include any practices, which are not stated in the law book and arise out of improvisation. Right from the entry of the local traders in these bazaars via sales of spurious consoles, pirated DVDs and contraband commodities to the tinkering of the barcodes of original DVDs to the number of informal arrangements used by traders to settle disputes, they can all come under the ambit of piracy/semi-legal acts.

‘The shift away from what piracy is to what piracy does enables us to consider on the same plane its linkages to the normative considerations for which public domain advocates argue and that they are often unable to achieve’ (Liang 2010: 364). Scholars working on the underbelly of the metropolis have observed piracy as an emancipatory practice at the grass root level. Ravi Sundaram and Lawrence Liang argue piracy makes a foreign electronic product ubiquitous by lowering the price of these commodities and spiraling them to the lowest group of consumers (Liang and Sundaram 2011). In emerging economies, where media commodities continue to be luxury goods for the popular classes, piracy in many instances is the sole window to an information world. In the electronic bazaars of video games in Delhi, IPR laws are flouted through different practices and create in turn sources of livelihood.

The selling of pirated DVDs of computer games is one of the practices that directly confront the IPR regime. The majority of the street vendors in Nehru Place sell pirated DVDs and CDs of computer games. On any normal day, Raj, the distributor would arrive in the market around nine in the morning. He brings with him the pirated DVDs and CDs of software and computer games in a dark travel bag. They are manufactured overnight by using powerful machines that reproduce DVDs at a faster rate (Bandyopadhyay 2012). Raj gets daily demands of DVDs from the street vendors in Nehru Place. He goes back to his employer at Chandni Chowk and passes on the orders. His employer copies the DVDs every night at his house and gives Raj the copied DVDs in the morning. Raj told me that his job is risky. He has to be careful at all times and avoid the police. If Raj is caught, he will be jailed and the police will confiscate all the copied DVDs. It would cost him a lot of money to acquire bail. He takes all the precaution to not come under the scanner. Therefore, he does not have a fixed place in which he makes delivery. He would call the street vendors every morning and let them know which side of the market he is. Sometimes, he leaves the bag in the assigned place and moves from there. Then the street vendors come and take their share from the bag. In order for Raj to have the possibility to disappear quickly, he demands that the street vendors make advance payment. The previous evening when orders are placed, Raj collects the money for goods as well. The street vendors find Raj reclusive. They understand that his job is quite risky to come to the market with a large number of pirated DVDs. For them as long as they are getting their daily supply of DVDs, it does not matter to them if they do not develop any lasting relationship with Raj.

None of the street vendors in Nehru Place were aiming at a professional career ahead. They all had some or the other horror stories of the government schools they

attended. Stronger classmates who inflicted wounds with razor blades bullied many of them at school. The situation at home that ranged from having an alcoholic father to a mother doing housework at richer people's houses had made them realize the importance of money. Out of the many stories, one powerful account was to lose their father to alcohol when they were growing up. The young street vendors narrated to me that they did not like seeing money crunch at home. They wanted to contribute to the household financially. Losing an interest in education and the relative easiness in entering the piracy network meant that everything fell in place for the young men. They were happy to earn in the early 2000 around 500 rupees (10\$) everyday only by screaming out for consumers and striking a deal. Although, in the current scenario, the market is showing a slowing trend, they still manage to carry home around 7\$ everyday. The piracy networks make it possible for these young men to access an expensive electronic product and create a source of livelihood. Their lack of formal training, economic and cultural disadvantage makes piracy probably one of the few options to continue in the urban economy. Piracy remains a crucial sector, where they need not do manual labour, and yet earn a decent income.

Selling of pirated DVDs/CDs of games is not the only practice in the market that contests the IPR regime. The proprietorship narrative is not something that the three bazaars see as the ideal form encouraging innovation. For instance, one of the innovations in these markets is to sell second hand DVDs of games and consoles. Traders buy used CDs/DVDs from gamers at a reduced rate and sell it at a higher price to other consumers. Usually, the traders repackage the old games in cellophane paper to give it the impression of an unused product. They attach carefully new price label in the back of the old DVD/CD. If a buyer is inexperienced and is new to the market, the traders end up selling the DVD for its original price. In the process they get a good profit margin. The selling of recycled games was started by one of the traders in either of the markets. Now almost all shops of video games acquire second hand DVDs/CDs from users, recycle them and sell it to new users.

The copying of successful business trends is analyzed in a very practical fashion. The trader claiming to introduce a certain innovation in the market does not feel cheated when he sees that his model is replicated in all other shops. One way in, which this coping mechanism works, is by placing the act of copying in some perspective. Even though a particular trader introduces a new innovation, he is constantly aware that in the past he has copied countless trends to bring his business to the present level. Harish is a successful wholesaler at Lajpat Rai market. He has inherited the shop from his father. His grandparents were partition refugees and were assigned the shop as a measure to rehabilitate the affected families. Over the years, beginning from the

late 1970s, the shop has traded in different electronic products. In the earlier days, the shop was selling transistors. From the 1990s, onwards it is selling video games. The shop aims at the market for parlour games. Recently they have learnt to produce big screen consoles for parlour games. In the shop, they create a wooden cabinet then attach a TV set in front of the cabinet. Using the normal IC board of a TV game, they then attach it to the big monitor. In front of the monitor is a protruding space, where they put the controls. The consumers as a result get the experience of playing normal TV games on wide screens. People assemble everything in the shop. Harish has an assistant who helps him in his work. The assistant has picked up technical skills in the market. Since, he has been a young man, the assistant went about in the market, intensely observing the different repair work in the market and posing countless inane questions to older technicians. With time, the assistant feels that he learnt the tricks of the trade. Initially he clumsily copied the skills that he learnt over the years observing other repairpersons. Now the assistant says most repair work comes naturally to him. He has had enough practice.

The new innovation of an enlarged TV game is quite successful in the market. A single console is sold for about 300\$. A lot of the video game parlours in Delhi are demanding it. Two shops down Harish's is another trader who has started producing the same wooden cabinet fixed with a large TV set. When I asked Harish about his rival reproducing his innovation, he said to me, 'nothing is original in the market, everything is copied. The consoles that we are making today, we first saw versions of it in China. We realized it could be profitable for the Indian market and started putting things together. No one in the market can claim an original innovation. People are learning from each other all the time. Most people come to the market empty handed and pick things from here and there. We are practical about these things. It is a competitive market. We enjoy a small window of privileged profit until the innovation is widely copied. We are happy with that'.

Many traders share similar sentiments about innovation and knowledge sharing. The bazaars existing without formal training on salesmanship, repairing and creation of products, traders learn the basics from each other in the market. Rather than viewing knowledge sharing as detrimental to trade, the traders reason it by relating it to their everyday situation. The bazaar is not thought of as something that is concerned with the present alone. Bazaar is made up of a shared past and future. In the past, every trader has on numerous occasions, shared tools with each other and copied business trends. The success and independence that one enjoys vis-à-vis one's trade in the present time is not separate from the days of struggle and dependency. For many of the traders, the images of coming to the market with nothing at their disposal are

fresh in their memories. Everything they built in the market is a result of the hard work, exchange of information, skills and tools that the fellow traders shared with them.

Information on an everyday basis is gathered through gossips, queries and eavesdropping (Preda 2009). With the overall urban economy aiming for greater transparency and organization, the bazaars work with a different logic. No activity in the bazaar is futile. Within gossips flourish important information. At times, when a group of traders gather at a place, information emerges that later instigate some traders to take a particular step. There are times when gossips about individual trader going to China to import things have impacted other traders to take a similar step. It is the nature of the market to feed on any information. Without any formal channel to acquire and process information in the market, information about the product and innovation come through observation, gossips and learning by copying.

Conversations with consumers are an important contributor to the knowledge stock of the bazaars. One day at Govind's shop at Palika Bazaar, he amusingly speaks to me about the extensive web they spin to draw particular information from consumers. He says to me that gamers are very egoistic people. They do not want to accept defeat, especially any serious gamers would never acknowledge, where they got stuck in any game. But as traders not having the time and interest to play each game gets to know the intricacies of a new game, it serves as precious information. Govind was talking to me about the fifth installation of the popular Hitman series released in 2012, Hitman: Absolution. He had through numerous conversations with different consumers learnt the difficulty level of the game. A lot of the gamers were having problems in crossing the third (terminus) and fourth (run for your life) level of the game. With that information, he haggled with other gamers coming to sell a used game. Govind would argue that the game was worth not so much money as it was difficult to crack. If the gamer would lie about any feature, Govind contested it, giving him an upper hand in the bargaining process.

The suppliers and distributors of video games are another node of the network-based knowledge in the bazaars. As mobile vendors, the suppliers provide important information about new markets and products. Some of the suppliers get products directly from China and have incredible stories about an expanding market. The traders listen to these stories wide eyed. In the narratives of the suppliers, the alien markets of China and Hong Kong are transformed into spaces with limitless products and overwhelming urban experiences. They are stories about massive shopping complexes and shops that have multiple varieties of single electronic parts. Lajpat

Rai Market, which is mainly a market of wholesale video games, the range of suppliers it attracts is large. In any given day, a number of suppliers would visit a particular shop and talk about various products.

Amongst the suppliers, there are distributors of games locally manufactured. Video games manufacturers such as Lara TV games have over the years carved a niche in the local market. They assemble parts mainly produced in China. Their innovation rests in finding cheap body parts in China and then creating the plastic cover locally, in different shapes and colours. The modest prices and attractive designs have created a market for TV games in the urban periphery in Delhi as well as smaller cities in India. A PlayStation Portable (PSP) that costs around 120\$ in India, the local versions of it come for about 25\$. These local products attract a range of customers, mainly those who are in the middle and lower income bracket. As one of the traders at Lajpat Rai Market remarks, ‘Delhi sirf CP aur South Extension nahin hain. Zyada log Delhi mein gharib hain, humare market east Delhi, Yamuna Vihar, uske aas paas ke jhuggi jhopri ke logo ke liye hain’. (Delhi is not simply CP (Connaught Place) and South extension. Most people in Delhi are poor, our market comprises of mainly east Delhi residents, that of Yamuna Vihar and the slums around it).

The distributors of locally manufactured games use the popularity of cheap games to promote a variety of products. They would arrive in a shop with a variety of consoles, remotes and chargers of video games. The distributors would elaborate on the features of each product urging the trader to hoard a new product. One day in July, I was part of a conversation between distributor Vijay and shopkeeper Bharat at Lajpat Rai Market. Vijay was trying to sell a new installation of Lara TV game.

Vijay: Yeh product aaj kaal bahut chal raha hain, abhi rajat bhai ne 20 piece order diya hain (this product is doing really well in the market. Just now brother Rajat has ordered 20 pieces).

Bharat: Haan, muje malum hain, par mene suna hain ki battery back up acha nahi hain. Mujhe customer se shikaayat nahi chahiye, haar do din mein pahuch jayenge dukaan mein (I know about it but I have heard the battery back-up is not good. I do not want to hear any complains from the customers. They will arrive at my shop every other day).

Vijay: Nahin battery back up toh normal hain. Abhi order kijiye piche se price na badh jaye (no! battery back up is normal. Order the item now or you might need to buy it at a higher rate if the company increases the price).

Bharat: Acha tum log toh bol ke de jaate ho, customer toh hume face karna hota hain. Ek kaam karo abhi sirf dus piece deke jao, dekhte hain kaisa response aata hain (Well! you people talk and leave, we are the ones who have to face the customers. Do one thing, just leave 10 pieces now, lets see how the customers response is).

Similar conversation between local distributors and traders are a day-to-day affair in the bazaar. Sometimes, the distributors come with a brand new product, other times they try to convince the traders to repeat orders for old products. With the importers of games from China too, the traders throw a volley of questions. But an important distinction in the interaction between local distributors and those selling imported goods is that with the importers many traders share a special relationship. With the local distributors, there is less secrecy. Since the manufacturer is from Delhi and the distributors have products about which information is largely available, there is less possibility for traders to acquire an exclusive product. With the importers however, the market they move about is large. If a particular trader share a special understanding with an importer, it is likely that he can get lay his hands on a niche product. The trader could then enjoy a small time of high profit until the other traders find ways to order the same product.

The bazaars moving away from an IPR regime both in its recourse to piracy to open new markets as well as its indifference to proprietary laws create network-based knowledge. Productively drawing alliance amongst consumers, local distributors and importers, the bazaars transform the chaotic assemblages into an advantage. Developing a practical approach to the instances of copying in the bazaars, the traders avoid wastage of energy in disputes that are inevitable. Therefore, we see that by shifting the focus from holding on to an innovation as an individual process to seeing any form of learning as collective, the traders create profitable exchanges. Rather than spending endless energy in finding ways to curb copying in an open environment such as the bazaars, the traders are satisfied with a small period of privileged profit. After that period is over, they are okay with other traders sharing the market profit of a new innovation. They would try other ways to acquire an advantage by salespersonship and by laying their hands on the next big thing in the market.

Tacit Knowledge in the Bazaar

Unlike the two dominant discourses that routinize certain codes and written guidelines for effective knowledge transmission, in the bazaars knowledge is tacit. Learning occurs through observation, experimentation and direct face-to-face communication. Michael Polanyi's notion of personal knowledge fits the description

of the kind of knowledge that circulates in the bazaars. Polanyi argues, ‘the aim of a skillful performance is achieved by the observation of a set of rules which are not known to the persons following them’ (Polanyi 2002: 49). There is a spontaneity attached to the way in which a trader acquires new knowledge. With the lack of formal guidelines, he internalizes the patterns of implementing an action, many a times unconsciously.

Bazaars work with shortcomings. It has the ability to develop any situation to one’s advantage. In the first instance, the electronic bazaars are endless stories of confronting urban anomalies. In a less resourceful environment with relation to machines, capital as well as tools, the spontaneous and uninhibited use of the objects on hand, create a paradigm that is suitable to the market. In order to sell commodities, the traders find it handy to have practical wisdom rather than erudite knowledge. Rohan Kalyan calls this aspect of practical wisdom, urban ‘metis’, in his study of group of conjurors in Delhi. In their ability to use tricks up their sleeves to create avenues of employment as well as acquiring favours from the state, the conjurors display practical wisdom (Kalyan 2013). In the following two narratives, one gets to see how the traders use everything at their disposal to approach technology in a useful way.

In early 2000, Shyam was around eleven years old when he started visiting Nehru Place. Many of his friends had dropped out of school and were selling pirated games and software in the market. Seeing the quick money his friends were making, Shyam decided to leave school when he was in the eighth standard. In the earlier days in the market, he did not know anything about computers or video games. He would spend the whole day calling out for consumers and then take them to his senior for repairs and sales. One such day, finding his senior absent, he took the computer of the client with the confidence of an expert. Shyam did not know anything about fixing computer and it was actually his first encounter with the machine. Shyam remembers that he tried pressing all the keys. It took a while for him to steady his hands on the mouse. He was unable to fix the problem but after that day, he became more comfortable with computers. The initial fear of approaching an alien technology was removed. He would work with different versions of computers, taught himself different functions of the machines before passing them to his senior. In the beginning, Shyam could not read and write in English. He would in order to run the computer, memorise the forms of the letters on the screen and the sequence in which they appeared. For instance, he memorized that in Widows if one goes to the bottom left corner of the screen then one sees S T A R T. If he pressed START, then he goes inside other combination of letters arranged one after the other with different functions. Over the years, these associations have become automatic to Shyam and he no longer consciously

relates to the sequence of letters to its respective functions. However, most new skills until date are learnt through a trial and error method. Shyam emphasizes that it is more to do with the attitude of approaching a new problems. He does not get overwhelmed when he works with computers of clients some of which are expensive systems. He approaches it with an easy mind normalizing the aspect of damaging the system. In case, a system is ruined, Shyam has the possibility of taking it to a better technician in the market or in the worst-case scenario he replaces the damaged parts. Shyam says a big misfortune is not an everyday phenomenon. Most of the times, he teaches himself a new skill by being at it for long hours. Sometimes, he goes to Youtube to find solution to particular problems. Shyam maintains that maximum learning in the market happens through observation and talking to people. He regularly interacts with experienced customers such as graphic designers and software s in the market.

Shyam says the senior repairpersons, colloquially addressed as ‘engineers’ teach the newcomers special skills. The ‘engineers’ in the markets are not trained professional. They over the years develop a knack for technology and fix errors better than most people in the market. Shyam thinks the process of learning from a senior repairperson is an elusive affair. The experienced repairperson never straightforwardly refuses to help a less experienced trader. However, he tries to make the process of learning as difficult as possible. He will go about things in a haphazard way and at a quick pace making it difficult for the observer to register everything. Shyam recollects that even if he stood next to the repairperson he would understand around 30% of the things at first go. Shyam would then go home and work on the problem on his own. If he were unable to solve the rest 70%, he would wait for another customer to come with the similar problem. At the next attempt, he has a good possibility of mastering the remaining part of the problem. Shyam maintains being alert and approaching technology without reservations as keys to staying updated about the latest systems and technical remedies. Everything in the market offers opportunity to learn. The presence of technicians, objects and tools create a situation whereby it is onto the person to have an open and fearless mind to pick new skills, Shyam adds.

The story of Shyam resonates life experience of other young street vendors in Nehru Place. Coming from a social and economic condition of constraints, the market is the first place that offers them the possibility to directly work with information products. A lot of the time smartness with products emerges due to the environment in which it is encountered. Unlike in the sphere of consumption where commodities are understood through notions of identity and aspiration, in the sphere of the market, a product is as good or as interesting as the profit it provides. In that light, innovation is elementary and is about using objects, people and situations as resources.

Lalit is one of the most reputed repairpersons in Palika Bazaar. He is one of the people who crack gaming consoles, 'mod' them and also fix defects in old consoles. The improvisation arises from the aspect of reducing complex technological procedure to a level that is comprehensible. Many of the repairpersons do not have the same tools as prescribed by experienced cracker. The repairpersons have to find the next best alternative from the tools already available to them. In this way, we find everyday objects such as a coin, a cigarette lighter and safety pin making their way to the repair desk. Lalit and others like him are unable to deal with software defects. The materiality of the hardware makes it an ideal commodity for experimentation. Tacit knowledge arises out of uninhibited dismantling of the parts of motherboards, connecting them to other instruments such as a tester. Of the many parts of a PlayStation and Xbox, Lalit identifies a particular hardware from another and knows what purpose they serve. He knows where the CPU (Central Processing Unit), GPU (Graphic Processing Unit) and the lens are. The knowledge acquired through observation, experimentation and accidental hitting on some useful information is neither systematic nor original in nature. Nevertheless, the element of novelty is attached to the aspect of how a particular activity is carried out in the bazaar. Therefore, the repairperson rather than being a creator is a facilitator of technological solutions already conceptualized in the laboratories of hackers and crackers based in other parts of the world.

One day when I was in Lalit's shop, I saw him breaking the PlayStation with a screwdriver. Lalit would usually spend a couple of minutes unscrewing all the bolts of the PlayStation to open it. He told me that only a few days back they understood that if they axed the PlayStation at the right place, it opened in no time without damaging anything. Since, then hitting a PlayStation to open it has become a regular activity. The unconventional mode of finding new solutions to a problem and normalizing that practice is what makes the bazaar knowledge economy stand in contrast to the formal economy of knowledge production. Many of the consumers who came to Lalit observe the uniqueness of the bazaar model. Pranab is an engineering student. He had to come to Lalit's shop as the BIOS of his PlayStation were spoilt. He and Lalit have been sharing information for the last couple of weeks to understand what the problem was. Pranab told me that he was not personally comfortable with the ways in which 'mechanics' in Palika Bazaar work. In engineering courses, there is a particular way to do a specific thing and here in the bazaar there is no respect for any rules as long it bore results. Lalit supported Pranab's observation and maintain that traders do not adhere to any system. For them learning is not about a corpus of knowledge and exists with relation to the problem at hand. As long as they are able to fix a problem, they do not care what type of tool they are using, how many rules they are breaking and what steps they are following.

Tacit knowledge is the natural form of knowledge that emerges in the bazaar. The lack of professional training along with unsophisticated tools is compensated by the flexibility and openness that personal knowledge provides. One can learn things by observing and by accidental bumping into a particular solution. There is no need for people to account for any knowledge in terms of its source as long as it bears results. In this regard, embodied knowledge balance the lack of professional training of the traders. Absence of codes and written guidelines allow the traders to innovate unabashedly.

The Social Organization of Knowledge in the Bazaar: The Guild Model?

The organization structure of knowledge in the bazaar model is messy resonating certain elements of the hegemonic and some others of the alternative model. It moves away from the IPR paradigm and closed nature of knowledge in the formal economy. Yet, the alliances are primarily utilitarian. The organization model of the bazaar shares similarity with the alternative model in its reliance on inters personal relationships. However, the bazaars do not develop a set of organizational rules based on the community ideas that it may serve.

The organizational structure of the bazaar is closest to the guilds of medieval Europe. Whereas the traditional guilds in Europe and India were not entirely similar in their political roles, they shared comparable ideas about skill transmission, inter personal relationship and trust. Scholars like Tirthankar Roy argues that the traditional craft community of the eighteenth and nineteenth century India did not enjoy the same level of political influence that the guilds in Europe had. Roy argues that in the middle ages, merchants did not exist as a powerful economic group. The Moghul rulers, for instance, did not depend on the merchants for rent. Moreover, there were other social forms existing at the local level, such as the village ‘headman’ that overrode the role of a guild (Roy 2009). However, overall the role and the presence of guilds in India cannot be dismissed. To begin with the traditional guilds in India share the same relationship between a master and an apprentice as witnessed in medieval Europe. Michael Polanyi argues, ‘An art which cannot be specified in detail cannot be transmitted by prescription, since no prescription for it exists. It can be passed on only by example from master to apprentice. This restricts the range of diffusion to that of personal contacts, and we find accordingly that craftsmanship tends to survive in closely circumscribed local traditions’ (Polanyi 1958: 55). Right from the guilds in eighteenth century to the modern day ‘bazaars’ in India, the relationship between master and apprentice is an intimate one. In the bazaars in

Delhi, where knowledge flows through the medium of anecdotes and observation, an intimate relation such as the one Polanyi illuminates is necessary.

Traders in the three markets have spent their initial years in the market training under someone. Most of the instances, it is employer of the shop who trains his assistant in a number of skills. It can range from training in salespersonship to transmitting knowledge specific to the technical aspect of video games. Paresh is training under his employer, Lalit at Palika Bazaar. It is his sixth month in the market and he is slowly picking up the ropes of the trade. He has his own desk. One day he is busy with the bolts of the PlayStations and shutting the covers of the console. Lalit seated at another desk calls out to him, 'Paresh idhar aa, yeh dekh!mein tuje bol raha tha na PlayStation 3 ke mother board ke bare mein' (Paresh come here, look at this! I was telling you about the motherboard of PlayStation 3). Paresh approaches his master's table and is excited like a little boy to see a new machine in its skeletal form. Each day, Lalit and Paresh sit in the same shop from morning to the evening in adjacent tables. They discuss many things, sometimes they brain storm on a particular problem and at other times they gossip about other traders at the market. The intimacy of their relationship is spelt out in the master sharing facets of his knowledge to his assistant. The master rarely hides any information. The attempt is to teach the assistant all that he knows so that in the coming days he is able to share the load of work. The bond that develops is not limited to trade related issues. Sometimes, the employer takes the role of a caretaker too. They come to each other's rescue when people from other shop lay any accusation on any one of them. Arvind, a trader in Palika Bazaar was angry with Paresh. He was complaining to Lalit how Paresh was rude. For a second, it seemed that matters went out of hand as Arvind could not stand the fact that Paresh was unapologetically joking about his demeanor. Lalit instead lightly rebuked Paresh and said to Arvind, 'Arrey Arvind ji, jane dijiye, bacha hain! Aap padeshan ho rahe ho toh, usko zyada mazaa aa raha hain' (Arvindji, let it go! he is just a kid. You are getting worked up so he is having more fun).

Apart from the daily interactions in which the relationship between the master and his assistant rest, there are customs in the bazaar that continue the traditional mannerisms of the guilds. One way to analyse this aspect is through the adoption of many terminologies, which were used, in the everyday workings of the crafts community. Terms such as 'ustad' or master that was used in the crafts community in North India is used in the bazaar to address the person under whom the assistant learn the tricks of the trade. This is a very crucial denomination showing the continuity between the crafts community of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in India and the bazaar model of knowledge transmission. What stands out is the

adherence to a trope of undying respect and allegiance shown to the ‘ustad’. A timeless relation is created. Irrespective of the fact that a person continues to work under his master or not, he would be there when his master needs him and would always acknowledge him as his teacher.

Rajib left his ustad’s shop in Lajpat Rai Market in the late 1990s. They continue to have business exchanges. Rajib claims that his ‘ustad’ is a pro hardware technician. When any console is released or its cracking details are made public, he and his ‘ustad’ would brain storm for the entire night. They would put their expertise together to find a workable solution for the market. Even when they face specific problems in their day-to-day business, they are there for each other. Almost every other day, a young man would come from ustad’s shop to Rajib with defective consoles. Rajib when he gets the time would investigate the consoles that his ustad had sent him. Apart from business exchanges, both ustad and Rajib are tied by a number of obligatory ties. Whenever his ‘ustad’ calls him on his cell, Rajib never dismisses his call. He would try not to turn down any favour asked of him. Rajib talks fondly of the times, which he spend training under his ‘ustad’. In spite of the idiosyncrasies of his ‘ustad’ who has a faint memory, Rajib respects him and is in awe of his skill. He is amazed at the fact that even though he forgets about everyday chores; he continues to be agile when it comes to his trade. He was often found saying, ‘hardware ke mamle mein, mere ustad ke upar ish market mein koi nahi hain’ (when it comes to matters of hardware, no one is better than my ‘ustad’ in this market).

The relationship between the ‘ustad’ and his student is based on practical concerns and trust. ‘Ustad’ teaches his assistant some skills with the hope that he would continue to work for him and assist him in his trade. In reality, however, there is a higher probability that the assistant moves away from his master after he has gained sufficient knowledge and skill. This aspect brings us to the second set of issues on which the relationship hinges on that is the element of trust. Knowing the temporary nature of the relationship, the ‘ustad’ is prepared to teach a new assistant everything he knows because he expects that the assistant would not betray him. The betrayal is tantamount to working with the rivals in the market, which in turn meant spilling invaluable trade secrets to the competitors. Trust acts as the untold law in the bazaar and its violation leads to social sanctions such as boycott and social ostracizing. As long as the assistant wants to start his own independent business after mastering the skills of the trade, the sanctity of the relationship between ‘ustad’ and his students is intact. Rajib was narrating to me the story of one of his ustad’s assistant who went on to work for his rival in Lajpat Rai market. Rajib scorned at his behavior. The break of trust was not a one off incident in the bazaar. He was telling me that all the people related to ustad have stopped having business deals the concerned person.

People in the bazaar continue many traditional rituals and let customary sanctions govern inter personal relationships. Yet, there are also certain modernizing features. Bazaars unlike the guilds are integrated within the monetary economy. Apart from the market links, knowledge circulation in the bazaar differs from the ‘informal collectives’ of crafts in their modes of recruitments. The process of recruitment of new assistant is not based on caste and family network; it is a secularized process now. Most of the times, assistants are hired like in the case of formal economy through recommendation. Even while hiring people from the same village, someone close to the employer has to guarantee for the person. In the past in crafts collective people from the same family and caste were trusted with the tricks of the trade. Now in the bazaars there are other mechanisms other than caste and family ties that ensure trust is not easily broken. The person who recommends someone usually acts as the guarantor of the new recruit.

An important element to the organization of electronic bazaars in Delhi is that they are nestled in other networks, social and political. Stability is granted to the trade through the numerous crisscrossing networks of people and their respective roles. People are organized in a way that each network supports the other. Specifically through the instance of Nehru Place where each network is pronounced, I would analyse the organization of labour in Nehru Place, and how each set of people sustain one other. In Nehru Place, one observes that the relation between state actors and informal actors rest on the mutual benefit that each gains out of the alliance. The street vendors have crucial links with the law enforcing bodies. In the bazaar, the beat constables are responsible for checking any violations in the market. The constables sometimes at the complaints lodged by big companies such as Microsoft come to raid the posts of the street vendors and arrest them. Often with new substitutes of officers, the situation becomes trickier. There is an initial period when the street vendors have to tread very carefully not to get on the wrong foot with the new constable. Jatin is the leader of a group of street vendors in Nehru Place. Throughout the day, he is in the market without directly selling any software and games. His main duty is to build contacts with shopkeepers, policemen and other vendors. The most delicate thread of relationship is with the police. Once a new head of the police is employed, Jatin has to keep an eye to spot the correct middleman. Rarely a police directly approaches the vendors for bribe. The policeman picks a middleman from the market who is either from his village and whom he can trust easily. It is the middleman who collects the money from Jatin and delivers it to the police. Jatin regularly makes the daily payments. He acts on the signals passed by the local constable if senior officers were coming to the market for inspection. He would

then warn the street vendors working under him and they would hide somewhere. Jatin in making the delicate negotiations in the market is the most important person in the group. Next to him, in the hierarchy is Shyam who oversees the daily business. Shyam, a skilled technician deals with the consumers. The division of labour between the leader of the group and the primary technician is similar to that of a traditional caste hierarchy. Dumont in his canonical work *Homo Hierarchicus* argues that caste system in India is based on two types of hierarchies. One hierarchy is based on status and other on power; the Brahmin sits at the top of the ritual hierarchy and King, the secular (Dumont 1980). In the same light, in the bazaar, there are dual heads; the leader of the gang operates top of the power hierarchy and the technician is on top of the knowledge hierarchy. The former looks after affairs external to the trade, maintaining contacts with different people and buying stability for the group. The latter is involved with the intricacies of the trade meeting the demands of the consumer's everyday. Like the traditional caste system where the secular hierarchy gets co-opted within the ritual hierarchy, in the bazaar, the technician is second in rank to the leader of the group. It is the leader who takes care of the security of the group decides on behalf of the group and pay *dehadi* (salary) to the rest of the young men.

Another alliance is between the street vendors and the owners of shops. Nehru Place comprises of a couple of multi-storeyed buildings, each floor has a line of shops. For the street vendors, strategic location is the ground or first floor of the buildings with easier access to consumers. A usual set up is stationing some young men at the ground floor of the building and others in the first floor. If we look at the composition of Jatin's group of eight street vendors, there are three young men who are positioned in the ground floor near a flight of stairs. This is a good position for the young men to approach anyone taking the stairs. The main function of the vendors at the ground floor is to get the attention of the consumers. They keep with them only a couple of DVDs. Once they have raised interest in the consumer, they escort her to the first floor. It is usually Shyam who keeps the stock of CDs/DVDs of computer games and software in the first floor. The other men linger in front of different pillars targeting consumers. Since, the young men have been conducting their businesses in front of other shops; it becomes necessary to have an understanding with the shop owner. Jatin establishes contacts with the owners. Jatin maintains that the shopkeepers tend to like him as he has a good reputation in the market. He does not drink and everyone sees that he is hard working. He tries to not meddle with other people's affairs and try to keep out of trouble. Seeing this nature of his, the shopkeepers don't hesitate in letting his men hang out in front of their shops. Jatin says that initially 'settings' (arrangements) with the shopkeeper were

based on exchange of money but over the years many of the shops have changed their attitude towards the street vendors. The shopkeepers developing close association with the vendors have come to take the role of a guardian vis-à-vis the young men.

Like in Nehru Place, all other markets have complex negotiations that maintain the delicate balance of a fragile informal economy. Social organization of knowledge in the bazaars is part of a larger informal organization that weaves in different elements, some of which exists outside the boundary of the informal sector. In case of the multiple rings of alliances, the monetary and moral economy acts as the glue to keep different people and their respective roles together.

Bazaars as Non Ideological Spaces

We observe that the state supported hegemonic discourse sees the free market bringing changes to the quality of lives across the world. The alternative discourse to knowledge envisions transformation through collaborative and participatory bodies operating in a wide environment. The electronic bazaars in Delhi, on the contrary, emerge as non-ideological spaces. The forms and patterns of knowledge formation and transmission are based on social relations and capital flow. Many of them are profitable and sustainable business models. Yet, ideology as a conscious set of ideas determining a vision is absent. There is no pride and belongingness attached to the knowledge that the traders possess. Whatever, radical modes develop in the market that of sharing and sustainability, they are unintended consequence of forwarding frugal and competent modes of survival strategies. The traders in all the three markets do not have any value laden understanding of the work they do, they are in it only for the money and the opportunities it provide to secure a livelihood. In the narratives of the traders, for them being in the informal market is the last resort. The non-availability of other sources of income and the informal market having relatively flexible modes of recruitment, the traders choose to enter it. However, time and again they were found to refrain from attaching too much significance to their work. Phrases such as ‘we are doing time-pass in the market’ and ‘everything in the market runs by fluke’ show the casual sentiments that the traders attach to their trade. The traders are unlikely to stand up for their trade. They do not carry any hope and ambition vis-à-vis their source of livelihood. On the contrary, the work they do is relegated to trivial chores that one performs when one has nothing better to do. Further there is a feeling of resignation. The traders say, ‘Jab tak cheeze chal raha hain, chal raha hain!’ (Till things go on, they go on!). It seemed that the traders were expecting things in the market to run their natural course. The situation in the bazaar

is worsening every day and the traders feel that they soon will be pushed out of the market.

Although the traders have somewhere accepted the sorry state of the market, it still affects them. Govind one day remarked, 'Why do you come here everyday? This market is dead! We get foolish customers who don't have the money or the knowledge to purchase games. The market is flooded with local tourist and people who do not have status to go anywhere else. You should browse the Internet, you will get more information there'. Like Govind many other traders from time to time showed their disapproval of me being in a decaying market place. The discontent on part of the traders is as much to do with the real situation of despair as to do with the reduced margin of profit. These bazaars do get a range of customers till date but their numbers have reduced. Added to that is a glaring illegality associated with the markets through the acts of piracy.

Exhaustively creating the conditions of survivals in a new city and no guarantee of those existing overtime have made the traders skeptical about their present trade. In the understanding of Hannah Arendt what the traders do is 'labour', toiling for their survival. It does not rise to the level of meaningful work and political action (Arendt 1958). Many a times, it appeared that the traders by refusing a direct identity to the work they do, they salvage their positions as a conscientious individual. For instance, their constant bickering about how the bazaar is going to the dogs was an indication of their detestation towards the ambience of the market. The traders sought to differentiate from those who frequented the bazaar for pleasure. There were times when the traders pointed to young men that came to the market to buy pornographic materials. Unlike them, the traders maintain they are not in the bazaars for cheap thrills but only because they have no other choice. Knowledge and innovation as a result are desperate attempts made at survival without having any independent identities.

Chapter IV

Ethic of ‘Non-Sabotage’: Pursuits of Money in the Electronic Bazaars in Delhi

The classical economists see market actors as instrumental beings, striving to maximize their self-interests (Simon 1972). Focusing on the traders in the electronic bazaars in Delhi, the search for a profit does not appear as simplistic as the mainstream economic theory makes it out to be. The traders in the bazaar are rational actors striving for a comfortable living. The traders however, desire to rise above the figure of a profit-maximizing individual. They aspire instead, to be a conscientious businessman and cushion their economic actions in a normative universe. What appears in the bazaar is a layered ethical universe engaging with the shifting market conditions. One of the important strands of the ethical universe is the Hindu moral world of the traders. Govind, a trader in Palika Bazaar views the Hindu moral universe through what he calls a ‘non-sabotage’ mentality. He says, ‘In business we should maintain a non-sabotage mentality! After all business is a collective action and one gains the most by taking into account others’ advantages and disadvantages’. At an individual level, the non-sabotage sentiment forbids the economic pursuit of the traders from becoming a ‘money for money’s sake’ enterprise. The traders help each other in the market without thinking of the direct material benefits.

At a macro level, the ‘non-sabotage’ sentiment gives a particular shape to the street level economy in which the traders operate. Inspired by the *Bhagavad Gita* and scriptural anecdotes, the traders connect the ‘non-sabotage’ mentality primarily to an economy of co-existence. The traders say they do not aspire to build businesses that act like the big trees jeopardizing the growth of other small plants. Instead, they prefer to be part of a *chai bagaan* (tea garden) that has many trees of the same size. In other words, the traders espouse an economy that does not go for relentless accumulation of capital at the cost of other market actors. The urge to amass incessant wealth is denigrated through the concept of *lobh* (greed). According to the traders, the scriptures have countless accounts of greed destroying the desirable balance of the universe. The traders strengthen the notion of ‘non-sabotage’ with

the ideas of *niskam karma* (selfless service), *imandari* (honesty) and lack of *lobh* (greed).

The virtues of ‘non-sabotage’ were lived realities in the bazaars in the early 1980s and 1990s. This was the time when the informal markets were the primary retailers and distributors of video games in the country. Individual importers would travel to Hong Kong and bring back Sega and Atari video games. Without any strong import laws in place in India, both the importers and the traders enjoyed a wide profit margin. During the decades of the booming informal economy around video games that according to the traders lasted until the 2000s, they were in a position to frame their earnings within normative concerns of honest dealings. They hardly partook in acts of stealing other traders’ consumers. Since, the 2000s, the formal economy of video game has resurfaced whether it is the official distributors of video games or the online market of games. As a result, the bazaar economy of video games is affected adversely. The traders now struggle to meet their livelihoods. In a competitive environment, the traders survive by their shrewdness and business acumen. They uninhibitedly invest in new products and tools. The traders develop a survival ethic to adapt to the changing market dynamics of video games.

The entry of the new actors in the video gaming economy, the official dealers such as Microsoft and Sony gave rise to another strand to the ethical universe of the traders. This strand is defined through the ideas of ‘ownership’ and ‘creativity’ that traders associate to their understanding of a ‘neoliberal’ ethic. The traders do not use the term ‘neoliberal’ to articulate the changes that they are witnessing in the present urban scenario. However, the characteristics that they use to define the changes are akin to the processes that are result of the deregulation policies adopted by the government since the 1990s (Mazumdar 2000; 2008). For instance, the traders discuss about the increasing sanitization of the urban spaces in terms of the stronger legal sanctions imposed on the informal markets. Moreover, the traders attach the rise of the legal sanctions to the inflow of transnational capital. The traders linking proprietary rights to the growth of MNCs show that when talking of the changes in the current urban scenario, the traders indicate a neoliberal society. ‘Neoliberal ethic’ is the new virtues that have touched the bazaars via current government policies and its implementations.

Ethics in the Bazaars

In the 12 months that I spend in the three electronic bazaars in Delhi, there are two distinct registers in which the conversations and concerns of the traders emerge.

The traders have a distinct demeanour while interacting with the consumers/customers with sweaty hands and rapid eye movements. The energy level is unmistakable of the bazaars, crowded and noisy that Clifford Geertz amongst others have so beautifully described in their work (Geertz1963). Once the transaction is complete either successfully or unsuccessfully, the traders introspect about the various occurrences during the day and their lives in general. The traders talk about their opinions on issues and impressions cast on them by various external situations.

The morality of the bazaars did not come to me as a series of incidents of cheating and fascinating bargaining repertoire vacuous of contemplation (Fanselow1990). Conversations in the bazaars are a series of concerns, some of which are about the virtuous actions set for a good life and others about basic survival needs. The traders would talk at length without necessary instigation of what they thought of their work and the need of doing what they do. The dwellings on the different events and people in the bazaar reflect on the business they are doing on a regular basis. In this light, traders' preoccupation about what they ought to do is connected to the urban context in which the markets operate. Ethics becoming an important issue for the traders explicate not only their ontological positions but also illuminate on the situations they find themselves in. Ethics in the bazaars does not exist as timeless preoccupations, they are the means to resist as well as accept the changing urban geography and privileges.

Scholarly discourse in general categorizes 'ethics' with relation to 'life's basic values' and is as such universal (Verharen et. al 2013). This chapter, however, lays out the problematic of performing divergent ethics in the lived realities of the actors. There are two primary concerns while talking about the ethical life of a subject in South Asia. First the ethical register comprises both of the moral codes and the lived context in which ethics arise and are shared. As such the chapter is placed in the recent literature in South Asia, which accepts ethics as a *tekne` tou biou*, a craft of living (Foucault 1983; 1984, Pandian and Ali 2010). Ethics imagined as 'an aesthetic of existence' means that the subject is building her ethical world in the course of having diverse experiences. It does not project the ethical world through the predetermined world of institutional morals whether it is religion or family. In India, Hinduism acts an important moral code. However, in the chapter the aim is to show that although Hinduism emerges in the formulation of the ethical universe, it is not absolute. The subject's choice of Hindu moral is correlated with her economic life. We observe the traders chose to introduce popular Hindu myths into their ethical universe that has resonance to their

businesses. Again, certain moral codes move in and out of their lives as new virtues get introduced via different contexts.

The second preoccupation of the ethical life in South Asia is the status of the subject. In order to frame ethics in the world of a particular subject, the subject imagined needs to be independent. The individual as an object of epistemic and ontologically enquiry comes naturally to western thoughts and ideas. However, this is not a simplistic distinction in India. Pandian (2010) argues, 'Like many others since, Mauss had contended here among other societies elsewhere in the world, personhood ramified outward rather than inward, into a social world of fluid names, ranks, and roles rather than an individual of personal integrity and subjective certainty' (Pandian 2010: 65). He intends on the 'contrary, to grasp the making of an interior selfhood through other cultural traditions of self-engagement' (ibid). Pandian observes it is important to consider the South Asian subject as an independent entity capable of an 'involved' enquiry. By letting the subject speak and taking her as pivotal in carving out her ethical world is an interesting exercise to posit the subject and in this case a 'subaltern' of the information society as epistemic being. Heidegger for instance, associates the act of speaking with existence itself and in turn suspending the prejudiced subject position say for instance that of the post enlightenment rational western subject. He says 'Dasein, that is, the Being of man, is delineated as *zoon legon echon*, that creature whose Being is essentially determined by its being able to speak (Legein) is the guideline for arriving at the structures of Being of the beings we encounter in discourse and discussion' (Krell 2011: 28). The subject therefore is imagined in her capacity to speak and in her capacity to arrive at a fuller understanding of her *Being*, as part of an *intersubjective* world. The traders in the bazaar speak of their lives in an autonomous way and articulate how their lives impinge on others.

What become interesting when we examine ethics from a lived position of a subject is that apart from it being a radical methodological posturing, we can neatly weave virtues, some of which has universal resonance such as *eudaimonia* (happiness) and others that arise from their unique economic and social situations (Adkins 1984). In talking about ethics in the lived world of the subject we are 'prepared to shuttle back and forth between phenomena of a relatively more collective and phenomena of a relatively more individual order' (Faubion 2011: 121). We are in a position to trace not just the readymade ethics that Zygmunt Bauman talks in *Postmodern Ethics* but also lay out the individual choices and constraints that builds a particular type of ethical universe and not another (Bauman 1993, Arvidsson and Pieterston

2013). The subjects may choose certain ethical conduct that they do not necessarily live and live certain ethics that they do not chose.

In the sections that follow, I develop the diverse elements that form the ethical universe of the traders through conversations. I first lay out the virtues that are part of the ethical universe that the traders are born into. These virtues are based on a Hindu moral universe. Some traders summarize many of the Hindu virtues through what they call a ‘non-sabotage mentality’, being benevolent and less greedy. These are at first glance universal virtues that would across most societies get attached to human excellence or the Greeks’ *arete*. However, in the bazaars they are reflection of living well specific to the context of Hindu scriptures and rituals. The scriptural universe providing justification to a correct economic action is similar to the way in which Boltanski and Thevenot raise in their work. Actors in different contexts seek common grounds for resolution of disagreements (Boltanski and Thevenot 2006). The moral virtues are useful for the traders to posit a superior cultural context that is acceptable to the collective as worthy of emulation. In specific contexts, Hindu ethics are evoked in a divisive way, tying the virtues to a religion. In the majority of the cases, however, Hindu texts are read in a cultural light. The Hindu moral world is similar to the material world that the traders live only it is perforated by superior beings, gods and goddesses.

Neoliberal ethic is an important virtue included in the list of aspired virtues of the traders in recent years. Neoliberal ethic creates unbridgeable tensions in the bazaar. These ethics are estranging as they emerge from another privileged *weltanschauung*. Aspirations are principally drawn from the changing urban economic and cultural landscape, which dominantly favour the business elite. This is the section of population that not only promotes a particular type of urban expansion but is also the principal beneficiary of the same. I argue that in spite of the traders not belonging to the elite section, they chose to adopt the virtues of ‘ownership’ and ‘creativity’ that are part of the formal information society. Although ‘creativity’ and ‘ownership’ are broad concepts, the traders define them in their own terms. They become interrelated concepts. Traders see both the concepts through their association with particular set of people and institutions. For instance, the traders see the people who create a product as the owners of it. Moreover, the traders perceive that only trained personnel, engineers and programmers are capable of creating original products in a professional environment.

In the present time, when bazaars are disadvantaged economically as well as legally with the resounding formal economy of video games, a dominant model has come to govern the everyday transactions in the bazaars. This set of ethics is to do with meeting the immediate subsistence needs. The traders develop a courageous attitude to give all it takes to survive in the market. They become self-interested businessmen thinking about their material well being first. The traders suspend some of their other ethical concerns when it comes to matters of survival. They become aggressive market actors bargaining incessantly to secure every market transaction. Toiling for the self and the family gives a legitimation that temporarily suspends the ideas of 'non-sabotage' and neoliberal ethics.

Hindu Moral Virtues and the Notions of Living Well

To articulate what it means to live well, many traders refer to living according to the Hindu texts and rituals. The Hindu moral universe stands for the traders as an absolute reference for leading a good life. This came out both in the account of finding meaning of a good life in texts as well as justifying actions as good by applying textual examples to life. Most moral virtues in the bazaar follow the general parameters of how to live one's life. The invocation of Hindu gods and texts is in line of following a particular philosophy than a religion per se. This idea is well developed in literature as a number of scholars have observed that Hinduism can be explored both as a philosophy as well as a religion. Classical philosophy in India, unlike in the West merges reason with ways of being in the world. In this sense, rituals and practices are not antithetical to the pursuit of a systematic corpus of thought. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2010) notes the benefits of critically examining the western ideas of secular thought and religious customs. In India, for example he notes rituals form part of everyday life not necessarily in a phantasmagoric context. He refers to an example from his research on labour history in India in the 1930s. Chakrabarty studies the jute mill worker in Calcutta and their celebration of 'engineer god Vishvakarma'. He argues in the social world of the workers it is difficult to posit rituals as 'irrational' because unlike the mainstream understanding, gods in India are not part of an abstract belief system and are explicated in actual practices. The lives of gods are not different from the lives of humans and are set in a more aspirational plane. They appear in a Nietzschean idea of *Übermensch*, a human in her superior stage of evolution (Nietzsche 2005). However, in some instances, the world of the gods is used in a divisive way when a particular virtue is assigned only to the Hindus and is unavailable to other religions. The adaptation of Hindu moral universe to the lives of the traders is not simplistic. In many incidents

in the bazaar, the moral universe is tied to a way of being and in others to an act of being a Hindu.

What stands out in the midst of the complex motive of evoking the Hindu myths and rituals is that it gives a shape to the economy the traders endorse. Although, it is not possible to talk about Hinduism and Hindu philosophies in totality, we see that in following the classical ideas of a good life, ‘compassion’, ‘honesty’ and ‘control of greed’, the economy that these traders value is one of co-existence and that of ‘non-sabotage’. This is an interesting aspect as in recent times, many managerial literature links scriptural teachings to a capitalist logic. Rita Birla argues, ‘Indian management consultants now promotes philosophies of corporate governance that claim to employ ancient wisdoms such as those found in the *Bhagavat Gita* to learn “self mastery” for leadership and attracting fortune’ (Birla 2010: 83). These linkages refer to a new age Hinduism that appeals to an elite group of businessmen and capitalists. In the bazaars however, we see another logic appear. It emphasizes on values promoting a symbiotic way of living in society rather than individual gains. In his work, Partha Chatterjee noted this tendency in street level economy and he argues, “there are many examples where, if the business are doing particularly well, the vendors do not, like corporate capitalists, continue to accumulate on an expanded scale, but rather agree to extend their membership and allow new entrants” (Chatterjee 2008: 58). Chatterjee sees the non-accumulative ideas developing amongst the street vendors through what appears to be a self-explanatory logic. He does not link it to any particular context of utility or ethics. They seem to come to the traders naturally. I argue that one of the ways in which the sentiment of frugality could be traced is to the classical Hindu notions of *niskam karma* (selfless service), *lobh* (greed) and *daya* (kindness/compassion). These virtues the traders take as the heart of their ethics. On the surface, it appears that the traders intentionally chose those virtues that propagate a non-egoistic version of the economy. However, it is important to bear in mind that the same virtues distinctly form the core of the popular cultural symbols of Hinduism.

Cārvāka is one school of thought in Hinduism that gives importance to pleasure and excess. All other school of thoughts, Samkhya, Yoga and Buddhist philosophy emphasize on restrain. Considered one of the most sacred of Hindu texts, the *Bhagavat Gita*, the main principles transmitted are of detachment and control of temptations paving way for truth and peace (Chakrabarty 1997, Mohanty 1992). Therefore, the traders in choosing particular virtues of Hinduism over others are following the popular ideas of Hindu thoughts that are relatable to the economy.

They are not seeking any avant-garde interpretation of the Hindu texts and myths to ratify virtues that are by nature critical about accumulative tendency. On the contrary, discourse on restraint and kindness is an important tract of Hindu philosophy/ religion (Sharma 1987) and inadvertently shapes the informal economy in a specific way. In the examples below the importance attached to Hindu virtues to build a superior life is highlighted.

We should do Selfless Service! (Humeh niskam karma karna chahiye)

Vikram is a street vendor in Nehru Place. He had come to Delhi in the late 1990s from a village close to Baraut in Uttar Pradesh. Tales about the earlier days in the market are of struggle and loneliness in the new city. His principal contact in the market, Ramesh who came from the same village helped him out. Ramesh had a lamination shop in Nehru Place and over the years, he had built reliable contacts in the market. When Ramesh introduced Vikram as his ‘brother’, to his colleagues, the attitude of everyone changed towards Vikram. From that day on, Vikram was accepted as part of the market. He was included within a group of street vendors and was assigned a spot from which he could target consumers. The gesture of Ramesh was life changing for Vikram in opening many doors in the market. Vikram evaluates his friend’s action relating it to the *Bhagavat Gita*. He draws illustrations from the *Gita* that celebrates actions managing to rise over material benefits. Vikram says, ‘It is in the *Gita*, we should strive for *niskam karma* (selfless service). Krishna says to Arjuna that not all action has to reap a profit in the immediate context. One should do one’s duty without thinking about the results’. Vikram finds in the *Gita* reference to selfless service that has a bigger purpose than mere egoistic gratification. Vikram alluding to the *Bhagavat Gita* evokes a context that is not always available to an ordinary man. It is available to a greater human and is symptomatic of the action and ideas of a better life.

By positing the value of his friend’s action in the context of the gods, we see that Vikram builds the extraordinary within the ordinary. In context of the bazaar, this is the idea of living well. It is not focused on questions of ‘what is’ but ‘what ought to be’ that can be subsumed in the everyday bazaar behaviour. (Hume 1896). In the bazaars, ought questions rest on morals and not on the direct material consequence of any action. If Vikram were to evaluate his friend’s gesture in a day-to-day context, it is not different from any random acts of kindness. He chooses instead to add layers of meaning to the action of his friend offering a helping hand. He draws the most authoritative moral context available to the Hindus, the *Bhagavat Gita* in labeling something as virtuous action.

In the bazaars, although gods are emulated, they are not infallible entities. Gods are imagined as beings that undergo similar experiences as men and manage to procure superior wisdom vis-à-vis a good life. The traders perceive of sages and gods as capable of mistakes. Once in a while, there are stories in the market that projected the weakness of the gods. Counter examples however, followed suit that reinstated the strength of the Hindu moral universe. In Lajpat Rai Market, one afternoon the traders are discussing at length the nature of the gods in heaven. They are discussing about the king of the gods, *Indra* and how he led a lavish and hedonistic lifestyle. All the conversations about the vices of gods left everyone with a sour temperament. It was not surprising when Bharat, one of the shopkeepers started talking about *Narada*. *Narada*, a Vedic sage is known for his devotion to lord *Krishna*. He was used as a virtuous figure to counteract the image of Hindu gods as hedonistic beings.

The element of a superior ethics lying with the religious texts is employed on a number of instances in the bazaar. One would hear from time to time argument coming to an abrupt end with a textual reference. Once in Palika Bazaar, I was in the midst of an argument of how non-resident Indians hesitate to state their original nationality. They were speaking about Indra Nooyi, the current CEO of PepsiCo and her reluctance to participate in the Indian economy by making monetary contributions. They left the topic after having established that Indra Nooyi was not a worthy Indian and in a mutually inclusive context not a good human being. Soon after, the conversation moved to Sunita Williams, an astronaut based in the USA with distant Indian ancestry. They were complaining of her allegiances as well until one of the traders remarked, ‘but she brought along with her the Bhagavat Gita in one of her space expedition’. With that remark there was no further probing on the matter. It appeared that if a person had faith in the *Bhagavat Gita*, there was no possibility of that person faltering in her worldly affairs. The Bhagavat Gita appeared in the bazaar as the ultimate authority defining what is a virtue and clearing dilemmas in worldly affairs.

Only Honest Money goes to the Temple! (Imandari ka paise hi mandir mein jata hain)

On a hot summer afternoon in May 2013, Vinod says to me, ‘I am proud that I give some money to my mother every month that she offers to the temple. It is always nice to see her come from the temple with offerings and bless the whole family’. Vinod, a leader of a group of street vendors in Nehru Place spends a part of his

income in the temple. What stands out as important for Vinod is his ability to earn money honestly that could go to the temple. He lists me a number of expenditure, his daily expenses, and expenses made on count of the family. As he went on accounting for his expenditures and the strict planning that goes behind maintaining the household, the importance of earning money by honest means did not leave the conversation. In recent times, Viviana Zelizer's work in particular shows that money does not necessarily have a one-dimensional function, objectifying all social relationships. Instead, Zelizer points out that depending on the context, money embody different values (Zelizer 1995). She refers to the earmarking of money and the role that money fulfills based on the purpose it is saved for (Zelizer 1978). Similar notions of money acquiring a social meaning are spelt out in the narrative of Vinod. For him, money is important as it enables him to make several payments. However, it gains added importance depending on its nature and the way it is earned. Vinod emphasizes that his money is not any money and it is money earned by honest means. If it was earned by unfair means, Vinod adds one could not imagine offering it to the temples and invite the wrath of gods. He insists, 'Bad money cannot go to the temple you cannot live with that! Whatever little you donate, it has to be earned honestly; otherwise you will be sinning against the gods'.

What does Vinod mean when he says that money has to be earned honestly. As he explained the instances of earning money honestly, it appeared that it rested on the nature of transaction conducted with the buyer. Dishonest money for Vinod would be money earned through cheating, and selling defective goods to consumers. Further for Vinod misleading the consumer and pocketing an illogically high sum of money amounts to cheating. Vinod points out that trust works in the bazaars in a mysterious ways, 'consumers know the bazaars are not trustworthy places like the malls. Yet, ironically people who come here come only with trust. They think in spite of being an informal market, the traders give them honest deals. In breaking the trust that has been entrusted on the traders, one is earning bad money. This money that carries the wrath of the consumers cannot go to the temple'. Vinod sees it as problematic to earn money by dishonest means. In context of the market, it suspends the trust that consumers cast on someone. In a higher register it prevents the trader from donating the money for a sacred purpose. The breaking of the link with gods for the traders is unimaginable. Temples and offering to the gods are an important way in which the link between men and gods is nurtured. In that sense there is an incentive for the traders to earn some money by honest means and gain spiritual merits.

In the moral register, earning money for money's sake is not an attractive practice. Money has to find some alternative function in the bazaar otherwise it posits the traders in a vulgar light. The ideal behavior with relation to earning an income is not to appear obsessively greedy and hungry for money. Even if a trader is making a good profit, there should be enough opportunity for him to show his generosity and his awareness about the different purposes that money can be put to use. Money spends merely on the self and earning it indiscriminately does not qualify the trader as a respectable human being. It was common to hear the traders taunt one another by saying, 'yeh toh sirf paise ke pise bhagta hain' (he just runs after the money). The striving money for money's sake become almost animalistic and does not qualify as behaviour worthy for human.

In Business there should be No Sabotage Mentality! (Karobar mein sabotage manobhav nahi hona chahiye)

I spend a considerable amount of time at Govind's shop, a trader in Palika Bazaar. He started his video game business in 1995 after working as a supplier in a local gaming company. His shop is one of the liveliest places in the bazaar. It was popular around the market as a place for gossip and *timepass*. Govind's elderly father, a retired army personnel is an attractive figure in the shop. Due to his age and experience, Govind's father was often found to spread 'gyan' (knowledge) to the younger men at the shop as well as to the consumers. I have met customers who came to the shop simply to chat with Govind's father, fondly referred to as 'uncleji' (the suffix 'ji' is used to address an elderly person in Hindi). The presence of a number of young men in the shop and uncle ji created an active environment to discuss numerous topics. If the discussions turned too vulgar, then 'uncleji' rebuked the young men at the shop including his son. Pontification on moral issues happens in a free flowing way. One day, while discussing about greed, everyone present at the shop agree that it is the source of a failed state in India. Govind identifies greed as the evil contaminating any space especially commercial places such as the markets. He narrates to me two mythical stories to substantiate his observation. The first story is an account from the scriptures condemning greed. And in the second narrative he illustrates how it is easier for the Hindus to live up to the virtue of self-control.

Govind tells me a story about a sage from the Vedic times. The sage was keen to know what the cause of all evils was. He prayed to God for a long time. In due course, God revealed to him that a prostitute could give him the correct answer. The sage accordingly went to a prostitute and asked her the same question. She did not

give him an immediate reply and said if he wanted to know the answer he should stay with her for a month. The sage agreed to the condition insisting that he would have his separate quarter. After a few days of living with the prostitute, one day she offered to cook his meals and bring him a gold coin everyday. The sage thought it was not a bad idea and he could dedicate his free time to other pursuits. Very soon, he started living a domestic life with material comforts. One day he proposed the prostitute to marry him. In the place of one month, seven months had passed. The prostitute as a reply to the sage's proposal remarked, 'You came here to know what was the cause of all sin, it is greed!' The sage understood everything. He coming in contact with wealth and comfort had long moved away from his previous virtuous life.

Govind uses this story to show how greed results in all kinds of sorrow. Getting lured by the offers of the prostitute, the sage gave up his pious life and his opportunity to gain true knowledge. In a similar quasi-religious tone, he relates to the harm of being a greedy trader. He emphasizes that when one is greedy in business one is moving away from God. For him, *Srishti* (creation) cannot exist if one keeps simply accumulating. The law of the universe is such that one needs to curtail one's greed. He says, 'Look at the elephant; he does not save quintals of bananas. But we humans do, we will need 200gram of food and we save quintals of it'. The animals according to Govind do not appropriate more than what they require for their survival. Humans on the other hand, he points out are in the habit of hoarding things for the future. They are egocentric and would prefer to unduly appropriate things over and above their survival needs. Govind asserts egocentric thoughts create *lobh* (greed) and nothing seems sufficient. He says the fear of maintaining prosperity for the self and the subsequent extraction of resources increases the 'sabotage mentality'.

Govind expands on the sabotage mentality. The sabotage mentality is by nature anti-creation. According to him, the Hindus do not have the sabotage mentality. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (the world is a single family), the famous saying in the Upanishad is what captures according to Govind the true spirit of contentment. If we take everybody as our own, there is no scope for greed to appear which, is immensely egoistic. There are moreover, strong notions of good and evil in Hinduism that prevents actors from enacting morally wrong choices, he adds. According to Govind, the scriptural division of the universe into three worlds, *swarg* (heaven) *mrityulog* (earth) and *narak* (hell) instill a fear in the Hindus to partake in right action. If a person is absorbed in greedy deeds then Govind says he

is more likely to end up in hell. And a virtuous life can guarantee a person a place in heaven.

Govind sees the ‘sabotage mentality’ acting all around him. Not only humans, even animals for him have a sense of the ‘sabotage mentality’. Animals that live closest to the ideas of respect and co-existence are dogs. Govind says that the traders try to be similar to dogs in the bazaar and earn merits. He says the nature of the cats on the other hand is unsuitable for the market. Cats are selfish and would think evil of others to forward their own interests. If one has to develop any business Govind maintains, one should nurture ties and not destroy them. Whether it is with relation to the ties developed with consumers and with other fellow traders, sustaining ties is an important attribute. According to Govind, an individual’s trade does well as long as business as a whole in the market flourishes. He sees business by nature is a social activity and one’s success is dependent on the other. Govind emphasizes business becomes a humbling activity once one follows the ‘non-sabotage’ mentality.

Govind does not stop at illustrating the suitable patterns of doing business; he goes on to assign these patterns with different religious groups. In an unsophisticated analogy, he sees the Muslims having a greater tendency to develop the sabotage mentality. Govind thinks the sabotage mentality develops among the Muslims as ritualistic sacrifice is allowed in this religion. He also embraces the Christians as existing outside the Hindu virtuous world. Govind says, ‘cruel people cannot be in business. Hindus have this custom of writing Om in honey while Christians have biscuits. (Govind uses the word ‘biscuit’ to refer to Eucharist). In his mind, the Hindus writing the sacred letter ‘om’ in honey is a spiritually uplifting experience than eating holy bread which he thinks is banal. Govind sanctifies the teachings and customs of the Hindus when compared to other religious. In his views, other religions lacked a similar depth in spiritual matters. That is why for instance he decides to talk about Mother Teresa who in spite of being a Christian is at par with the Hindus. She according to Govind was god fearing. By this he meant that Mother Teresa was able to control greed. Govind points out Mother Teresa understood the spiritual weightage of earthly matters and worked in service of others. In drawing the cases of Muslims and Christians to show that they have a sabotage mentality vis-à-vis the Hindus, Govind is unable to create a coherent narrative. For in reality there are sects in Hinduism that has ritualistic sacrifice as well. In practice the Hindus are neither more nor less violent than other religious. Govind does not build these conceptions in any logical context. It is merely a matter of preference for him. We note in certain cases, there is an underlying divisive tendency when moral

virtues are attached to a group identity. In such instances, Hinduism becomes superior to other religions. On the whole however, whenever Hindu virtues were evoked in the bazaars, it came out as a cultural guide to a good life.

Changing Times and the ‘Neoliberal’ Ethic in the Bazaar

In this section, I talk about a new set of ethics that came to prominence in the bazaars with the rise of the ‘corporate class’ in India. The elites that led the independence movement were the political class, urban bourgeoisie and the landlords. Since the 1990s however, the business class has dislocated the landed elite (Kaviraj 1988, Chatterjee 1993; 2004). In the current times, the business elite emerges as the most influential class directing the economy and the Indian society. The preferences of the ‘corporate’ class in India are similar to the beliefs of the global business elites. The way in which economist note that the tricking down effect of free markets and wealth will uplift the poor, the business elite in India also shows faith in a free market to deliver (Friedman 2005). Rapid industrialization and development appears as an antidote to all social problems in India including poverty. To go along the path of industrialization and urbanization, the Indian business elite amongst other things welcome foreign investors and capital. The guaranteeing of a congenial business environment in India entails that the nation is a signee of all major IPR laws. In effect, in the country, an investor friendly physical and legal infrastructure is in place.

The new protective regime appearing in the mainstream society affects the bazaars considerably. When the bazaars were in an economically robust position in the 1980s and 1990s, the IPR logic with relation to video games was insignificant. Around that time the gray markets were the only places that kept video games and consoles. The range of people who came to the market was diverse; consumers from all sections of the society crowded these bazaars. An ethical discourse on the piracy of video games was absent. However, the traders point out things started changing rapidly after the mid 2000s. The gaming market was struck by the neoliberal market changes. New authorized channels opened both for the distribution and supply of games. Suddenly, the bazaars found themselves targeted for their source of livelihood. Trading in pirated DVDs/CDs of video games is deemed illegal in the Indian soil. The traders are finding themselves quickly removed from the hegemonic virtues that define an information product and the economy around it. The irony however, is that even though the traders in the bazaar are unable to live up to hegemonic virtues of proprietorship and creativity that are part of a formal information society, they have incorporated them in their ethical

universe. ‘Creativity’ and ‘ownership’ emerge as aspirational virtues in the bazaars. This may be out of a very practical consideration. The traders witness on a regular basis the privileges of those embodying the ‘neoliberal’ virtues in an information society. They see the formal actors enjoying both legal and economic benefits under the current regime. The traders use some idioms to display their affinity towards the dominant discourse of an information society.

Piracy is similar to Stealing! (Piracy chori ke barabar hain)

The traders in the bazaars sell a range of ‘pirated’ products. They are also absorbed in the cracking of gaming consoles. The traders however, show reservation against their trade. They have their own ethical stances on piracy. In the bazaars, the discussions on ‘piracy’ are multi-layered. Many traders acknowledge that piracy guarantees them a source of livelihood. In spite of that, the traders do not necessarily endorse ‘piracy’ as a just practice. The impressions on ‘piracy’ as a morally wanting behavior is built in two ways. First it is built on a subjective register to examine what piracy does to the economy. And secondly piracy emerges in the bazaars via the opinions of the consumers coming to the markets.

Shyam is a skillful technician in Nehru Place. His everyday chores comprise of selling pirated DVDs/CDs of computer games and installing cracked games in personal computers. Based on his skill and reputation, Shyam manages to secure a decent income from his job. Yet, Shyam does not accept piracy as a right path to earn a living. He tells me that piracy amounts to stealing from people what is their due share of profit. I was amused to see him bothered by piracy that positively affects the informal economy and negatively only the big multinational companies such as Microsoft. I was curious to know what aspect exactly Shyam found problematic. Shyam gave a detailed account of what he thinks is the immediate result of ‘copying’ on other market actors. He agrees that Microsoft is a big company with a good yearly turnover. But according to him, the positive scene of business is mostly in the USA. Every office of Microsoft in the nooks and crannies of the world do not make a profit. Shyam argues, ‘we have a Microsoft office (points to a multi storied building) right next to the market. Thousand of employees in there have to meet monthly targets. Otherwise, they get fired from their jobs. It is only the top-level executives whose jobs are secured. Indians hardly rise to these positions. Indians are usually the foot soldiers without any real power. We are not surprised therefore, when we get raids from the Microsoft’s offices. We are directly responsible for the spiraling down of prices. But what can we do! We also have to earn a living’. Shyam’s thoughts are interesting to trace the dual framework in

which piracy is lived in the bazaar. It guarantees the traders a living. Yet, at the same times piracy does not qualify for a good life. It cannot be weighed in a moral register as a right economic action. Shyam sees piracy as tantamount to stealing someone else's livelihood. He explains, 'Microsoft is every year spending thousands of dollars in producing games and software and spending another thousand to build security systems. Hackers destroy all their work in one second. Then the pirated DVDs come to the bazaars. We sell software whose market price are 100,000 for only 500 rupees. This is stealing from the company who spend so much time and money in creating a new product'. Shyam is unable to process piracy as something innocent and empowering. Although it provides the traders a source of livelihood, according to him it is a wrong practice. The normative stance on piracy comes from a larger worldview. The cultural landscape of India is laden with religious and folk tales that relegate stealing to a sin. Numerous fables and tales in India pass judgment on stealing and frame the thief as a sinner lacking a moral conscience. Unlike, in China where stealing is normalized by the incidences of social banditry, in the Indian cultural landscape, stealing is maligned (Adler 2005). The moral stance on piracy is tied to the secular ideas of how an individual has rights to the things he owns and creates. Piracy in the bazaar overlaps the moral world of stealing with the proprietary relationship of an individual to objects. Since, the traders have not created the DVDs that they copy, they cannot easily legitimize that action.

A parallel force that encourages the traders to frame 'piracy' in a negative discourse is the consumer they meet everyday. Bharat, a trader in Lajpat Rai Market tells me, 'It is very insulting to be in a market where everyone sees us in a suspicious light. There are countless incidents of us selling packed goods and yet having to answer questions about the quality of the products. The consumers would not have ceaseless queries in the malls. The market on the other hand is infamous for selling pirated products'. According to the traders, the consumers look down on the informal markets and the people absorbed in it. The consumers show pity and disgust at the traders selling pirated products. The traders highlight that they come across consumers who do not miss any opportunity to embarrass them. The consumers according to the traders return with faulty products and abuse the trader for having sold them the same. The traders say that at times they intentionally sell lower quality goods. However, they maintain in most instances it is the copied nature of the products that reduces their quality. The consumers thus find enough excuses to label the traders as cheaters.

The typecasting of the traders and markets appear justified. A trader at Lajpat Rai Market emphasizes, 'No respectable person would want to be absorbed in a pirate economy. There are decent jobs and piracy is not one of them. The tremendous stress, the dingy corners in which we have to hide our things and all the underhand dealings, most people do not want to be part of such a trade. Whoever is here is because they are left with no other choice'. The nature of the trade developed around illegal practices and squalid aesthetics fall short of the sanitized urban workspaces. When the consumers highlight the negative aspect of the bazaars, the traders upheld their views. The consensus is created because the consumer's negative evaluation of the bazaars is based on the same set of secular virtues that the traders espouse.

The popular imagery in India links the development dreams with legality normatively. There are various symbols in the private and the public sphere that frowns upon any act of encroachment of law. A large poster hangs in one of the busiest metro stops in Delhi, Rajib Chowk. The poster reads, 'You buy counterfeit goods, government gets no taxes which affects welfare schemes & she stops coming to school!' Under this there is another caption that is semi-circled, 'Ask for a bill, check the label'. The position of the poster is very strategic. The fact that one of the exits of Rajib Chowk opens to Palika Bazaar, a big gray market in Delhi means that the poster is targeted at the right audience. The thoughts behind the poster are equally clever. The association of schooling of a girl child with gray goods creates a moral campaign that few can ignore. In a country with a dismal sex ration and disturbing rate of female education, any appeal made on the part of woman's emancipation is note worthy. However, what the poster does in highlighting a particular cause is to negate all other linkages of a gray economy. Camouflaging the important aspect of reason behind the growth of counterfeited and pirated products, the image developed is one-dimensional. The gray economy does not exist as an illegal enterprise because the people involved in it willing evade taxes and dupe people. It exists out of the loopholes of the formal economy. The regimented nature of the formal economy with strict monitoring of the actors who enter it makes it necessary for the small traders to search for their own pockets of profits (Sundaram 2010). In most cases for the small traders resorting to piracy becomes the only means to transact in economically viable products. The mainstream discourse chooses to portray only one side of the picture. By neglecting the important links between the formal and informal economy, between branded and counterfeited products, the hegemonic discourse intentionally create a skewed image of the mass markets.

Those who are Mechanics do not have Degrees! (Jo mechanics hain un logo ke paas degree nahi hoti)

The neoliberal ethic authorized in the bazaar is not limited to the traders' nature of work. Reservations arise with respect to the ways in which a particular work is done. There is a lack of conceptualization of the knowledge that the traders possess. The small time innovation in the bazaar and experimental use of local tools are not seen in a positive light. Knowledge circulating in the bazaar is banal for the traders; it is yet to be put in a language of qualification and efficiency. Considering the lived reality of the traders, it is important to steer clear from the management literature on 'jugaad' and their jubilation of frugal street level innovation (Radjou et al. 2012). The literature presents jugaad as a self-conscious celebratory discourse. On the other hand, if we examine the practitioners of the bazaars, they do not frame 'jugaad' in the same light. Far from seeing 'jugaad' as emancipatory, they are not even sure what they do is in any sense creative and innovative. 'Jugaad' to the traders comes across as a desperate philosophy, something they resort to because they are not good at other things. The traders accept that they do not have the capacity (resource and skill wise) to create other sources of income in the formal sector. One of the traders argues, 'we are doing nothing here, simply doing time pass and jugaad with little value'. Statements such as this capture the casual sentiments attached to the work of the traders. The traders juxtapose improvisations in the bazaar to the technical work that 'mechanics' perform. 'Mechanic' is an interesting terminology used to refer to a technical person in the bazaar. Mechanic in the bazaar could include the repairpersons, employers and the assistants in the shops. The colloquial use of the term 'mechanic' in India relates to manual labour and undesirable work. Imagery of a car mechanic covered in grease rising from the bottom of a car is a scene in many Hindi movies. The image of the 'mechanic' is often contrasted to an urban achiever dressed in a suit in many of these movies.

The amateurish and low paid work of the 'mechanic' is an unsuitable job in India. Chandrasekhar (2005) develops the aspect of how there is a gap between the growth of the professional class in India and the opportunities available to the working class. The market choices of the working class and the non-professionals are limited to being 'mechanics' and other odd jobs. The work of the 'mechanic' becomes synonymous with uninteresting and mundane work. There is a lack of an objective estimation of the role of the 'mechanics' in the general cultural milieu as well as in the bazaars. In the three electronic bazaars in Delhi, the so-called mechanics are adept at fixing technical defects and cracking of gaming consoles. They introduce from time to time small innovation in the market. The devaluation

of the work of the ‘mechanic’ occurs by comparing him to other professionals in the knowledge hierarchy. In the bazaars, the comparison arises with relation to the engineers and computer programmers. The traders see themselves inferior to the trained professionals with educational degrees. According to the traders, the engineers and programmers are creative people. They have spent years training in professional institutes. Systematic knowledge transmission in the engineering colleges is compared to the tacit nature of knowledge transmission in the bazaar. The hands on knowledge in the bazaar fall short of the charisma that a trained hand carries.

The traders follow the ethic of the corporate world and imagine knowledge to develop and flourish in protected environment. They refer to the images of engineers and programmers sitting together in plush rooms. The traders amuse each other with stories of the engineers and programmers working on sophisticated machines. One day at Palika, a repairperson rattles off why he cannot be a successful programmer. Lalit says, ‘Have you seen the expensive machines the programmers use to build software! The successful programmers get to work with the most powerful computers in the world. We are here working with screwdrivers and borrowed tools. I can never reach the stage of efficiency that skilled software programmer have. It is almost impossible to create things on your own in the market. We are copying invention of others. There is no originality in the market’. The traders associate the professional skills and sophisticated machines with creativity and innovation. The bazaars on the other hand produce ‘mechanics’ and ‘crackers’ copying each other at the slightest pretext.

The preference of the traders for neoliberal ethic is also reasoned through the opportunities that a professional certificate allows. Apart from the charm and mastery that professionals hold, there are also direct benefits that trained individuals and educational degrees acquire. Shyam after speaking what he has learnt in the market, copying from other traders tells me with a concerned voice, ‘Sometimes in the market I am able to install DVDs which even the engineers coming to the market find difficult to work with. Over time I have picked useful skills. I however do not see any future outside of the bazaar. No office will ever hire me even if I am good at what I do. I don’t have any degree certificate to validate my knowledge’. Shyam’s account of the state of things in the formal economy and its exclusionary nature undoubtedly creates a huge sense of lack for the practitioners in the bazaar. The traders admire the ethical universe of the corporate world in its understanding of ‘creativity’ and professionalism

guaranteeing a lucrative life. They see what the corporate lifestyle carries in the present time, a salaried job, status and security in the emerging cities.

Survival Instinct and the Everyday Transactions in the Bazaar

So far we have discussed the virtues that traders relate to living well. The ethic of the Hindu world comes alive through the scriptural anecdotes and practices in the bazaar, the neoliberal ethic we observe are at an aspirational plane. We now focus on the dominant ethic that governs the everyday behavior of the traders in the market. Rather than directed towards ideas of living good, it is concentrated on earning a living. It is based on the precept 'to be good, is first to be'. In academic works, a conscious effort is visible to critically explain what survival entails. In many instances, the conditions of survival create its politics by tying with the larger social and economic situations. James Scott observes the peasants in Lower Burma and Vietnam develop their politics around subsistence needs. The peasants create charity structure and other forms of reciprocities to challenge market risks. Subsistence dynamics give the peasants the tools to forward a skillful resistance (Scott 1976). Further, Didier Fassin's article shows how survival by itself has a value. It need not attach to other politics to develop a value of its own. Engaging with Agamben's notion of biological life and the 'homo sacer', Fassin shows the efforts made by subjects to keep living. His work on Aids survivors in South Africa illuminates survival as carrying layered meanings. Imagined against death, living emerges as a value (Fassin 2010).

In the electronic bazaars in Delhi, survival ethic sustains a fight to exist in a competitive urban environment. If the traders do not hold on to their daily commercial transactions, they could perish from the urban economy. The primary rationale attached to the spirit of survival is to earn at any cost. A trader has to think of his immediate material requirements and give his best in each market exchange to secure the same. The survival ethic in the bazaars does not leave much scope for contemplation. It also takes a very stark idea of existence that Fassin argues in his work. When it comes to the matters of surviving or perishing in the urban economic scene, the traders do not have the luxury of politicizing life beyond its biological disposition. The traders have to carve a living first to build on a normative universe of living well according to the Hindu moral universe and the neoliberal ethic. The survival ethic demands from the traders that they take up a pragmatic approach towards everyday market transactions. It is the markets exchanges that guarantee the traders a living in the urban landscape.

Everything is Fair in Survival! (Guzaarish ke liye sab kuch jayeez hain)

Vikram speaking of the merits of *niskam karma* (self-less service) in the market adds with a practical tone, ‘you can follow your virtues when you have money, if not then you are just thinking about your own survival’. This is a crucial paradox built in the market. The urgency of crisis and risks makes everything negotiable in the bazaars. Living under a constant threat from the law authorities and the new entities entering the market, the traders increasingly encounter a precarious existence. There is a suspension of the ideas of a future as there is not much hope associated with it. Given the slow state of the market in the current times, the traders do not have the energy to dream about a prosperous future. They divert all their energy to everyday market transactions. There is further a lament for a glorious past that is fast slipping away from the hands of the traders. The traders happily remember the times when there was such a rush of consumers in the market that did not have to worry about money. They could dedicate their free time to other fruitful pursuits.

The traders in the current situation are stuck with a circular present where everyday they undergo the same routine keeping up their fights for survival. Temporality in the bazaar is an important factor. Over time, the market changes its shape. Passing time creates memories and nostalgia that inflates certain perceptions. Whether or not the traders are actually living a hand to mouth existence is not a question here. But it is about them feeling the same way. Deteriorating from the previous economic and social status position has made the traders feel that they live on a hand to mouth existence. The traders confronting a dip in the market fear the worst, and are unable to have any real estimation of their situations. All they can now think is how to survive. The way to survive is imagined through making each transaction successful. This can be with regards to selling all kinds of goods pirated, fakes and original products. Sometimes the traders lie about the presence of a particular commodity in their shops. At times, they defame the fellow traders telling stories of their dubious trading histories. The traders are ready to cheat consumers than give up on an opportunity to earn a profit. On a particular day, Saurav, a street vendor in Nehru Place cheats a consumer by giving him a wrong DVD of a computer game. The consumer had asked for the fifth installation of *Grand Theft Auto*. Saurav had the cover of the title without any DVD. He skillfully placed another DVD within the cover and sold it. Saurav felt it wiser to replace the DVD at the right time rather than relinquish the money coming to him. What we had earlier discussed as important for the traders to live a good life such as honesty, and having no sabotage mentality is put on hold when it comes to the matters of the

traders making a sale. Suddenly, the traders turn pragmatic and it appears that in the end making a successful transaction is all that counts.

On most days, in the entrance of the shops, the traders gather to attract new consumers. They call out for consumers from a distance. At other times they run after a prospective consumer to get him or her back to their shops. Some of the shops in Palika and Lajpat Rai market were found to appoint young men especially to target consumers and lure them to the respective shops. In the spirit of fighting for survival, all other considerations of social etiquette were put on hold. Many a times, the traders would be seen bargaining incessantly with the regular customers. They were adamant in acquiring every penny of the profit available to them. There were times when the traders would accuse each other of being unfair at the slightest provocation. Bazaars become highly volatile places when they are forced to function under a survival ethic. The onus placed on each transaction gets amplified. The traders are no longer in a position to have value judgments about the modes of earning when they are fixated with making a living in the first place. A clear amount of frustration is visible with the traders when on a particular day they make only one or two sales. The temperament of the trader oscillates between the feeling of an existential crisis and a go-getter attitude. The traders take strength from each unsuccessful transaction and come back for the next with new energy.

Before You Sell a Product Sell Yourself! (Saman bech ne se pehle apna aap ko becho)

One of the striking sentiments attached to the idea of surviving in the bazaar is to stop at nothing. Not only is the value system open for negotiation, the physical body is also put to test. The discomfort of the physical body is ignored over the energy required for each transaction in the market. Govind in Palika Bazaar tells me that there is a reason why he keeps the energy level high in his shop. The people at the shop are encouraged to talk to one another to be in an upbeat mood. Govind says an active and cheerful space is necessary to conduct business. As he points out a customer/consumer can enter the shop at any time. It would be difficult to pep up energy right at that moment to attract the consumer to the product and bargain with her. What Govind says about the constant chitter chatter is true for the other shops too. There is a seamless movement of conversation amongst the people at the shop to the consumers. The incessant conversations in the shops make it easier to interact with the consumer in an upbeat mood. However, it often takes a toll on the traders. The traders have to be prepared to weave attractive stories about the product in a

way that the consumers are swayed by it. They have to willingly participate in the discussions, some of which are naive and insulting directed towards the character of a particular shopkeeper. The traders cannot lose their anger when they have spent almost an hour talking to a consumer and he leaves just before making a purchase. The self-annihilation comes through the aspect of ignoring physical exhaustion and mental work. The good show put up for a commodity to sell can all come down to nothing. At the end, it is about giving the best to attract the attention of a consumer and convince her to buy a product. On a regular day, the conversations with the consumers often start by inviting her to the shop. I am using a conversation at Govind's shop in Palika Bazaar to show the amount of persuasion and convincing that goes behind the sale of a product. Govind one afternoon is talking to a group of high school students in his shop. The group of young men encircles the counter area and only one of them decides to lead the bargaining process.

Govind: Come here! What are you looking for?

Consumer: I want to sell the used PlayStation 3 DVD of Grand Theft Auto V

Govind: How many times have you used it? I hope there is no scratch.

Consumer: I have played it once. It is in great shape.

Govind: How much do you want for it?

Consumer: 1600 rupees (24\$). I bought it for 3000 (60\$)

Govind: Kid! Are you coming to the market for the first time? Do you have any idea what are the present rates in the market for used DVs? Give us a decent price! We are not paying anymore than 900 rupees (18\$)

(Slighted by Govind calling the consumer a 'kid' or an immature dealer, there is some commotion amongst the young men. They are contemplating whether to stick to the shop or try another one. They bounce back with the information at their disposal).

Consumer: We have checked the price on OLX (a website for secondhand goods). It is paying us 1500 (30\$).

Govind: Do you even know how it is to deal with OLX? It will first list your DVD on the web and then wait for interested consumers. If it gets anyone, the website will first forward your number to the person. After that it is your headache to arrange a meeting and give the buyer your product. Then you have to ensure that you get paid the correct amount for the sold product. It is not automatic!

Consumer: We know the process that is why we have come to the shop. But we want at least 1200 (24\$).

(Govind realizes that his scheme of direct bargaining and belittling the consumer was not working in his favour and decides to change his strategy altogether. He shifts the topic of conversation).

Govind (pointing to his assistant says in a jocular tone): Look at him, how thin he is! Don't you want to treat us with something to eat? We can all do with some samosas (Indian snacks) and tea. You all look like nice young men. Come on! You

people can spare us some money.(At this point the assistant getting his cues jumps into the conversation)

Assistant: How nice of them! We are going to have free evening snack today.

(Govind meanwhile calculates how much money would be required to feed everyone at the shop, eight people including me. He quotes the price at 2\$ (100 rupees). All the four young men are baffled and they are reluctantly sucked into the conversation by the sheer spectacle created in the shop. They were in a way obligated to spend on tea because of the attention diverted towards them. It was now hard for them to escape the transaction and appear out rightly disrespectful)

Assistant to Govind (in a loud voice making sure that the consumers are listening): Okay! So we have to pay them 1000 rupees (20\$) after deducting the price for the tea. (The young men are hesitant to accept the bargain. Yet, they realize they cannot do much to get out of it. They take their 20\$ and leave the shop)

Similar conversations between a consumer and the traders are a regular feature at the three markets. They can continue for quarter of an hour to an hour. What becomes interesting is the time and care put into the whole transaction to make it work in the favour of the seller. In this conversation, for instance, we notice that Govind manages to buy a used DVD for 1000 rupees. His initial price of 900 rupees he points out later is illogical. He admits that he roped in the consumer for a great price. The DVD that he bought for 20\$, he will sell it to other consumer for at least 30\$. However, it was not an easy deal. Govind had to use his brain. Realizing that consumers were young and naïve through their bodily demeanour and speech, Govind decided early on to manipulate them. It took him some time and mindless chatter to finally hit the chord. He could see that all of them were polite and not every shrewd. So the invocation of generosity on the part of the young men was a good move. The young men were inexperienced to evade the prospect of spending money for the tea that was asked to indirectly reduce the rate of the product. Govind was lucky to push the transaction until the very end. However, many a times the traders spend as much effort in devising strategies only to find the consumers far more stubborn leaving them immensely exhausted. The grueling routine continues in the bazaars. The traders are drawn to the idea that their survival is contingent on the success of each and every transaction in the market.

The Market Ethic

The willingness to participate in commercial activities means that the traders are interested in a profit. Bharat at Lajpat Rai Market says, ‘We are in the market to earn money and not to do charity. We earn money by any means as the saying goes everything is fair in business and war’. The undying spirit of the traders that is reflected in the survival ethic should have carried the traders a long way forward.

As businessmen with a relentless attitude, the traders could expand their trade to a considerable extent. The push that survival ethic gives to the traders to overcome any obstacles, physical as well as mental has the capacity to make the traders outshine their business competitors. However, the layered ethical universe of the traders overlapping with economic pursuits creates a unique market actor. The crisscrossing of the calculative nature of an economic actor with the moral concerns of Hinduism and secular laws give rise to a businessman that envisions a profit from the local face-to-face market transactions. The economy that results is a Braudelian market that focuses on the immediate exchanges without eyeing for a ceaseless expansion of capital. We have small businessmen that seek a comfortable living without jeopardizing the life chances of other traders. The traders do not spend as much energy scheming and strategizing how to capture the market and change the course of it to the advantage of one particular group of traders. Rather the traders would give their best to pocket the money from individual market transactions. Views on selfless service and greed are so entrenched in the cultural fabric that the traders are unable to completely ignore it in their business pursuits. As a result, we see the actors giving a spirited fight for survival and not invest as much energy in a systematic accumulation of capital. The traders are satisfied with a comfortable profit margin rather than expand their trade by overthrowing other market actors. Striving solely for money would mean that the traders gave in to *lobh* (greed) and sabotage mentality. Money earned at the cost of morality does not have the same level of legitimation in the market as when money is earned for meeting the basic survival needs. If a trader earns money incessantly even after meeting his basic needs, all kinds of talks start in the bazaar. The fellow traders show some suspicion towards the nature of a person that values money over the accepted virtues in the market. The rumours and the devaluation of the accumulative tendency through a Hindu moral paradigm work as a customary sanction in the bazaar. As a result, the duress shown during face-to-face exchanges is not extended towards matters of dominating market outcomes and the diversification of trade possibilities.

Another feature that drives the traders to make income from small market transaction is the neoliberal ethic. The traders aspire for the formal economy of engineers and programmers with professional qualifications. As a result of this, the traders devalue their own work. The small time innovation although are profitable moves, they do not become successful business models. Inspired by the formal information society, innovations in the bazaars get subsumed under the normative universe of piracy and criminality. The traders do not build any political networks of people, associated with pirated and counterfeited goods in an urban set up. They

do not raise much voice against the unequal process of change in the urban economy, which situates the traders in the periphery. Rather than legitimizing piracy based on the marginalized position of the traders in the urban economy, the traders resort to the laws and morality of the hegemonic discourse. As a result, we do not see the traders becoming political actors vis-à-vis their businesses. In a Marxist term they are yet to become a class 'for itself' (Marx 1973). We see the traders rather than protecting what they do for a living, they disown their trade. Influenced by the Hindu moral universe and neoliberal ethic, the traders focus on small time market transactions and do not organize labour collectively. The non-elite market actors in an information society on account of their ethical preoccupations resist the expansion of their trade as well as a fight against the hegemonic model. The market actors are not different from that of the peasant bazaars, coming to the market daily to sell their wares. The traders are absorbed in bargaining and procuring their daily consumers. Trading in an information product has not bred any radical dreams and politics (Lash 2002). The traders do not create online and offline associations to organize labour engaged in the informal information society. The problems and potentials of the electronic bazaars in Delhi are overlooked, as the core of the ethical universe does not rise from the rituals of everyday business. The skills of cracking, hacking websites and online commercial interactions do not come to use in resisting the unequal distribution of power and opportunities in the urban economy. The market ethic in the bazaar as a whole creates a non-capitalist market actor with a schizophrenic tendency of repudiating his own source of livelihood.

Chapter V

Asian Modernity?: Aesthetics and Aspirations in the Electronic Bazaars in Delhi

India is a consumerist haven today. Local and global goods throng every nook and cranny of the country. The rich in India whose number is expected to quadruple in the next four years are spending on Lamborghinis and sports cars. They live in villas, go for lavish holidays and dabble in Chinese cuisines⁹. The changes in the lives of the rich through commodities can be traced back to earlier decades of development in India (Appadurai 1986). India after independence chose Nehruvian ideas of growth with equity. An image of a forward-looking nation with advances in science and technology won over the Gandhian ideas of frugality. Particularly after the 1990s, the road to a consumer society in India was finely laid. With the debt situation of the country worsening, India chose to liberalize under the heists of the World Bank and the IMF. Post 1990s, the opening of the economy led to both cultural and economic transformation of the country. Globalization had hit India. Labour organization transformed along the line of introduction of information technologies in workplaces. Leisure spaces diversified along side the onslaught of global goods reaching out to different groups of consumers in India.

Modernity imagined through global goods, ideas and aesthetics thrived in different social and cultural contexts in India (Lukose 2009). Out of the varied adaptations to a global lifestyle, we see a 'hegemonic' group after the 1990s. Roughly identified as the 'new middle class' of urban professionals, this group of young consumers imagines the NRI (Non Resident Indian) lifestyle embodying growth and progress in the twenty first century (Fernandes 2006). The state and the economy alike see the upcoming class as the poster child of an emerging India. Their consumer behaviour and aspirations are symptomatic of a modern India. When the global lifestyle of the urban elite is broken down, what we get are 'privatized spaces', branded goods and the desire for commodities (Vedwan 2007). 'New middle class' is a product of neoliberal market reforms. As a result, air-conditioned shopping complexes, movie theatres and branded stores are at a stone's throw away in urban centers. Delhi, the capital city of India stands testimony to the importance attached to the 'new middle class' and their vision of development. Gated residential complexes, exclusionary

⁹ <http://qz.com/241862/the-richest-indian-homes-spend-the-most-on-a-hopelessly-unproductive-asset/>

leisure and workplaces mark Delhi's skyline. A present study shows the per capita income of Delhi is three times higher than the nation's average.¹⁰

The rich in Delhi is getting richer and the poor poorer. The high rising buildings are surrounded by rows of roadside kiosks and street vendors selling their wares. While the local and international designer products crowd the malls, the street vendors and small traders sell soda water to street food to pirated videogames. The traders of the three electronic bazaars in Delhi are part of the street level economy. They are the non-elite of society. Illustrated by such concepts, as 'subaltern group', and the 'urban fringe', the street level businesses are outside the mainstream domain of economic and cultural reproduction. The non-elites in India are identified as the target group of amongst other things of 'sustainable development'. Their existing as a target group of welfare schemes, incapable of independent consumption is a skewed view. The non-elites in India appropriate urban spaces and global goods to create their own ideas of modernity and progress. This chapter portrays the rise of a parallel discourse of modernity in India coming from the mass markets. Alongside the innovative use of urban spaces and commodities, the alternative mass modernity in India shows faith in a different kind of future. Drawing from the conversations with the traders and consumers in the three electronic bazaars in Delhi, Lajpat Rai Market, Palika Bazaar and Nehru Place, the chapter develops the facets of an alternative bottom up modernity in India.

Dominant Modernity in India: Individualized Spaces, Branded Aesthetics and the Aspirations of a Global/US model

Modernity is a harangued concept. Especially in a country such as India, the lens of modernity has opened innumerable debates. Modernity came to be seen both as an ailment left behind by the colonial rulers and a new paradigm worthy to be emulated (Aloysius 1998). The nation building process remained a search for finding the right mix of forward-looking values at the same time preserving the ethos of the Indian society. Values of secularism, individual freedom and development jostled with the traditional community and village structures. With time, the emphasis on different values keeps changing. Over the years, a nativist turn to the economy with preference for *swadeshi* (indigenous) goods developed into an economy flooded with global goods (Deshpande 1993). The emergence of a global consumer culture saw a huge push and redefinition of it through the proliferation of information products (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995, Liechty 2003). The use of urban spaces,

¹⁰ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/indiahome/indianews/article-2136360/Rich-mans-capital-Delhis-capita-income-times-national-average--residents-spending-splurge.html>

aesthetics and politics of consumption are within the contours of a mediatized society. The proliferation of information technologies and goods created avenues for the dissemination of ideas and a homogenous temporality of living in the contemporary (Harvey 1989). In India also, the contemporary consumer culture and ideas of modernity is tied to the growth of IT sector. The growth of the software products and services in India created the notion of a country that is enjoying the fruits of technological modernity alongside the leading countries of the world. However, the mushrooming of software firms and branded information products does not exhaust a technological modernity and consumer culture in India. We have in the same urban space, the new middle class of software professionals and the lowly paid call center workers. The advanced markets of Apple iPhones, Sony PlayStations and Samsung Tablets rub shoulders with the bazaars of stolen iPhones, cracked PlayStation consoles and refurbished computers. Paradoxically, the upper echelon of the Indian society and its vision of consumer modernity get typecast as the pan Indian dream and aspiration (Nilekani 2008). In order to understand how the elite discourse of India becomes the dominant model of modernity in India, we have to first examine its main characteristics. The dominant discourse of modernity in India imagines a certain use of urban spaces as privatized spaces. The consumption pattern is in line with the global consumer culture of branded commodities. And finally the aspiration of the dominant discourse is of a neoliberal India that needs to continue its present journey of mass scale urbanization and technological advancement (Cohen 2013).

Privatized Spaces

The rich and the expanding middle class in India use urban spaces in a particular way. Leela Fernandes argues the tendency of the 'new middle class' is to locate consumption as a site of individual privatized strategies that are shaped by the processes of privatization of public utilities and spaces (Fernande 2006). What one sees is an overall transformation of the urban geography following from the ethos of an autonomous consumer. Democratic spaces of grazing fields and playgrounds are increasingly replaced by high-rising apartments and gated neighbourhoods. In the case of Delhi, Amita Baviskar observes the city is pushed towards beautification and 'bourgeoisie environmentalism' fulfilling the dreams of the elite section of the society (Baviskar 2003). Kavita Ramakrishnan builds on this aspect of a sectarian city when she argues how the 'growing middle-class' creates discriminatory bodies such as the Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs). The RWAs usher orderly residential spaces in an urban city by regulating the unauthorized population in the surrounding slum areas (Ramakrishnan 2013). Amongst all the steps taken in the

direction of creating privatized spaces in the nation's capital, the Commonwealth Games in Delhi in 2010 stands out. It highlights the proliferation of exclusive malls and recreational spaces in the city sanctioning the number of food hawkers, tea kiosks and beggars on the road (Dupont 2011).

The non-elites surviving in the same urban space witness the life style of the rich. They register the changing geography of the city towards more individualized spaces. Lalit, a trader from Palika Bazaar describes the bearing of an individualized shopping place. He says that the demeanour of the buyer and the seller is subtle in the upscale malls in Delhi. Both the buyer and seller are adults and do not form a dependency relationship. Lalit says the buyers and sellers go about their work trusting each other to keep to their roles. He quips that the shopkeeper in the malls and fancy markets are soft spoken. They carry a certain air about themselves. The new and packaged goods would be finely lined in extravagant shops. On most days, Lalit observes the traders do not budge an inch from their seats. He says the shopkeepers in the malls need not spend hours explaining the basics of a product and bargain incessantly. According to Lalit, the traders' job mostly is to bill the product selected by the consumer. The impersonal exchange and the 'abstract price-making mechanism' that classical economist upheld is what according to the traders characterize the spaces of neoliberal consumption (Storr 2008).

The traders in the bazaar further develop a vivid notion of the elite consumer in India that inhabits the individualized shopping spaces. According to them, the elite consumer in India is self-sufficient; she is aware of her rights and requires minimum assistance from the shopkeepers. Lalit, a trader in Palika Bazaar builds a parallel between the autonomous consumers in India and the advanced consumer in the US. In the United States, supermarkets have rows for a single product. Lalit reiterates a consumer in the US buys a product after she browses through the chain of commodities stacked in the shop. Similarly, in India, he observes the elite consumer does sufficient research on the features and pricing of a product before she purchases it.

Conspicuous Consumption and Branded Goods

Closely connected to the aspect of individualized spaces and autonomous consumer is the nature of the product that these spaces display. If we take the instance of the spread of global consumerism, much has been written about the importance of brands. Brands are crucial in defining the status and identity of the consumer in contemporary times. The decision to buy Nike shoes and Levis Jeans is as much a

matter of personal choice as a statement about belonging to a particular group. Many scholars are writing about the intangible nature of the brands, the affective capital and ethos that brands create over and above its material utility. Adam Arvidsson, for instance, argues the inflated value of a product is created around brands names and not so much along its physical attributes (Arvidsson 2006). In the case of India, branded commodities collide with the vision of an elite consumer. The use of original high-end luxury goods and everyday consumer goods create an idea of wealth and prosperity. A popular image of South Asian modernity is now palpable. It is intimately connected to India's explosive, urban growth brought on by the policies of economic liberalization. Jackson in his review of Leela Fernandes' book writes of the dominant imagery of middle class consumption. 'Dynamic, youthful, and impossibly pretty middle-class professionals laugh carefree billboard smiles into ubiquitous mobile phones as they cavort through playgrounds of shiny glass malls, private cars, alcohol, fitness centers and luxury condominium high-rises' (Jackson 2007)¹¹. What New York Times refers to as the 'new Indo-chic' basks in the glory of commodities from coca cola to cell phones to living in posh neighbourhoods in India (Toor 2000). Prior to the neoliberal market reforms in India, income and status inequality did exist in society. The elite groups of politicians, bureaucrats and industrialists were marked from the 'subaltern groups' through their access to political and economic resources. However, what distinguishes the dominant group of consumer in post liberalization era from the rest is their exhibitory nature. Leela Fernandes in her book quotes from a lifestyle magazine:

In the 60s and 70s this whole bit of accumulation of wealth was still suffering from a Gandhian hangover. Even though there were a whole lot of families who were wealthy all over India in the North and South if you notice all their lifestyles were very low key. They were not exhibitionists or they were into the whole consumer culture. Now I see that changed completely...You want to spend on your lifestyle. You want your cellphone. You want your second holiday home, which earlier as I said people would feel that sense of guilt-that in a nation like this a kind of vulgar exhibition of wealth is contradictory to Indian values. I think now consumerism has become an Indian value (Fernandes 2006: 29).

Whereas in the Gandhian era, wealth and privileges was seldom used as a mark of distinction, now wealth is out there not just for personal consumption but also is ostensibly displayed. As Fernandes points out gone are the days when the Indian politicians travelled in third class compartments, now they travel first class, adorn Gucci shoes and designer *bandhgala* suits. The resulting change is not merely a

¹¹ <http://www.cjsonline.ca/pdf/indiamiddleclass.pdf>

matter of personal taste but a larger change in the *zeitgeist* of the country. The traders in the electronic bazaars in Delhi also record a rise in conspicuous consumption in India. Bharat, a trader in Lajpat Rai Market says post 2000 one can distinguish a rich from the poor in India. He believes a rich person does not bother coming to a marketplace such as Palika Bazaar that has the reputation of selling fake goods. They go to posh markets where they feel they are getting value for their money. Bharat recollects in the 1990s the picture was entirely different. There were not many markets of video games in the country. The existing ones were all gray markets having a range of products, original as well as counterfeited commodities. At that time it was unusual for people to ask ‘is this product stolen?’ (yeh saman kya chori ka hain?). Bharat observes that in the 80s and 90s, people accepted electronic products were part of the gray economy. Imported goods were mostly smuggled into the country by ignoring custom laws. In Bharat’s eye, only in recent times with the rise in shopping complexes and ‘posh’ neighbourhood markets that the bazaars are known to sell non guaranteed products. According to him, the segmentation of markets into those selling guaranteed products and those selling counterfeited products mark the consumer as rich and the poor in India. That is why he thinks the majority of the rich prefer going to sleek shopping malls such as *Select Citywalk* where they buy branded video games and accessories. An avid gamer belonging to the upper strata of the society, Bharat says *chakkar laganye* (roam around) the bazaars only when a product is not available in the ‘malls’. The traders highlight how the elite consumer in India single out the bazaars for not selling branded commodities alone.

Preference for branded goods amongst the urban rich and ‘new middle class’ in India create an aesthetic of consumption. This group of people leads the process of reorganization and styling of urban spaces. We see the emergence of highly sanitized shopping places catering to the elite consumer in India. The shop windows in the high-end malls are marked by sophisticated décor. Every product is meticulously displayed without any room for chaos and disorderliness. Often there are themes that govern the ideas of displaying the products and their respective positions in the shops. The interiors of the shops are clean and organized. The ceilings and the floors of the shops are spick and span giving the impression that the shop has newly opened for business. Novelty is one attribute that goes along with the notion of brandedness and status. Each new product adds on to the charm of carrying a branded product. The Apple I Phone series is a case in point. Almost every year, Apple launches a new phone in its I Phone series. Apart from the minor technical revisions done to the features of the product, the main attraction for a consumer is to possess the latest gadget from a well-known company. The newness of the product creates an idea of

being ahead of time and living the dreams of technical and consumer modernity to the hilt. Branded aesthetics is further about puritan spaces. Sold goods are billed and carry a guarantee with them. A counterfeit and recycled product seldom finds a place in the upscale shopping places in India. Every product lays claim to being a quality product with all its legal character intact whether it is with relation to the aspect of company pricing or the channels for acquiring the product. Formal and legal distribution networks provide the neoliberal shopping places with fancy branded goods. If we were to see the shops of video games in the upscale malls in Delhi they are equally sanitized spaces where company products are carefully decorated on the shelves. There is no place for pirated and second hand DVDs of computer games in a shop such as *Hamleys* in South Delhi.

Aspiring for a Global Consumer Society

The desire of the hegemonic group in India for individualized consumption spaces and branded goods marks a certain vision of a modern India. The future society that this group imagines is one of a global consumer society where an individual consumer fulfills her dreams (Fernandes and Heller 2006, Stearns 2001). No matter what an individual desires, it should be within the reach of that person. The liberalization policies of the market post 1990s have made this dream a part of reality for a large part of the Indian society, the business elite and the 'new middle class'. Every global commodity and lifestyle choices are part of the Indian cultural milieu. The uncensored consumption of information products amongst other things indicates development and progress within the present model. In order to sustain this model of unhindered consumption and rapid urbanization of Indian cities, the government and business elite in India increasingly push for the freedom of the markets (Sundaram 2009b). In the eyes of the business elite, a free market guarantees the fulfillment of the dominant aspirations in India, to be a consumerist paradise and a global economic superpower. The dominant discourse claims that every individual in India over the course of time will fulfill her dreams and lives a comfortable life if a free market and global investors bless the Indian soil.

The pet project of the current NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government at the center, 'Make in India' campaign is a direct reference to the aspirations that the dominant group holds for a modern India (Krishna 2013). It is an invitation to local and foreign investors to make everything in India from clothes to software to toys. The rise in local and foreign investment to make India a manufacturing giant and flood the markets with consumer goods is part of the same process of imagining a modern future for India. One of the direct measures taken to fulfill the dreams of

consumer modernity is the circulation of IPR. India is a signee of the major IPR laws in the world. The Indian government looks up to the US driven protective regime to encourage creativity and the influx of information products in the country. In fact, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi while illustrating the 'Make in India' recognizes the US as a 'natural global partner' of India. He writes about the US and India relationship, 'Our strengths in information technology are especially important for leadership in the digital age. The partnership between our businesses takes place in the comfort and certainty of similar political systems and shared commitment to rule of law. In education, innovation, and science and technology, the U.S continues to inspire India'¹². The Indian government imagines the US as a natural ally in its vision of modernity and prosperity. If we put focus on the official take on video games in Delhi, then we see that the government is strict on piracy. The number of raids on shops and street vendors selling pirated materials is a burning example of the legal attitude adopted towards the informal economy.

Bazaar Modernity: Social Space, Pragmatic Consumption and Aspirations for a Chinese Model of Growth

The dominance of the 'new middle class' projecting a certain consumer lifestyle does not comprise the whole of India. Out of a teeming 1.25 billion people in India, more than half of the population is outside the elite circuit of consumption and aspiration. Recent studies show about 90% of the Indian workforce is in the informal sector¹³. Its consumption pattern and aspirations are different. The bazaars in Delhi are one such place where the alternative and mass modernity is underway. Right from the physical geographies to the range of commodities sold to the aspirations they breed, bazaars are fertile grounds for an alternative and bottom up modernity in India.

Bazaar as a Social Space

A variety of video games clamour the electronic bazaars in Delhi. The market exchanges of a global information product in the local bazaars take a particular character. The informal electronic markets in Delhi are in the interstices of a modern rational economic organization and at the same time fulfill the role of a community space. The growth of the bazaars as social spaces ties with the earlier *mohalla* (neighbourhood) video gaming parlours. The *mohalla* parlour had the same level of openness and warmth that the bazaars largely emit today. Ali, a postgraduate student

¹² <http://online.wsj.com/articles/narendra-modi-an-invitation-to-make-in-india-1411687511>

¹³ http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2013-10-25/news/43395491_1_neelkanth-mishra-india-fall-informal-economy

and an avid gamer remembers as a child playing arcade games in rusty machines. Often, the machines are mishandled to a point that it starts taking Indian rupee in place of the original iron coins manufactured for the machine. Ali met different people at the gaming parlour, some of his own age and others much older. The gamers would challenge one another and interesting rivalries and friendships developed. At times, the owner would let young children and the regular customers play for free. He thinks the owner showed generosity as he enjoyed video games as much as his customers. Ali till date misses the energy of the neighbourhood gaming parlours. At Lajpat Rai Market, I met two brothers who have their gaming parlour in Rajinder Nagar area in Delhi. The brothers told me that their shop is one of the few parlours left in the center of the city. In the 80s and 90s, mainstream commercial complexes such as Priya Multiplex in South Delhi had popular parlours of arcade games. It was an activity that brought many gamers together. In the earlier days, the brothers remembered senior players coached younger players on how to play a new game. Often gamers would give up their own turn to let a young player acclimatize to the machine. The joys of meeting in public places and as young men disappearing from their homes were wonderful memories that many of the gamers carried with them.

In 2000, the traders observe the number of gaming parlours in the city has reduced. They are prominent now in the slums and the urban periphery. However, the bazaars in Delhi preserve the essence of a community space. Similar to the *mohalla* parlours, the bazaars welcome different kinds of gamers, a 'newbie' and a veteran, a poor and a rich gamer. A number of traders in the three bazaars in Delhi are part of the generation of gamers of the 70s and 80s that played arcade games with friends in the parlours. I observe the traders continuing with the social spirit of games. Many gaming shops in Palika Bazaar, for instance, have LCD monitors attached to gaming consoles in front of their shops. As gamers went around the market, they could spend time playing games on the LCD screen. What strikes out is the relationship that grows between a stranger and a particular shop. In Jaspal's shop in Palika Bazaar, Suresh is an experienced technician. Suresh grew up in the slums of West Delhi. As a young man, Suresh was a wanderer. He came to Palika and started playing games on the TV monitors outside of Jaspal's shop. In the beginning, Suresh says he did not even know how to hold the controls. His interest in games grew out of practice and he particularly excelled in the FIFA game series. Jaspal remembers seeing Suresh growing from a non gamer to a gamer. Finding that Suresh has a knack for games, Jaspal decides to hire him as an assistant. Suresh's initial interest in games made him develop into an adept technician. The bazaars are a breathing place of many wandering souls such as Suresh. Unlike the malls in Delhi that are exclusive places,

bazaars are open for everybody. Saurav, a street vendor in Nehru Place notices the moment one enters the mall; he is made to feel trivial. He points to the behaviour of the security man at the entrance of the mall. His job according to Saurav is to restrict the movement of people into the mall. He says the security man immediately guessing the position of a person through his dress and demeanour does not hesitate to ask what he has come to buy in the mall. 'Aapko kya chahiye?'(what do you want?) is a readymade question in the mouth of the security man. He says the malls create a sombre ambience to unsettle those people who do not regularly visit them.

Bazaars on the other hand are not the individualized spaces of the twenty-first century India, the malls and shopping complexes. The relationship between the trader and the consumer is one of dependency. The traders gain a lot of information talking to experienced gamers. The advanced gamer coming to the market gives useful information on new releases, features of a particular game and the chances of a new game doing well. Majority of the times, the consumers of the bazaars do not have sufficient information and knowledge about the product. Consumers come to the market not only to buy a product but also to familiarize with the product. The bazaar goers are seeking an experience or as Clifford Geertz would put it, 'a way of life' when they visit these narrow and densely populated commercial places. The consumers are not autonomous and show their need for guidance at the outset. The distanced and formal salesperson at the mall is a counter figure to the gregarious shopkeeper at the bazaar. The traders at the bazaar are prepared to take on any query from the consumer however, naïve it is. They often find themselves at a peculiar spot of a teacher that has to mentor a student on his way to a new subject. Shyam, a street vendor in Nehru Place gets many consumers who have not used computers before. A consumer possessing a cheap desktop downloads all the freely available software and games. Shyam says the consumer however, does not know how to use them. One way out that many inexperienced consumer sees is to come to the bazaars. The consumer knows that someone in the bazaars will be willing to help him. Shyam personally quotes two reasons so as to why he agrees to assist clueless consumers. He thinks that the people needing assistance are not from a resourceful background. That reminds him of his own humble beginnings. He grew in a slum in Delhi without any access to information products until he joined the market. Secondly, Shyam thinks that the bazaar exists by virtue of its consumers/customers and it is not wise to send anyone home without aid. No matter how trivial a query is Shyam patiently hears it out.

The hustle and din of the bazaars stand out from the restrictive place of the malls and posh shopping complexes in Delhi (Ghertner 2011). A lack of presumptuousness

defines the bazaars. On most days, a sea of people comes to the bazaars, some genuinely interested in buying a product, and others looking for *timepass* and good conversations. The bazaars hardly disappoint. They enthrall the experienced and inexperienced consumers alike. The histrionics of the traders and their unending opinions on politics to PlayStations force the uninterested buyer to stop for a moment and gaze inside the shop. From the perspective of the consumers, bazaars satisfy the empty link. Bazaars instill the initial confidence in a naïve consumer to take on a sophisticated information product. For the more experienced gamer, the bazaar exists as a place to show off his skill and discuss with the traders features of a new game. As the traders push a pro gamer to divulge as much detail about a new game, a lively conversation follows where both parties share some information to get more. The bazaars mend the cracks of the information society in India. Although, under the aegis of trade liberalization, global information goods flood the Indian markets, not much is done to trickle them down to the lowest consumer. Both in the level of prices and favouring formal channels of acquisition over informal ones, the elite consumers are the main target group of neoliberal changes. The promotion of India as an IT superpower is intact by the group of software programmers and the polished consumer. However, the neglect of the state and formal channels towards the lowest consumers in India do not mean that games are a popular activity for the knowledge and cultural elites alone. Video games are popular across all sections in India. Bazaars are an important link in this regard. Availability of cheap counterfeited goods and bazaars existing as a social space ties the lowest consumers to an information product. While, speed defines the formal information society, the bazaars understand the time required by different groups to adapt to a new product. It is ready to slow down and go back in time to stock simpler gaming products and in effect incorporate a new consumer. The mass consumer of an information society in India is born and nurtured by the sociable bazaars.

Pragmatic Consumption and the Aesthetics of Obsolete Goods

The elite consumer in India prefers branded goods. In the bazaars, however, money gets precedence over brands and quality of products. The average consumer is of an *ek ke sath ek free* (one for one free) mentality. The traders in the bazaars observe the consumers prefer *saste se saste saman* (the cheapest goods).

The traders attach consumers' preference for a *sasta saman* (cheap good) on a few explanations. One day in August in 2013, Bharat insists that I stay in his shop until the closing hours. The usual rush of suppliers and distributors of games in Lajpat Rai Market subsides after 7.30 in the evening. Bharat finds time to talk about the

preference of the consumers for *sasta saman*. He attaches the inclination to buy cheap goods as an inevitable consequence of the urbanization process in India. The rich and the poor have huge income gap. However, Bharat notes the rich exist as the trendsetters in the Indian market. In a Veblenian analysis, Bharat points out that a commodity first is popular among the rich, then the upper classes (Veblen 1994). Once it reaches the middle classes, the commodity gets a wider base making it easier for it to slip to the lowest consumer. Bharat notices Internet cafés and television advertisements acting as a medium to penetrate elite culture in India. Money scarcity however, sanctions the possibility of the lower section of population to buy expensive products. The average consumer he observes although has an awareness of the various luxury products has to settle for its cheap versions because of money constraints.

The traders observe other linkages to the popularity of cheap items in the bazaars. Lalit, a trader in Palika Bazaar is replacing the lens of a PlayStation 3 console. As the consumer waits for the console to get repaired, Lalit strikes a conversation. He talks of the difficulty of getting money out of people for repair work. Lalit says that if possible the consumer wants a good repaired for free. Hearing Lalit's observation, the consumer at the shop starts talking of his own personal experience. This particular consumer thinks that settling for cheap goods rise from an overall shallow mentality of the Indians. Most Indians do not have taste. He narrates an incident of how a family friend decides to marry off both his daughters on the same day to save money. The family is financially well to do yet stinginess shown on part of the father shows bad taste. Lalit on the other hand attaches the attitude of being cheap with money to the fear of losing security. He develops the *sasta saman* mentality of average Indians to an act of calculation. Lalit thinks the difference between the consumers of the market and of the malls is the thoughts attached to money. He says there are even people with money coming to the bazaars. However, they have new money. The consumers with new money are not accustomed to it. Lalit is of the opinion fresh money does not negate the fear of poverty of previous times. The parallel to this scenario according to him is of the traditional rich. The people born into these families have never experienced want and have no fear of it.

Apart, from the general deficiency of money and the fears attached to losing it, the traders observe another concern that ties the consumers of the bazaar to the *sasta saman*. In many accounts, this tendency was summarised by 'puraney khailo waale log', people with traditional views. A naïve person not incorporated into the consumer age renders the need for a *sasta saman*. Prakash in Lajpat Rai Market says some consumers have peculiar perceptions. When he quotes a price for a game or a

console, many a times consumers quote him price from another period. Prakash quips some consumers are from *babaadam ke jamane ka*, from Adam's era.

The preference for *sasta saman* lends a particular aesthetic to the bazaar economy. The need for cheap goods means the bazaars store a range of commodities. Many of the shops have cartons of goods covered with cobwebs. The traders do not know which piece of item comes handy. They do not dispose even smallest of the small items. This approach of the traders brings shreds of wire, broken pieces of games and all kinds of tools into the shop. Usually, small black cartridges of *He Man*, *Duck Hunters* and *Super Mario* lie in various parts of the shop. The aesthetic of old video games contrasts with that of a new game that comes in different sizes and colors. A single handheld game has a number of varieties. Sony PlayStation Portable (PSP), PVPs from China, locally manufactured Lara handheld game to name a few. As the price of commodities goes down, flimsy hardboards substitute the solid packaging of a PSP. The body parts look different. A sleek looking PSP gives away to bulky local handheld games. Further, heaps of pirated DVDs/CDs occupy parts of the shop. The image of a gunman on the cover of *Grand Theft Auto* is stretched and blurred. Countless reproduction of an original cover gives a seedy background to the pirated DVD. On top of that expensive gaming consoles lie in the shop in different stages of repair. Some consoles are only the plastic covers with the hardware parts missing inside. Other consoles placed on the top shelf of the shop are pieces abandoned by their owners. The old consoles balanced one over the other give the impression that they have not been tended for a while.

Apart, from the paraphernalia of products in the shops, the traders in an attempt to furnish reasonable goods hoard not just finished products but also parts of the hardware of consoles. One finds IC board of old TV games, adaptors, and remotes of different games in the shop. The shop counter has screwdriver, soldering wire, nuts, cotton, gas lighters etc. that the trader use to fix technical problems. The crowded shops create an archaic aesthetics. The shops in the bazaar are timeless spaces. The formal shopping spaces of video games that stack the latest games are a sharp contrast to the bazaars of old games. Values of goods in malls are its novelty. In bazaars however, any good is worthy as long as there are demands for it. An obsolete aesthetics of the bazaar do not build an 'aura' of a product. The contemplation of a Walter Benjamin on what the loss of an aura of art captures or forsakes is lost in the bazaars (Benjamin 1969). An original good is as good as its copies. With the ethos of a product built around money and utility, the aura of a product is not limited to the values imagined by the creators. Whether it is the protective rights imagined by the creator or the sophisticated graphics of a new product, bazaars on most occasions get

past these assumptions. Some consumers in the bazaar pontificate on the superior quality of their latest PlayStation consoles. However, a counterfeited good is comparable with an original one in the bazaar. Merely the lower quality of a product does not become a criterion for dismissing it. The emphasis is on reasonable pricing and getting an experience of playing video games. The consumers coming to the bazaars want to encounter video games in their personal lives. Many parents of young gamers see video games fitting with a contemporary lifestyle with shrinking leisure places. For young enthusiast gamers, videogames are a lifestyle choice. For these gamers, the mediatized goods of their work spheres seamlessly flow to their leisure world. The new gamers on the other hand want a slice of simulated reality, to steady their hands on an alien technology and go on a joy ride. The various consumers of the bazaars get diverse experiences of playing video games. These experiences can flow from the pirated DVDs, cracked consoles and contraband products. With the concerns of money being paramount to many consumers, they settle for something rather than nothing. In the bazaars, the decision to buy a product is coterminous with an affordable price range, not too high to feel a dent in the savings and completely blow up from any previous measures of comparison.

The importance attached to experiencing video games in its elementary form creates an unmediated relationship with the product. Brands do not exist as an external connection mitigating a person's preference for a particular product. No doubt, the bazaars get consumers waiting for the next big releases of an important gaming studio such as Sony, Microsoft and Nintendo. However, these consumers are not in the majority. Generally, the consumers coming to the bazaar value their experience of playing videogames rather than fixate on the medium used to play it. A Chinese PVP is as good as a PlayStation Portable as long as it operates. Nakassis notices in her study of young men in urban Tamil Nadu that the awareness of a brand is not much to do with ideas of authenticity as to the fact of wearing a brand. For that matter a fake is good enough as long as it looks 'branded' (Nakassis 2012). In the bazaars, however, the fetishization of brands is absent to a considerable extent. The issue rather is of accessing a new information product. What video games offer is more important than questions of status and identity attached to a brand name.

Traders and their Aspiration for a Chinese Model of Growth

The rich and the 'new middle class' in India embody a global/US centric consumerist society. The love for branded commodities and the support of proprietary regimes for the creation and circulation of information products fall under the Intellectual Property laws, many of which are pushed by the US government. The knowledge

workers in India are tied to the US economy. Many Multinational US firms in India absorb the pool of highly skilled and lowly skilled knowledge workers from the country. The traders in the bazaars dealing with video games however, do not see the US model as worth emulating. The traders view the US model of growth as elitist. The traders in the bazaar perceive the importance attached to quality and rights complying with a population that has some equanimity of resources. In the case of India, that vision is far-fetched. The traders say when for majority of the population in India information and access to resources is a problem, we cannot expect them to be fixated over quality and rights. The traders think China grasps the diversity of the Indian markets. Their everyday encounters with the Chinese traders, physically and through online communication help breaks the myth of the US model. In place of the faith shown by the elites in India on the US/global model of development, the traders observe China standing up to the demands and necessity of the mass consumer in India. The traders pull out some of the qualities of the Chinese model.

A Disciplined Workforce

The traders associate an aspect of Chinese modernity to its disciplined labour force. They regard the existence of a disciplined workforce contributing towards China developing as a superpower. In all the three bazaars, I heard stories about the strength of the workforce in China. The stories varied from the organizational quality of the workforce to the individual attributes of labourers. It was interesting to see that many of the traders with in depth knowledge of China have not visited the country personally. This may also be the reason behind formulation of strong notions about China. Most of the times, it is the visits made by importers and some friends of the traders that are the carriers of stories of the sprawling urban geography in China. WhatsApp messages exchanged between the Indian and Chinese traders on a day-to-day basis add on to the knowledge pool.

The traders are of the impression that in China everything is systematically organized in the shops to save wastage of time and energy. Bharat, a trader in Lajpat Rai market says usually in the shops of China, there is an efficient and friendly young saleswoman. She communicates well in English and is very diligent. The shop keeps only the samples of different goods. The bulk of goods are stacked in storehouses outside. When the buyer places the order and payment for the goods is made, the young assistant facilitates the deal. Bharat sees the de-cluttering of the shops and the professional behaviour of the people at the shop making it easy to trade with Chinese businessmen. Apart, from the organized nature of the shop, another advantage is the disciplined workforce in China. Rajat, a trader in Palika Bazaar talks about the

features of a disciplined China. One of the fellow traders in the market that Rajat knows well is recently back from his visit to China. He has many tales about the new country. What struck Rajat are the descriptions of a Chinese worker. The worker in China comes across as hardworking and dedicated. The importer told Rajat that a Chinese worker does not waste time gossiping and commuting from his home to workplace. Most factories have accommodations. The worker gets an off on Sunday when he goes to visit his family in the countryside. On a regular day, the workers have a one-hour lunch break and stick to their schedule. They respect the rules and do not stretch the lunch hour. All the stories of a disciplined workforce in China are particularly striking for Rajat when he compares it to that of India. A worker in India Rajat says is *alchi*, lazy. All he thinks is how to reduce the workload and spend the time idling instead. So he thinks it is a common feature in India for a one-hour lunch break to get stretched to three hours. Rajat accounts the numerous *bidi* (local cigarette) and tea breaks that a worker takes in India. On top of that, he says gossips starts spontaneously amongst workers. What is left in a day is a couple of hours of serious work and the rest of it spent by shirking work by devious means, Rajat adds.

When the traders in the electronic bazaars talk of a disciplined workforce in China, their allusion is to productivity. The highly regimented work hours are not in anyway seen as exploitative. There are studies that examine the exploitative nature of the Chinese economy including the firms that employ family labour (Harvey 2005). The traders' neglect of this aspect of the Chinese economy is to do with their level of disappointment with the current state of the market. The slow turn over of the informal economy and the Indian economy in general has led the traders to think it as a shortcoming of the Indian workforce. An increase in productivity by a disciplined and dedicated workforce appears as a feasible solution to the problem of a slowing down Indian economy.

A Prudent Government in China

Alongside the ideas of a disciplined workforce are the traders' ideas of a strong and responsible government in China. The traders see the strong division of power bending towards the Community Party helping China to take resolute decisions. They think that the firm decisions of the government are strengthened by the love shown by the incumbents towards the country. The traders are of the opinion that the party leaders do not put their own interests before that of the country. The contrary situation is that of India. The traders view majority of the politicians in India are corrupt; they do not work in the nation's interest but their own. Added to this is the prevalence of a 'license' system in India. The traders maintain that one has to shell

out a huge amount of money to obtain permissions to establish one's own factory. On top of that, there are the taxes levied on the produce. Bharat in Lajpat Rai Market says even before a factory is set-up in India, an officer bangs at the doorstep. Property tax, income tax, and sales tax are slammed on the proprietor. Bharat sees that not much incentive is left on the factory owner to expand his business. The government in China is an exception even in this regard. He says that the Chinese government rather than posing problems by regulations, on the other hand tries to facilitate the business process. It keeps its interference to the minimum. The Chinese government is not bothered with the day-to-day operation of the firm as long as it is profitable. According to Bharat all the Chinese government wants is one percent of the total profit. And after satisfying that condition, any firm has complete liberty to open factories in China, Bharat adds. He says although India and China has comparable human and natural resources, China has moved much ahead because of its responsible and non-interfering government.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Out of the traits highlighted about the positives of the Chinese model of growth, the traders put maximum emphasis on the flexible nature of the country. The everyday interaction with Chinese goods and tradesmen makes this character of the Chinese economy stand out for the traders in Delhi. They are amazed to see how well Chinese products fit into the domestic market. At present, the India-China trade is at 65 billion with a huge trade deficit against India (Roy 2014). The traders in the electronic bazaars are aware of the advantage that the Chinese economy has vis-à-vis its production of mass goods. The mass markets in India do not run by expensive western electronic goods, the cheap varieties run the bazaars. In their admiration of the Chinese economy that produces cheap goods, the traders touch on Shanzhai innovation. Shanzhai model captures the Chinese flexible copying culture. Etymologically meaning 'mountain village' or 'mountain stronghold', Shanzhai goods are created outside of 'official control', done as a parody of the original product (Tse et. al 2009, Hennessey 2012). The development of the Shanzhai innovation in China ties it up with other mass markets in the world that are looking for cheaper alternatives of branded goods. Govind, a trader in Palika Bazaar draws out the capacity of Chinese goods to fit into different Indian pockets. He gives an example of the Samurai games that came in the 1980s for approximately 5000 rupees (100\$). It was at that time a luxury product and a certain section of Indian consumers could afford it. Come 2000 Govind says Samurai TV games are everywhere in the market. A Samurai game that was sold before for 100\$ is now available for 5\$. Govind says China immediately grasped the pulse of the Indian market. What they

saw in the Indian mass market was the demand for cheap video games. Accordingly they tweaked the product to create cheaper versions of it. Cheap user-friendly models substituted the sturdy consoles of earlier Samurai games. *Halka* (flimsy) chips, Govind observes replaced the quality chips of earlier machines.

The flexibility and adaptability of Chinese economy is not just seen through cheap goods. According to the traders, the true spirit of the Chinese economy is to adapt to any kind of situation. The traders point out Chinese goods overcrowds not only the local markets but also the European and North American markets. They are of the opinion that China sends the superior quality goods to the West and the inferior ones come to India. The traders think it is not China who makes that choice. China simply only responds to the respective demands put by different national economies. Accordingly, the traders observe even wires have four varieties in China, A, B, C and D. Depending on the demands of the market, China sends the required variety. It has the capacity to rise up to the occasion. According to the traders, the adaptability shown by the market towards goods extends to the ethics followed in the market. They say the Chinese economy and the government do not judge between a small and a big businessman. Unlike in the US and India, legal boundaries in China are flexible. Any business is not penalized for dealing in semi-legal products. If the Indian traders were in China, they would on the contrary enjoy many incentives. As a result, the traders say the Chinese government is not preoccupied with whether a business is of pirated goods or original commodities. On the other hand, the traders say China is concerned if a business is profitable or running on loss. Since, the electronic bazaars in Delhi are profitable enterprises channeling goods to the lowest level consumers, traders believe the Chinese government would have subsidized their trade. The traders however see that India is not able to access the overall benefits of the mass markets in India. Following the global legal standards, the traders mention the Indian government evaluates the bazaars only through the scope of legality and seldom through that of popularity and profit. Far from giving the bazaars trade subsidies, the government imposes fines on them and labels them dubious.

When the traders talk of the flexible nature of Chinese goods and ethics, one can trace it to a particular trend of the classical Chinese thoughts. Classical Chinese thoughts unlike that of the West do not see morality arising out of external situations but as emerging through practical situations (Keay 2009). The teachings of Mengzi, and the Laozi school focus on strategic intervention and ‘non action’ emphasizing on the richness of any situation. François Jullien in his seminal work, *A Treatise on Efficiency* writes, ‘Rather than set up a model to serve as a norm for his actions, a Chinese sage is inclined to concentrate his attention on the course of things in which

he finds himself involved in order to detect their coherence and profit from the way they evolve' (Jullien 2004: 16). Keith et.al observes the continuity of classical Chinese thoughts to modern times. Until date the distance taken from a normative regime and the ability to work according to the external circumstances has governed the Chinese model of development. "Chinese development model' defined by replicable institutional variables but instead a fluid context-, situation- and agency-based modus operandi, a method of policy generation and implementation based on an acceptance of pervasive uncertainty, a readiness to experiment and learn..., an agility in grasping unforeseen opportunities, a single-mindedness in pursuing strategic goals, a willingness to ignore ugly side effects and a ruthlessness in eradicating unfriendly opposition' (Keith et. al 2014: 277).

Asian Modernity?

The dominant modernity in India has flowed from the policies of the state and increasingly from that of the free market. The top down approach of the modernizing process in India is evident with the changes made especially to the urban landscape. If we take the instance of the national capital of India, Delhi, the master plan of 1960s zones the city into various districts giving preeminence to politicians, bureaucrats and urban professionals. The residential quarters and the workplaces are designed thinking about the convenience of the salariat (Sundaram 2010). After the 1990s, the highlight of the urban landscape is not just Lutyens' Delhi but also include the sprawling South Delhi. The pride of Delhi alongside the Rashtrapati Bhawan (President's House) and Connaught Place include the luxurious shopping complexes and high rising apartments. If the top down ideas of modernity after independence lived up to the ideas of a secured job and status, in the present time it celebrates money and commodities as well.

Slowly and steadily, we see a trend contrasting the dominant process of modernity. Unlike the dominant modernity, seeds of which were sown by the government and the neoliberal elites in India, the alternative modernity rises from below. The mass in India gives shape to the alternative modernity. Right from the preference for particular type of spaces of consumption, to cheap products to Chinese aspirations, the alternative modernity is of the people. What Gordon Mathews et.al has termed as 'globalization from below' and 'lower-end liberalization' can be now seen in a full light. Gordon Mathews and others focus on the spread of local goods to the majority of the population in the world through copies and semi-legal goods (Mathews et. al 2012). We are in a position to observe the facets of social and cultural

transformation that goes alongside the spread of knock-off goods. In the chapter, we observe the circulation of cheap information products to the lowest consumers in India requires a social space such as that of the bazaars. The bazaars fulfill not only the function of a commercial place where goods are bought and sold but also a social space where a new consumer gets assistance to operate a new information product. We further see different levels of associations with a consumer product. Unlike, the dominant modernity where brands become a selection criterion, in modernity from below, practical considerations of money get precedence over quality and brandedness of a product. The emphasis is placed on experiencing a new product rather than possess the best version of it in the market. Therefore, speed and novelty that marks the dominant/global modernity gives away to obsolescence and sluggishness in the alternative version.

Finally, the aspirations attached to modernity from below are distinct from that of the dominant discourse. While the dominant discourse see the US centric western model of a consumer society worthy of emulation, the alternative model bends towards a Chinese model. The traders in the bazaars highlight the strength of a disciplined workforce, supportive government and flexible ethics. Getting the necessary changes in the bazaars and replicating a Chinese model, the traders expect to become a force to be reckoned with.

The aspirations and everyday practices that tie the lower end markets in India to China portend a modernity from below- it is about chaotic spaces, archaic aesthetics and flexible regimes of products and laws. The bottom up modernity emphasizes on the needs of the people. It develops a direct relationship with commodities. What a commodity does to the lives of the people gets precedence over what the aura of a commodity is. Moreover bottom up modernity is about capturing the strength that precarious existence provides, to make the best use of the situation at hand. This attitude is not just limited to exploiting the immediate market situations but also to recognize the allies in such a bottom up process of change. The traders in the bazaar see a winning model in China because they can relate to its development paradigm. The mass markets in both the countries cater to similar group of consumers and have a comparable level of human resources and deficiency of material resources. It appears that the contemporary modernity of the majority of people in the world is likely to be Asian in nature. The development of social commercial places, knock-off goods and exploiting conditions of precarity is likely to sustain the dreams of modernity of half of the world's population.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

The Other Information Society

The electronic bazaars in Delhi bring together aspects of the social, economical, ethical and the political. The different spheres appear as ‘modes of existences’, impinging on one another while at the same time maintaining their roles and identities. The coming together of the different ‘modes of existences’ in a South Asian marketplace invites a reconsideration of categories such as knowledge, market ethics and modernity. In a postcolonial context, all the categories have received sufficient attention. In the mainstream discourses, particularly in the nationalist discourse of India, there is an appeal to unearth the rich history of the past. *The Discovery of India*, a book written by the first Prime Minister of Independent India portrays a deep epistemological tradition in India including that of native science and technology (Nehru 1946). The interest in native science and technology continues until date. The current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi in his effort to show the supremacy of native science quotes not just historical instances but finds illustrations in the Hindu mythologies to push his case forward. His emphasis on India unearthing many scientific and technological marvels of the world takes him to the mythological times of the *Mahabharata*¹⁴. Particularly in the present times, the mainstream views on knowledge push towards a strong scientific and technological tradition, merging Vedic wisdom with the contemporary IT industry in India (Nilekani 2008).

If on the other hand, we examine the portrayal of market ethics in a South Asian context, then the greater tendency is to portray a traditional market actor as embedded in his social context often incapable of making rational choices. He is more likely to conduct business out of social and cultural obligations of kinship and religion than act out of self-interest alone (Birla 2011). In the views of colonial historians and classical Sociologists alike, the economic activities in India are super seceded by the demands made by the collective. The mainstream idea of modernity

¹⁴ <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/comment-the-two-faces-of-mr-modi/article6553304.ece>
<http://www.newslaundry.com/2014/10/30/despite-the-pope-says-you-cant-believe-in-evolution-big-bang-and-god/>

similarly focuses on a developed India led by the market, consumer goods and urbanization. Economic growth trailing on the line of a neoliberal society becomes the buzzword to indicate holistic development for India (Parekh 2006).

The interesting aspect is that in all the dominant discourses of knowledge, market ethics and modernity, what we hear are the voices of a particularly group of people, more often the elites of society. We see a top down approach to filter the desirable goals of a particular section to the rest of society. In the context of India, the postcolonial literature is a conscious effort to break past the elite usage of spaces and power. The emphasis is to break away from abstractions and to look at actual practices. The production of ideas and practices are not studied at the top level of the society. They are studied at the level of the masses. The emphasis is to understand the ways in which people live their lives and attach meanings to symbols. As a result, in place of the struggle for independence of the national leaders, we read of the peasant movements and the local power politics (Chakrabarty 1989). Modernity becomes a multifaceted process and not a process with a singular teleology. The electronic bazaars in Delhi are part of the masses. The bazaars comprise of the non-elites, 'subalterns' of the society. However, unlike the postcolonial literature that is based on a Marxist idea of dichotomy, conflict alone is not a suitable heuristic device to study the busy market places in Delhi. Postcolonial literature is built on the unequal division of power in society. Whether it is the opposition imagined with the colonial leaders or the nationalist elites, the local politics and practices unraveled against the background of an unequal distribution of power and resources (Guha 1998, Pandey 2006). In the electronic bazaars in Delhi however, people do not always formulate new practices and aspirations in opposition to something or someone. The traders in the bazaars that are mostly from small business families and from the urban underbelly are aware of their disadvantaged positions. However, majority of the coping mechanisms develop in the market spontaneously out of the traders' situation of constraints. The practices in the bazaars do not give rise to social movements and resistances against the dominant sections of society. In fact many a times, the traders upheld the principles of the governing regime rather than fight against it. Moreover, the struggles of the traders are not limited to the overcoming of harsh external environment. The struggles also relates to the traders' inner struggle, their interior selfhood. Latour's of 'modes of existence' paradigm caught the diverse realms of the traders, many of which are in the stages of *becoming*. Understanding the bazaars through the modes of existence let me account for different phenomena in the market and explicate what the bazaar paradigm as a whole is saying.

When applied to the bazaars, 'modes of existence' divulges new forms. In the case of knowledge production in the bazaars, we see that the informal electronic markets in Delhi move away from the formal and alternative model of information society. Without having visions for a better society, the bazaars adhere to a pragmatic model of knowledge production and transmission. The bazaars move away from a proprietary regime of copyright. In its place, bazaars resort to sharing to make the best use of tacit knowledge that each trader possesses. The bazaars further give rise to innovative ideas of sustainability. The recycling of old DVDs of games, video gaming consoles and everyday tools limits the creation of electronic waste. It further trickles down second hand goods to the desirable consumer. The recycling of old electronic products is done to forward the interests of the market and not with any ideas of protecting the environment. Even so, unintentionally the bazaars create some radical forms of production and use of knowledge.

If we take into account the ethical universe of the traders, the values born out of a moral universe co-exists alongside the values born out of survival concerns. The result is a non-capitalist South Asian market actor that is concerned with meeting his immediate survival needs than aim at world domination. The Hindu moral universe and the neoliberal ethics arrest the aggressive tendency of the survival ethics of the traders. The zeal and confrontational attitude that the survival ethics allow has to come to terms with the ideas of 'non-sabotage' that the traders associate with the Hindu moral universe. Moreover, the neoliberal ethics of ownership and creativity dampen the spirit of the traders to glorify what they do for a living. Piracy associated with stealing and the lack of educational degrees demotivates the traders. The traders see the neoliberal ethics through the IPR and professional degrees. The lack of both the elements in the electronic bazaars in Delhi prevents the traders from attaching any positive trait to their trade. As a result, the traders do not consciously expand their business models of small time innovations.

Finally if we take the realm of modernity in the bazaars, we observe the traders are drawn to a Chinese model of growth that values lucrative business enterprises coming from the people. The electronic bazaars in Delhi target the masses in India. The varieties of the products kept in the shops, old and new, branded and fakes suit the sensibility of the average consumer in India. Moreover, the open attitude kept by the traders to welcome any type of consumer, urban and rural, educated and naïve reinforce the fact that the consumers that these markets target are the masses in India. In the hegemonic discourse of modernity in India, the traders find considerations for the lowest level consumers missing. The traders of the bazaars highlight that the hegemonic discourse is USA centric propagating privatized consumption lifestyles of

shopping malls and branded goods. Contrary to that, the traders perceive that the Chinese model has its eye on the people, what the different group of consumers demand and what are their capacities. Seeing the openness and flexibility of the Chinese economy and governance, the traders see this model more useful for their business purposes in India.

Knowledge, ethics and aspirations interact with commercial activities in the bazaars. The profit-maximizing tendency of the traders co-exists alongside skills, morals and ideas of a modern living. All the modes of existence in their fusions give a certain character to the electronic bazaars in Delhi. The electronic bazaars in Delhi indicate another type of information society in India. It is a bottom-up model of information society. Values, aspirations and skills come from the people absorbed in the market and are not formulated by some external agent such as the state. The result is a particular type of market actor with his distinct earning and spending habits. We see the interactions of the different modes of existence in the bazaar give rise to a non-capitalist market actor. He is interested in earning a living using the resources at hand. His aspirations are geared towards an inclusive business environment where all kinds of market actors and consumers find their bearings. Overall the bazaars in Delhi show the traits of an 'industrious' economy. Arrighi in his work points out in the Western countries, the adopted path to development is industrial giving preeminence to machines and factories. Whereas in China, the economy is industrious, it is the people that fuel the state enterprises and the growth of manufacturing sector in China (Arrighi 2007). Similarly, for the electronic bazaars in Delhi, its industrious nature stands out. The diligent nature of the traders to overcome trade difficulties and the general tendency of the markets to co-opt desires of the masses shows the bend of the bottom up information towards the people. In the other information society not only the people become market resources but also their demands and desires give direction to the economy.

The bottom up information society, unlike the formal information society in India does not change its course out of external considerations such as the flow of global capital and investments. It does not automatically latch on to the next big trend in the market to get an upper hand in business. If at all, the bazaars have to show preference, then they show it to their immediate environment. Rather than let global capital and the latest information product govern the bazaars, the consumers drive the bazaars. The bazaars see the consumers as its optimal resource. Whether the consumer is from an affluent family or from a poor background is not a question here. The question is of satisfying the needs of each and everyone coming to the market. The bazaars regard stocking up cartridge video games and incorporating

consumers from small towns a better marketing strategy than keep selective games and attracts affluent consumers. The bazaars in the process reveal a practical wisdom. Dealing with precarious urban existence provides perceptiveness to the bazaars. They know that desires are part of everyone's life and the Indian state only grasps the dreams of the elites. The bazaars attempt to rectify this shortcoming of the Indian state. They satisfy the dreams of the mass-who has been asked to dream in an independent India but never given the means. Now the electronic bazaars in Delhi are equipping the mass with lower priced information products. By enabling the lowest level consumers to fulfill their dreams, the bazaars are pushing the mass into the twenty first century of science and technological brilliance. However, as we see it is not just a simple story of inclusion. The bazaars by incorporating the mass consumer is actually giving shape to a different type of information economy altogether. We find commodities in their most basic form in the other information economy. The preoccupation is with the functions of a commodity than with its external symbols of a brand or an aura. The unmediated relationship with the product comes across in the shop desk where the traders dismember expensive consoles to give it a new life. The consumers enjoying Super Mario on locally manufactured handheld game as much as on imported ones further accentuates the process of a direct contact established with the product in this case technology as well.

With the other information economy in India already having tie ups with China who knows if the coming decades herald a new productive regime that turns every user into an innovator. Like the traders of the bazaars that establish a technical relationship with video games, the mass consumer with comparable level of resource constraints might turn into a creator. Breaking the myth of the commodity as a status symbol is a first step in that direction. When a commodity is seen through what it is rather than what social symbols it carries, one gets to mold what one comes in contact with. The traders have already attained this in the bazaars. Video game is not a fancy gadget in the bazaar: it is the hardware, nuts and bolts, and plastic jackets. They are at your disposal to give a shape to the materiality of the product.

Unlike the formal information society that came out of excess of knowledge and resources, the other information society is all about lack. The abundance of resources in the formal information economy creates a complete knowledge worker that can conceive a product from its beginning. In the other information economy until now, the practitioners are working on an already formulated product. It would be interesting to see in which direction the informal bottom up information economy heads. Even though, it does not turn into a full time creator, it is already changing a lot by small time technical fixes, second-hand DVDs, cracked consoles, and

colourful TV games. The aestheticization of the other information society is already underway. The people belonging to it are becoming clearer. Now we have to see the time taken to strengthen the lower end transnational network of goods and people. And what are the new innovative business and political models that emerge in the process.

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