We restate the question: can design be reoriented from its dependence on the marketplace toward creative experimentation with forms, concepts, territories, and materials, especially when appropriated by subaltern communities struggling to redefine their life projects in a mutually enhancing manner with the Earth?

(Arturo Escobar, Designs for the Pluriverse, xvii)
1 Heritage and Design: An Introduction

This Element proposes to look at the relationship between heritage and design by way of a case-study approach based in contemporary India. I offer up ten distinct portraits of a range of heritage makers located in Goa, a place that has been predicated on its difference, both historical and cultural, from the rest of India (Gupta 2009b) over the longue durée. For the first-time visitor to this tropical paradise situated on the edge of the Indian Ocean, it is a site of monsoonal beaches, ageing European hippies, Russian package tourists, Indian elites and honeymooners, Portuguese Catholic architecture, and its now-famous Goan prawn curry and rice (Gupta 2014a). For the long-time resident who moves away from the beach and enters its hinterland, it is a space for a range of innovative heritage design projects (Gupta 2018b). I attempt to read the distinct heritage of Goa – a former Portuguese colonial enclave (1510–1961) surrounded by what was previously British India (1776–1947) – as a form of place-ness, as a source of inspiration for further design work that taps into Goa of the twenty-first century. My series of portraits is visual, literary, and sensorial and takes the reader on a heritage tour through a design landscape of villages, markets, photography festivals, tailors and clothing, books, architecture, painting and decorative museums. I do so in order to explore heritage and its future iterations as increasingly dependent on innovation, design, and the role of the individual but also always as a member of a heritage community.

1.1 Conceptual Framing: Heritage and Design

This Element is rooted in ethnographic ways of seeing and writing in order to think through the relationship between heritage and design, an underdeveloped area within heritage studies (Meurs 2016). I am also interested in thinking about a heritage’s place-ness as a laboratory for different design projects and practices, with acts of design involving dimensions of training and expertise, skill and labour, specialized craft and industry, commitments (to ideas and places), and judgements or dispositions in particular ways (Sennett 2008; Adamson 2010; Meurs 2016). For the case in hand, I explore how certain practitioners of design (for example, architects, urban planners, photography and museum curators, writers and publishers, fashion designers, and painters) use a specific heritage site (involving its signature details of history and culture) as a source of inspiration for other kinds of aesthetic work involving the old and new, the experiential and affective. I then examine the multiple ways these ideas get translated into material heritage objects (be it a building, book, article of clothing, photo display, painting, museum exhibit). While some of these are more classic design subjects (such as architecture or clothing), others are new
ones (such as photography, the book, or a market), which perhaps require more careful thinking about the design work put into each different heritage project, as I do in the sections that follow. I also hope to complicate the distinction between ‘greater’ and ‘lesser’ heritage (Butler 2016) by way of design to open up both the range of heritagization processes that are taking place in Goa and what can be considered under the rubric of ‘heritage’ more generally. Lastly, these processes require thinking about the ethics of responsibility (to both heritage and design) in doing. The heritage makers I profile were selected precisely for their thought, care, and commitment to Goa as a space and place. In other words, it is not simply the transformation of something old by way of new design ideas that defines heritage, it is rather about the biography of the individual involved and their changing relationship to Goa over a lengthy period that show a more dynamic and performative heritage landscape in the making. Furthermore, and not surprisingly, these same persons know and respect one another, often through their design work, and make up a heritage community of sorts, one committed to Goa’s continued and sustainable heritagization.

Ethnography becomes my entry point into their life worlds and design ideas and practices; here, I conceive it as a form of design, or ‘specialized craft’ (Andrews 2009), involving a set of multiple methodologies that I have put together. First, it involves traditional anthropological fieldwork technologies such as conducting life histories and interviews alongside participant observation. Secondly, it is fieldwork that takes place over the longue durée through multiple timed visits, which, in turn, reveals both changes in Goa’s heritage-scape and the creative changing practices of this set of heritage makers. There is also an auto-ethnographic dimension to this long-term engagement that reveals my own set of changing research topics and personal relationships to these heritage practitioners. Thirdly, it involves spatial and visual mapping and close study of design projects, building towards what is a growing subfield in the discipline, ‘design anthropology’ (Mazzarella 2003; www.culanth.org/fieldsights/series/keywords-for-ethnography-and-design). It is a way, according to pioneering figure Dori Tunstall, of seeing design as translating values into tangible objects and experiences (‘Design Anthropology: What can designers learn from anthropologists?’ www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/bysdesign/2008-08-23/3200730). Fourthly, my ethnographic design equally involves online digital research, an expanding arena for gathering data (Hine 2000; Horst and Miller 2012), including interviews, extracts, and visual content and websites often designed by these individual heritage practitioners themselves; they are also integral to the fieldwork process. In other words, the in-person and online supplement one another (through shared content and connection)
through what has recently been called a ‘multimodal’ approach (Chin 2017; Collins, Durington, and Gill 2017; Dattatreyan and Marrero-Guillamon 2019). Together, they create and perform a lively heritage personality and presence and very much form part of the appeal to a larger Goan global community that has a long history of diaspora-making with connections to multiple elsewhere (Gupta 2019c, Frenz 2014). Specifically, my research will suggest that the online increasingly functions as its own design studio space, an important and crucial feature that contributes to the overall design project, so that Goa’s heritagization is showcased both locally and globally. My particular ‘patchwork ethnography’ (www.culanth.org/fieldsights/a-manifesto-for-patchwork-ethnography) then is one of combining long-term classical anthropological fieldwork methods (and timed multiple visits), with encounters and writings of self, design foci, and online research; it is also one that is derived from and tailored to the specific heritage space and place of Goa.

Moreover, there are several interesting historic parallels at work here throughout the research-design format. One is between my changing relationship with Goa, starting from the cusp of the twenty-first century through its first two decades, and Goa’s changing relationship with the expansion of the Internet over this same time frame, and its increasing role in Goa’s fashioning of itself for a global Goan diasporic and world audience. A second is that it is as much about Goa’s making itself into a heritage destination as it is about the designing of heritage that is required to make it sustainable, timely, and relevant, and which it builds and carefully crafts, including its digital lifeworlds. A third parallel is that of my own ethnography as a form of research design operating in simultaneity to Goa designing its sense of self and its heritage landscape; both are in flux and always dynamic, always relational.

This Element also exposes the globality of Global South locations such as Goa (India) (Gupta et al. 2018, Connell 2007) and showcases a range of dynamic heritage practitioners who are contributing distinct formations of globality through their design objects, sites, and practices. We could also see these heritage design projects as practised less in opposition to globalization than rather being integral to new forms of globalization (Adamson 2010). I will also suggest the central role of heritage and design in making certain kinds of dwelling (entwined urban and rural) both possible and meaningful in the Global South (Gupta 2018b). These new sustainable lifestyle formations are taking place the world over as a result of the increasing congestion, high rates of pollution, and difficulties of living in global city spaces that are increasingly becoming nondescript ‘non-places of supermodernity’ (Augé 1995), where one is anywhere and nowhere at the same time and mobility is restricted due to the overpopulation of people and things (cars in particular). These conditions of
urban living have of course been worsened by the global coronavirus pandemic (2020–). Instead, and even more so now, there is an active return to history and culture, in search of alternative forms of the ‘good life’ (Ahmed 2010; Appadurai 2013; Fisher 2014) in global hinterland pockets the world over. They, in turn, promote an ease of mobility within localized spaces, by way of innovative features that restore, revive, and repurpose heritage through careful and clever design (Jackson 2014; Gupta 2019d). In a sense, I am proposing an ethnography of heritage futures (Clammer 2012) and (smaller) community-based heritage building through a theory and method of design, two aspects that I take up in my conclusion. Lastly, it is my long-term engagement with Goa that has also placed me in a unique position to foreground a specific case study of heritage and design for this new Cambridge Elements Series on Critical Heritage Studies.

1.2 Hinterland Goa

I have been visiting Goa over a period of twenty-five years and have an intimate sense of this dynamic space that holds such meaning and continued curiosity for me. It is where I first conducted fieldwork during the summer of 1994 as a PhD student in anthropology studying in the USA, and it is the site on which I have built the foundation of my scholarly academic career, including the publication of numerous articles (on a range of topics including tourism and heritage) and two single-authored monographs (Gupta 2014b; Gupta 2019c). It is a fascinating and enduring relationship with a place that has taken on a life of its own, autobiographical aspects and ethnographic encounters that I elaborate on more fully in Section 2, ‘Goa Dreaming’.

In other words, it is my range of research interests on the topic of Goa that has positioned me to write carefully about the politics of its past as a history of the present. First, it is one very much attuned to the ways in which Goa’s Portuguese colonial past (relational to the historic role of the British in India) continues to sustain its idea of historical and cultural ‘difference’ (Trichur 2000; Gupta 2014a) from the rest of (British) India while still being part of it. I have written about how the state of Goa operates as an ‘internal exotic’ of sorts by way of its colonial difference (Gupta 2009b), a characterization that post-colonial India relies on to sustain itself as a geopolitical entity. This includes its forced integration into the Indian nation-state in 1961, a still-contested moment in Goa’s decolonization process (Gupta 2019c). Secondly, I have shown how Goa’s colonial difference got mapped onto its tourist representations and continues to feed both international and domestic tourism, a sector of Goa’s economy upon which it is wholly dependent. As well,
there is a much longer history of varied forms of tourism that Goa has experienced in the space left over by Portuguese colonialism: early 1960s European spiritual hippie tourism, Catholic religious tourism, trance music, package tourism (British and Russian mostly), and finally domestic honeymoon tourism (Trichur 2000; Newman 2001; Saldanha 2007; Gupta 2014a). Thirdly, tourism and heritage continue to overlap in complex ways (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998) in the case of Goa and are very much tied to international, national, and local heritage politics, including donor funding and the neat packaging of heritage for tourism consumption. Velha Goa (Old Goa), the historic centre of the Jesuit missions and the resting place of St Francis Xavier’s corpse, was put on the coveted UNESCO list of world heritage sites as early as 1986; it is an important site for Roman Catholic and Indian Christian pilgrimage and continues to play a vital role in Goa’s heritage landscape. There is also a select envisioning taking place with regard to Goa’s Catholic heritage; it dominates in tourist discourses even as Goa’s Hindu heritage is equally vibrant and is being heritagized in interesting and important ways locally. Both are simultaneously caught up in larger pan-Indian discourses of Hindutva that rely on and put pressure on Goa’s historic, cultural, and religious difference once again. Fourthly, there exists a longue-durée history of Goans moving within an intra-colonial Portuguese world from the mid-nineteenth century onwards in search of improved livelihoods (to Mozambique, Angola, Macau, and Portugal), which continued in larger numbers during the tapered end of colonialism and integration into the Indian nation-state (1947–61) (Gupta 2019c); this in turn has made Goa into a heritage destination both for Goans living outside Goa but still on the Indian subcontinent and for its multiple far-flung diasporas (UK, Canada, East Africa, Australia). These four thematics of research and writing, or rather conceptual framings, have been integral in shaping some of the background thinking for this Element.

In 2013, during my sabbatical year from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, where I currently live and work, I returned to Goa with the tentative idea of looking at its contemporary heritage landscape. I spent five months living in North Goa with my family in order to get to know this familiar place that felt very different thirteen years later, from the perspective both of my own life journey and that of Goa. Once I stepped away from the sun, sand, and surf of sossegado (a Portuguese word that refers to the relaxed lifestyle Goans supposedly inherited from their colonizers) amid its coastal beaches, I began to see a vibrant Goa that is “quietly making itself” in its hinterland, even as its long-standing history of hospitality is an integral part of its larger cultural sensibility (Bruner 2001).
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I revisit the theme of Goa’s villages located in the hinterland, less as tied to the distinctive history of the pre-Portuguese system of communally owned community properties (comunidades), although traces of that system still shape the layout and livelihoods of each of the 347 villages or Indo-Portuguese aldeias that make up Goa today (Powell 2011). Rather, I have chosen to research these places as first or second homes for a group of globalized citizens, including many Goans who have lived in other parts of India or abroad (for both shorter and longer stints) before returning to a much changed ‘home’, urban Indian transplants mostly from Mumbai and Delhi, and, finally, Westerners who are choosing alternative lifestyles in a multifaceted cosmopolitan India of today. I see it interestingly as a new form of ‘orientation’ that is taking place, which suggests a convergence of South and North and a loosening of directional markers across and within the subcontinent.

I interviewed many of these ‘urban rural dwellers’ – predicated on urban living prior to a return to an idealized vision of rurality in the hinterland – to get a sense of their attraction to this nestled place caught between city and country life, taking advantage of both. Perhaps it is a search for interiority (both spatially and psychically) in an increasingly fast-paced world. Many of these returnees and migrants are in search of an ‘alternative cosmopolitanism’ found by way of a return to the rural after experiencing the urban (Nandy 2007), choosing to live in Goa’s hinterland, away from its congested tourist belt in North Goa but still close enough to benefit from its readily available amenities. These attractions include a fast internet connection, specialized commodity goods (including both local and imported products such as French cheeses and wines from France and nearby Pondicherry, a former French colonial pocket in India), Goan spicy chorizo and caju feni (the local moonshine), and pristine beaches, only a few hours’ drive away. Goa’s village interior spaces then function as both work (ground) and playground; it is a form of artisanal living, Indian style, but Goan by design. It is also the way that I meet these globalized locals – at literary events, art shows, and openings, in bookshops, as friends of friends – and the sparse directions with no road signs but rather visual markers that are given to find each of their homes (‘look for the church on the left’, ‘the bridge crossing’, ‘the second four-way stop’, etc.), nestled deep in Goa’s hinterland on a quiet lane or street that I would have easily overlooked had it not been for the scribbled map hastily drawn on a napkin at the end of a late night or the detailed directions sent via email prior to our visit. It is villages with names like Siolim, Aldona, Bastora, Moira, and Utorda that I sound out so as to become familiar with them as I try to look at a road map to locate the exact lane, driveway, house. However, these quiet changes both redefine and entangle village life with urbanity as much as they index a telling shift in the attitudes and orientations across North and South India and the West towards urban
life itself. This initial research (over a five-month period in 2013) in some ways led me deeper into the labyrinth of Goan village life and caused me to undertake multiple follow-up fieldwork visits (between 2015 and 2019) in order to fill out this set of portraits of persons with certain long-term commitments to Goa – it includes a mix of Goans who have remained in Goa; Goans who have lived outside Goa (either in India or elsewhere) at some point in their lives; North Indian residents in Goa; and one Argentinian-Spaniard; all of them are busy redesigning Goa’s heritage in very personalized and politicized ways.

Lastly, this Element is very much a reflection on Goa’s dynamic heritage and design landscape, one that is about seeing a certain style of heterogeneity in order to think through the layering of different historical, cultural, spatial, and architectural representations, subjectivities, and mobilities over the longue durée. For the specific case of Goa, as caught up in ‘in-between zones of civilization’ (Feutchtwang and Rowlands 2019), it combines and adds design influences from the Portuguese, but also the Dutch, British, and Mughal, from Hinduism, Islam, and Catholicism, and is still in some sense ongoing as new micro-design ideas are adopted and adapted to fit Goa’s changing heritage and lifestyle choices. Here, I argue for Goa’s continuing ability to domesticate the world unto itself following Jeremy Prestholdt (2008). For me, this twinned conceptual framing of designing heritage and ethnography as design offers a potential entry point into the mood and texture of post-colonial Goa today, one that is framed by my own long-standing expertise and familiarity with Goa from both a scholarly and experiential standpoint.

1.3 Ten Acts of Portraiture

This introductory section has briefly outlined my conceptual framing of heritage and design as well as my long-term engagement with this place called Goa. I enter the ‘heritage-scape’ (Di Giovine 2009) that is Goa today by way of ethnography as a form of design to approach design. My ten portraits are equally of persons and things: of markets, cloth, books, architecture, photography, houses, food, and villages. They reveal Goa to be a site of layered histories and affects, of travel, mobility, and design innovation. Each heritage practitioner showcased here sometimes conforms to, endorses, or counters Goa’s multiple representations, as well as contributing their own, one that is often tied to the biographical and in pursuit of Goa as a ‘lifestyle’, an alternative form of cosmopolitanism (Korpela 2013; Nandy 2007: vii). Ethnography as a form of design also serves as a fitting passageway into Goa’s contemporary heritagization in the hinterland, following small lanes, gravel roads, and handwritten street signs to look for certain ‘micro-narratives’ of history, culture, and difference, all rooted in design. To conclude, I provide here a summary of the sections to follow (2–8), suggesting that my small Element offers up a series of
portraits of a range of heritage makers, places, and projects based in Goa who are designing its heritage landscape for the twenty-first century. These acts of portraiture are descriptive, visual, lyrical, intimate, and painterly in their attempt to grasp the person’s lifeworld of heritage and design.

Goa Dreaming: Section 2 sets up my own historical relationship and engagement with Goa the place through a series of encounters, visits, and experiences. It is an auto-ethnographic reflective piece that sets up my research on Goa’s hinterland heritage and design landscape.

Market: Section 3 is a portrait of graphic designer Orijit Sen and his innovative ‘Mapping Mapusa’ project, run through Goa University. The Mapusa market is a historic colonial bazaar that is still very much in use by locals and foreigners alike and which includes generations of traders selling a range of Goan intangible heritage food items (coconut-leaf baskets, Goan pao (bread), rock salt, prawns, and pork sorpotel, to name a few). I helped map its various sections and stalls (by way of photographs, videos, life histories, and drawings) with groups of Goan students over two short courses that took place in September and October 2013; participant observation in this design project will provide the basis for my analysis. I also look to its future iterations, as it is still ongoing and has developed a digital life of its own.

Cloth: Section 4 is a tale of two Goan tailors, the late Wendell Rodricks and Savio Jon, whom I interviewed first in 2013; I interviewed Savio again in 2019 alongside his fashion muse Sacha Mendes. Wendell and Savio are both products of a longer global history of Goan tailoring and diaspora making that I have written about elsewhere (Gupta 2016); each is turning cloth into a different heritage project for today, the former a fashion designer and author of a book on the history of Indo-Portuguese sartorial designs entitled Moda Goa (Rodricks 2012b) and the latter a fashion designer who relies on indigenous cloth and weaving practices to pattern dresses that are sold from his ancestral home in the village of Siolim. More recently, and before his untimely death in February 2020, Wendell had been involved in opening up Goa’s first costume museum and research centre in his ancestral village of Colvale (forthcoming in late 2022). My section also includes a brief profile of Sacha Mendes as a heritage practitioner of cloth in her own right; she is the proud owner of an innovative shop that promotes local design; it is a space set up on the bottom floor of her family’s home in Panjim, the capital city of Goa.

Book: I focus on two literary figures in Section 5. Diviya Kapur is a trained advocate and former Delhi resident who moved to Goa fifteen years ago, and Frederick Noronha is a Goan journalist; both keep the literary and scholarly alive.
in Goa today, the first by way of a bookshop called Literati that revives the book and a reading culture as heritage, and the second through the running of a small alternative academic press called Goa,1556 which solicits and publishes a range of books centred on Goan heritage, tangible and intangible. I have followed closely their respective innovative design projects over many years, both of which will provide the basis for my acts of portraiture.

Architecture: Section 6 is a portrait of Goan architect Gerard da Cunha, who has worked on various heritage museum projects, including the publication of a book dedicated to Goa’s historic Indo-Portuguese styled houses (1999), the building of a small museum to house the research materials gathered together during the development of this same book project, his involvement in the recent restoration of the sixteenth-century Portuguese Reis Magos Fort, and lastly, the making of an archive and museum space to honour famed cartoonist Mario de Miranda’s (1926–2011) illustrations of Goan life. I have interviewed Gerard multiple times over a period of ten years, and I write about his evolving design ideas for a set of diverse architectural projects.

Village: Section 7 is a portrait of Goa’s villages, where I have lived and worked alongside many creative persons. I first focus on the villages of Saligao, Chikhli, and Moira, which I know intimately, having recently spent time living and experiencing daily village life in all three of them. The section is simultaneously a portrait of two Goa-based heritage practitioners and two locations, North and South Goa. Lola Mac Dougall is a Spanish curator and photography specialist, who has been living in North Goa for twelve years and who has fashioned Goa’s architectural landscape (including its Indo-Portuguese Catholic churches, houses, and village interiors) as backdrops for her biannual photo festivals (February 2015 and November 2017), both of which I attended and was involved in setting up. Savia Viegas is a fiction writer and painter whose life journey returned her to Goa from Mumbai later in life and in an unexpected way. I spent time with the novelist and painter in her ancestral home in Carmona and gained a sense of how the village functions as the medium and canvas for her writing and visual projects.

Goa by Design: In Section 8, I return to Goa’s dynamic heritage design landscape, gesturing to its future iterations as well as to the building of a heritage community of sorts in the hinterland where these ten practitioners are engaged, interacting and involved with one another’s projects. I emphasize Goa’s distinctive features as well as its sustainability as a design model of and for additional places and processes of heritagization, incorporating the old and new, and take into account history and culture. It also serves to revisit the theme of heritage and design, the topic that frames this Element.