



6 BAZAARS IN VICTORIAN ARCADES: CONSERVING BOMBAY'S HISTORIC CORE

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Introduction

In Bombay, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Government reshaped the City by means of a series of distinct, planned architectural and urban design projects. The authorities sought not only to make the city's growth cohesive but also to place their imprint on its form by controlling building activity and investment in infrastructure—however sporadic and incremental it may have seemed.

The old Fort area of Bombay, the object of the colonial government's attention, marks the origin of Bombay as a city, and is the commercial and also perhaps a symbolic center of the Bombay metropolitan region. (This in spite of the fact that it is an invisible entity—in that the fort does not exist today)! But now the urban fabric of the Fort area is being altered by various activities vying for the same space, and current building laws, which are standardized throughout the city, do not attempt to safeguard the clarity that the makers of this area had envisioned during the past century.

The most emblematic of the conflicts, the spread of traditional Indian *bazaars* into the formal urban spaces planned by the colonial government, suggest new approaches to the preservation that take into account the constantly changing nature of the city. This brings to the fore the urgency to outline relevant strategies and approaches for its conservation as a historic urban center relevant to the emerging form and structure of Bombay. This is especially important given that the state government has now legislated policy which protects the Fort area as well as other historic areas in the city. And in order to make the implementation of this conservation policy effective, it would be crucial to fine-tune these to the contemporary forces that are moulding the form of Bombay's historic center and other conservation zones.¹

Structuring the Core

The renewal of the Fort area dates to 1864, when the removal of the fortifications that surrounded the city was finished. The removal of the ramparts symbolized a change of purpose for Bombay, which no longer needed to serve as a land-based defense fort and whose growth as a prosperous trading and manufacturing city was being constrained by the fortifications. It also precipitated a strategic plan to restructure the city center that included the widening and improving of roads, the addition of new open spaces, the construction of public buildings and the imposition of urban design standards. Consequently, the demolition of the ramparts intensified, clarified and made irreversible Bombay's change of urban

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function from a fortified port town to multifunctional trading and manufacturing centre.

These renewal efforts projected a consciously conceived, visible image of Bombay, perhaps the first such urban design gesture in colonial India. At the western edge of the Fort area, along the Back Bay waterfront, several public buildings were put up on land made vacant by the removal of the fortifications. This magnificent ensemble of Gothic buildings (which included the High Court, the University, the Post and Telegraph offices and the Old Secretariat) helped clarify the existing bow-like cross axis, which had implicitly structured the Fort area for more than a century. These buildings transformed Bombay's skyline and visually structured its western edge.

A smaller-scale project was the privately sponsored Horniman Circle (1864), which involved restructuring a green in front of the Town Hall into a formal circular park enclosed by an assembly of architecturally unified commercial buildings. Although the plots on the Circle were auctioned to commercial firms, the design of the facades was controlled to create a sense of unity. This urban design approach, popular for more than a century in countries like England and France, had not been previously used in India. The arcade also offered protection to pedestrians from both the intense summer sun and the lashing monsoon rain.

These projects created an east–west and a north–south axis through the Fort area which over the next three decades became more pronounced with the addition of public buildings that were added as the city grew. The east–west axis ran from the Town Hall through the public buildings on the western edge, and ended with a vista across the bay. The north–south axis was anchored at one end with the grand Victoria Terminus (1878–1887) and at the other by the Gateway of India (1911–1914), a monument that symbolized the ceremonial entry to the city. The intersection of these two axes was celebrated by the construction of the Flora Fountain (1887).

In 1898, the north–south axis was further reinforced by the development of Hornby Road under public design controls. Here, unlike Horniman Circle, there were no restrictions on the design of the facades, which were conceived and built by different architects. But each building was required to have an arcade, which acted as the physical and visual element that tied together the varying architectural styles and enhanced the legibility of Hornby Road as an urban design composition.² This development along Hornby Road connected the crescent of public buildings south of Flora Fountain (including Elphinstone College, Sasson Library, the University and Watsons Hotel), unifying disparate elements in the composition of the newly designed city core.³

This decisive re-ordering of central Bombay, which was directed by the colonial government, contrasted with the additive, incremental and impulsive growth that had characterized the Fort area since the inception and settlement of Bombay. In spite of the overwhelming problems of

sanitation and overcrowding in other parts of the city, the administration had the liberty, and the power, to focus its attention on a smaller, more tangible area. The government used every opportunity to use buildings and infrastructure to establish a cohesive urban form that responded to the unprecedented increase in commerce and industry, and to give colonial political power a visible expression.

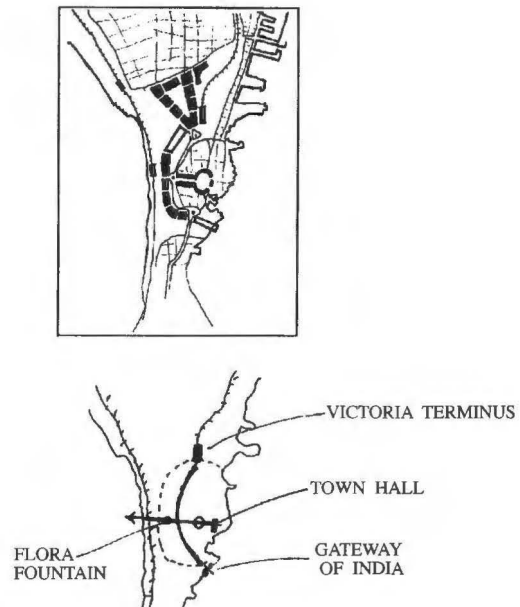


Figure 1 Renovated Fort and the emergence of the cross-bow axis after the removal of the fortifications.

Dual City

A century ago, Bombay was two separate cities, Western and Indian, with parallel residential, commercial, religious and recreational areas—two separate networks of spaces in which these different worlds existed with minimal conflict. In the Western quarter, all efforts were being made to impose a formal structure upon the city—reinforcing the axes, controlling building edges and styles, instituting traffic regulations and encouraging large corporations to open offices. The Indian city, in contrast, was characterized by chaotic, haphazard growth and overcrowding.

The boom decades of the 1860s and 1870s resulted in fragmented development all over the island. Growth was incremental and organic in the Indian city. Cotton mills, which drew immigrants from surrounding agricultural areas, served as the heart of districts in the Indian city. Small businesses grew and shops and stalls mushroomed near temples, mosques and along main traffic routes. Here, unlike the city center, little control was exercised over the sites being developed for housing or industrial use. Residential, commercial and religious activity patterns were integrated in a tightly knit urban fabric like a traditional Indian *bazaar* town.

The *bazaar*—a chaotic market place comprised of shops, stalls and hawkers—can be seen as the symbolic image of and metaphor for the physical state of the Indian city. The chaos and apparent disorder of the *bazaar* is precisely the quality essential for the survival of vending—physical proximity between seller and buyer. It also is the physical manifestation of incremental and *laissez-faire* growth of the market place. More importantly, it symbolizes positive energy, optimism and a will to survive outside the official system.

This classical, colonial, dual-city structure survived until the 1960's when the unprecedented scale of distress migration from rural areas to Bombay (and other urban centers) completely altered the exclusivity of the two domains. The *bazaar* became an instrument that absorbed migrants, cushioning their entry to the city, and swept across the city—sprawling along transport lines, slopes of hills, underutilized land, undefined pavements and even the arcades in the Victorian core.

The *bazaars* blurred beyond recognition the physical segregation of the dual cities. They wove the two worlds together with a system of shopping and recreation spaces that infused their own architectural and visual character wherever they spread. The arcades, in particular, provided a condition most appropriate for hawking: the supporting columns of the arcade gave definition to the amorphous spaces of the *bazaar* and defined the territory of individual hawkers.

The spread of the *bazaar* into the Fort area transformed the intensity and patterns of use there and began to wear down the physical environment with overlays of an alien imagery and building materials that compose the paraphernalia of the *bazaar*. Today, shrines and stalls about the splendid Gothic buildings and fill the spaces in their arcades. Overcrowding has altered traffic patterns and made the bow-like cross axis unrecognizable.

The physical degradation was further accelerated by the imposition of the Rent Control Act (1942), which froze rents and gave tenants legal protection. As a result, it became uneconomical for landlords to maintain buildings, which are now subdivided to accommodate the swelling population of the city.

Furthermore, the formulation of building regulations (such as setbacks and floor-area ratios) generalized throughout the entire city (presumably for ease of administration) have resulted in the destruction of the street edge. The rebuilt Alice Building on Hornby Road is a case in point: its setback has destroyed the continuity of the street edge and arcade, crucial components in the design of Hornby Road. The new block does not comply with either the architectural textures (for example, the masonry bases) or details (such as cornice bands, articulation of arcades) that characterize the precinct. This has happened in spite of the implicit and explicit rules for building that have been followed in this precinct for the last century.

Contemporary Context

Increasingly, the Fort area is seen as the Financial center of the city. This in spite of the BMRDA's (Bombay Metropolitan Region Development Authority) aggressive policies to create a polynucleated structure for the region and promote Bandra-Kurla (in North Bombay) as the new International Finance Center. In fact, in the early 1980s the BMRDA issued a notification barring the creation of additional office space in the island city and capping the available Floor Space Index at 1.33. in order to discourage growth in South Bombay, and encourage growth in the north as well as give impetus to the growth of New Bombay. Clearly, the State Government's failure at implementing this policy of creating a "polycentric growth" through the development of alternate business centers at Bandra-Kurla and New Bombay, has not prevented the growing displacement of residents by commercial buyers. The BMRDA survey of 1995 reveals that 1.06 lakh new jobs were created in an area of 23 sq. km in the southern tip of the city between 1981 and 1991. This has actually accelerated the concentration and importance of the Fort area as a Financial center with an increasing number of commercial establishments opting to be located here.

Furthermore, with the recent liberalization policies of the Government, multinational corporations, especially banks and investment companies, are opting to be located in the Fort area—usually in older Heritage buildings. The companies acquire and renovate heritage buildings to be located in a historic environment which instantly gives them an identity and of being perceived as having been around for a while! Simultaneously, with the patronage of the city's Yuppies and expatriates, related functions such as art galleries, specialty restaurants, boutiques, travel agencies, etc. are appearing at a rapid rate to service this interrelated global clientele that is coming to use the Fort area. In the meanwhile, with the additional pressure on the southern tip of the city, the infrastructure in the area is being overstressed to the point of collapse—traffic, and the physical state of public spaces, being the most obvious ones. So while the Fort area is increasingly becoming a more exciting place to be located in, it is fast deteriorating physically.

Conservationist and citizens' groups emerged in the late 1970's to address this rapid deterioration and transformation. In the best case, these groups represented a new relationship between citizens and cities authorities, a coalescing of private initiative for public good. This was especially important given that city authorities and Government (comprising chiefly of politicians elected from rural constituencies with no interest in Bombay apart from its role the administrative capital for the State Government) seemed incapable of playing a leadership role. And private enterprise seems, even today, to lack a moral conscience.

It was in response to this deterioration and the resulting demolition of historic buildings in the 1970s and 1980s, that some citizens' groups⁴ took it upon themselves to list important buildings and petition the government to protect

them through legislation. In 1991, the Government of Maharashtra listed approximately seven hundred buildings and a draft notification was published for objectives and suggestions. It was clear that the government list which largely recognized and identified individual buildings had not addressed the issue of safeguarding the physical form of the precinct or the context in which these buildings were situated. It is the lack of legislative framework, which recognizes the importance of special planning rules for the area, that has been detrimental to the conservation of the urban form and character of this historic area.

Conservation Legislation

Although there existed a number of citizens' groups and non-governmental groups interested in the conservation of historic buildings, they desperately lacked technical inputs in the form of architects and planners working with them who could address issues related to building bylaws and other aspects related to infrastructure proposals. Therefore, their roles were restricted to exercises such as listing buildings and protests against threats that these buildings might face. Their efforts were limited in that there were no attempts to dovetail conservation into the planning process and thereby evolve legislation that would protect these building together, within the context they were set in. Recognizing this deficiency in the conservation movement which was by 1990 giving some popularity and support, The Bombay Conservation Group, a loose association of practicing professionals, decided to organize an international workshop in October 1993 to stimulate a discussion and articulate ideas and strategies about Area Conservation and the relationship between Conservation and Planning. In order to focus on these broader issues and make them tangible for citizens as well as city administrators, the Fort Precinct was taken as a focus for the deliberation of the workshop. The workshop was successful in that it not only attracted intense public participation, but also that a number of ideas and directions were generated as a result of the deliberations—both formal and informal. It was to follow up on these ideas and suggestions and to extract the lessons of the workshop and actually apply these principles towards evolving a conservation strategy for the Fort Precinct, that the Urban Design Research Institute set up a research team in January 1994—3 months after the workshop.

As a first step, an analysis of the Government's draft notification and listing reinforced the relevance of treating the Fort Precinct as a conservation zone on account of the incredible concentration of the listed Heritage buildings in this precinct. Of a total of 624 listed buildings in Bombay, 193 are located in the Fort Area—almost a third! And fifty percent of the total number of Grade I buildings and an almost equal proportion of Grade II buildings are in the Fort Precinct. In short, the very concentration of listed buildings demanded that the Fort area be treated as a 'Heritage Precinct' with a special designation as a Conservation Zone. And such a concentration of listed buildings would imply that the overall context that they exist in should be dealt with sensitively, for,

any incongruous development would impact a large number of heritage buildings. Therefore, by saving the buildings in the Fort, you basically take care of approximately half the city's conservation-worthy buildings!

Having established a team consisting of practicing architects, urban designers and students of architecture, the first stage of the exercise, viz.: the Documentation and analysis of the Fort Area was carried out. Having completed this, the core team interacted with various professional and activists to formulate a set of preliminary recommendations for the Conservation Proposal.

This was published as a book with an accompanying volume documenting the deliberations of the Workshop. The intention of this publication was to act as a catalyst—a document or handbook which could form the basis for both citizens groups and the Government to formulate legislation in order to declare the Fort area a Conservation Zone or Heritage Precinct. The incorporation of this legislation would be, it was felt, the critical first step in rejuvenating the physical condition of this precinct, as well as harnessing ideas, resources and efforts to sustain this historic core of Bombay as a valuable asset of the city.

The document was submitted to the Government in October 1994, one year after the workshop. Government officials, such as the Urban Development Secretary, the Municipal Commissioner, etc. had been involved in the proceedings of the Workshop and participated informally even in the documentation and analysis process. Therefore, on submission of the document there already existed a receptive audience in the Government. And what did become evident was that by laying out the entire picture clearly as a document, more than half the battle was won! For not only could the ideas and proposals be presented clearly, but also that a ready document was available for reference—to show politicians, administrations, etc. Moreover, the politicians and administrators were now obliged to react—one way or the other!

At this next stage, the critical players in seeing the legislation through, were members of non-governmental groups such as the Bombay Environmental Action Group, who in numerous meeting spread over 6 months, convinced, worked and helped the Government draft the final document which was to be published as legislation. The process ended in June 1995 when the resolution was passed and the official document and notification of Heritage Buildings precincts published—here the Fort area together with seven other smaller precincts were demarcated for conservation.⁵

The accompanying legislative framework that evolved was surprisingly flexible and wide ranging. Besides making provisions for the aspects of modifying building bylaws that have an impact of the physical of buildings in conservation areas (eg. setbacks, heights, etc.) the legislation addressed the issues of road widening, FAR, development plan reservations, overall height regulations, etc. which might irreversibly effect the physical character of the precinct.

Furthermore, the legislation included powerful incentives such as TDR (Transfer of Development Rights) and user changes (Residential to Commercial)⁶ to encourage the conservation of building and precincts.

This legislation has now been in active operation for almost three years and besides the usual grumblings against additional bureaucratic processes, the legislation has virtually drawn no criticism from the builders, building landlords and property owners. The only criticism, usually voiced informally by citizens groups concerned with the Heritage and Conservation issues, is the one which has to do with the flexible approach taken towards authentic architectural and material conservation by the implementing authority—in this case the Heritage Conservation Committee which advises the Municipal Commissioner. This is particularly relevant when the Fort precinct is discussed only because of the great concentration of Grade I and II buildings in the area. This contrast between the general conservation standards and what might be perceived as the ‘more purist approach’ is highlighted by the precedents set by the multinational banks and financial institutes which are increasingly situating in old building in the Fort precinct.⁷ Besides being totally interested and committed to the “complete” restoration of the building they occupy, their financial capacities facilitate conservation projects which unfortunately for the citizens’ groups (usually composed of highly educated upper income people) are coming to set a benchmark in terms of the standards for conservation and its very perception.⁸

This approach, besides not recognizing smaller incremental efforts which might coalesce over time to positively transform the area, also negates the possibility of fundamental adjustments to buildings more akin to the contemporary aspirations of the local inhabitants who are in the process of re-colonizing an environment that they inherited! It is for this reason that these groups run the danger of being myopic and exemplifying egocentric thinking; they may result in little more than superficial corrections such as facade restoration (usually at extremely high costs) and ‘beautification’, improved pavements, etc. What these groups do not possess is a sense of what the city should be; they lack a constructive, action-oriented agenda for grappling with the city’s transformation. Their crusades inevitably devolve into ‘turf battles’ that represent the limited perceptions that a select minority have of the city and its form—in the process putting conservation further away from the planning process and its relation to the larger issues in the city.

Bazaars in Victorian Arcades

Bombay’s century-long history of being a dual city is shifting; its two worlds, and their varied activities, attitudes and physical manifestations are coming together in the same place. The phenomena of *bazaars* in Victorian arcades in the old Fort area is emblematic of this conflict; it is not only forcing a confrontation of uses and interest groups but also demanding new preservation approaches.

For the average Bombay resident, the hawker provides a wide range of goods at prices considerably lower than those found in local shops. Thus hawking in the arcades that characterizes the Fort area is a thriving business. For the elites and for conservationists, the Victorian core represents the city center, with icons complete. In fact, as the city sprawls out, dissipating the clarity of its form, these images, places and icons have acquired even greater meaning for these groups as crucial symbols of the city’s fast deteriorating image. Consequently, hawking is deemed illegal by city authorities who are constantly attempting to relocate the bazaars.⁹

What this conflict brings to the fore is a fundamental issue when dealing with conservation in post-colonial situations—whose image is one seeking to conserve? For an entire generation of citizens, the Victorian core of the city represents repression and exclusion—the buildings are clearly icons of our colonial past. To others, the historic center is a bit of the city where cohesiveness of urban form and the integration of architecture and urban design create a pleasant (or at least potentially beautiful) environment by sheer contrast to the *laissez-faire* growth that has come to characterize the contemporary Indian urban landscape. Therefore, in this context conservation approaches have to treat their “object” purely in terms of “building and environment as resource” devoid of its iconographic or symbolic content. For now, many worlds inhabit the same space in the city, relating to it and using it in different ways.

Can designers and planners contribute towards conserving and moulding the physical form of the Fort precinct in a way that responds to the massive shifts in demography and use patterns? Can we address, through design, the connection between social issues Bombay faces and the conservation of its physical form? How might we weave into this transforming historic city center, the aspirations and use patterns of a world different from that which created it? Can we design with disparate attitudes?

Architects and planners can play a decisive role in initiating new solutions, in creating new contexts by reinterpreting the existing ones. The solution lies not only in creating new districts to take the pressure off the city center, but in simultaneously understanding, restructuring and shaping perceptions of the existing city form. We also must recognize that a city’s prime resource, in addition to its urban form, is its concentration of human skills and enterprise, of services and activities. To sustain and accommodate this requires change from within the city. At times, the urban form must be renewed: buildings must be recycled or demolished, new streets and infrastructure must be added, and so on.

Regional Context

This brings us to the issue of the “purpose of the city”. It is apparent that in order to conserve or transform the built environment of a city, or part of it, it is critical to identify and clarify its purpose in the historic, the contemporary and the

emerging future context. That is, the very *raison d'être* that gives the physical form of the city meaning and contextual validity. For example, what would the role of the Fort Area be, and what kind of transformation would it undergo, if Bombay as some economists believe becomes a de-industrialized global city offering more financial services?

In the context of the recent trends towards liberalization and globalisation, Bombay is being re-structured to accommodate growth, and efforts are on to strategically place Bombay as the financial capital of India. The Fort area, which has always been the financial centre of Bombay, would have to be critically evaluated in terms of its role in the new emerging scenario for the city.

In order to dissipate traffic and allow balanced growth, a multi-centered approach is being applied to the Bombay Metropolitan Region. The Regional plan envisages four new centres—besides the Central Business District (CBD) in the Fort area and Nariman Point, the other commercial/financial centres are to be in Bandra-Kurla, Oshiwara and the CBD at Belapur in New Bombay. Hence the role of the Fort area as a Financial centre is being re-examined in the current debate which has preoccupied the BMRDA, the State Government as well as the private sector.

What still makes the Fort the most viable choice as a financial center (as opposed to developing the Bandra-Kurla area) is that the Fort precinct houses a number of corporate headquarters, besides the Reserve Bank of India, the Stock Exchange & the other Bank Headquarters. It is also in close proximity to the Mantralaya, as well as most Government administrative offices which are within walking distances. Other subsidiary services like the High Court which is within the Fort and the Income-Tax Offices on the periphery, are also important factors. In addition the Fort area is already well connected by the mass transportation network of both the rail systems and water transportation, to the Nhava Sheva Port area and the industrial belt in New Bombay which are fast gaining importance, are also conveniently located and could be accessed easily from any point along the eastern foreshore of the Fort Area.¹⁰

However, what will work against the potential of the precinct as a Financial centre is non-availability of land to accommodate growth. This is mainly on account of properties being frozen due to the Rent Control Act.¹¹ Also, present Government policy does not encourage urban land renewal propositions. On the other hand, with some shifts in policy, the Fort Precinct could be transformed and rejuvenated substantially, perhaps by appropriately recycling portions of the BPT and Naval lands. In any case, this is an issue that would have to be carefully examined with a longer, time frame perspective.¹²

Similarly, is it too implausible to imagine that another way to open up potential space to accommodate the financial center in the Fort Area would be to move the Mantralaya, State Assembly and related Government offices to New Bombay?¹³ This would not only give impetus to the growth of New

Bombay as planned in the 1960's, but in the process allow the Fort precinct to rejuvenate itself both in terms of its changing purposes as well as its physical state. Conservation would work as an advantageous strategy, in the urban renewal process, as it would make available a ready stock of buildings, with the necessary infrastructure.

Challenge for Conservation

This strategy for conservation through identifying the purpose of the city is perhaps appropriate even at the micro level with the conservation area itself. For example, within the Fort area, a number of sub-precincts have been designated. These sub-precincts have, aside from their architectural characteristics, also intrinsic use patterns which have resulted from the concentration of particular functions. Ballard Estate is, for example, an office district with a mix of large private corporations (mainly Insurance and shipping related) as well as some government offices, the area around the Flora Fountain and Horniman Circle are clearly emerging as a banking district, the zone around Kala Ghoda, a cultural/ art district, etc. If these intrinsic use patterns were identified clearly and encouraged through incentives, the adaption of these areas to their emerging use as well as their physical conservation and improvement would easily emerge. Furthermore, breaking large conservation area like the Fort Area into smaller units would reduce the number of interest groups acting on a particular part of the cities facilitating a common purpose as well as minimizing conflict. This would allow the environment to be re-adapted (if only temporarily) in response to contemporary aspirations of the city.

In order to facilitate this process, it is critical that conservation processes encourage the recycling of buildings as a conservation strategy. The interplay of this discipline of keeping the external illusion intact while adapting the inside to evolving social needs and contemporary aspirations is worth serious consideration. In the exterior, the Victorian townscape will be recalled while the insides accommodate turn of the millennium banking offices public institutions: in the various forms that characterize contemporary urban India? It is through this process that there will be a draining of the symbolic import of the edifice, and a deepening of the ties of architecture with contemporary realities and experiences—where a particular urban typology will be transformed through general architectural interventions and placed in the service of contemporary life and realities.¹⁴

With today's transformation in use, conserving the Fort area effectively would require identifying those components of the city's urban system that are essential and should be conserved—such as its physical structure, or the architectural illusion that it presents through features like principal views, skyline and urban design punctuation—and those that can be transformed to other uses, even if only temporary.

The challenge in Bombay is to cope with the city's transforming nature, not by inducing or polarizing its dualism,

but by attempting to reconcile it, to see opposites as being simultaneously valid. The existence of two worlds in the same space implies that we must accommodate and overlap varying uses, perceptions and physical forms. For example, the arcades in the Fort area are a special urban component that inherently possess a capacity for reinterpretation. As an architectural or urban design solution, they display an incredible resilience: they can accommodate new uses while keeping the illusion of their architecture intact.

The original use of the arcades was two-fold. First, they establish a definite position in terms of building—street relationships: the adoption of this architectural/spatial element provided a mediation between building and street. Second, they were a perfect response to Bombay's climate: they served as a zone protecting pedestrians from both the harsh sun and lashing rains.

One design solution might be to re-adapt the functioning of the arcades. They could be restructured to allow for easy pedestrian movement and accommodate hawkers at the same time. They could contain the amorphous bazaar encased in the illusion of the disciplined Victorian arcade. With this sort of planning, components of the city would have a greater ability to survive because they could be more adaptable to changing economic and social conditions.¹⁵

There are no permanent solutions in an urban landscape charged simultaneously with duality as well as rapid transformation. At best, we could constantly evolve and invent solutions for the present using and safeguarding the crucial components of our historically important urban hardware. In fact, "Bazaars in Victorian arcades" could potentially become an authentic symbol of this preferred reality—an urban landscape that internalizes the past for the present and towards a sustainable future.

Notes

- ¹ This paper was first written in 1992 and published in volume 8, number 1, of *PLACES* (MIT Press) - titled *Transformation and Conservation*. Since, the paper has been substantially modified to include the process of conservation legislation and related issues which did not exist at the time.
- ² This project was initiated by the City Improvement Trust, a government organization whose responsibilities included formulating specific development plans and controls for different parts of the city, if acquired private lands, redeveloped old and congested areas and prepared layouts for underdeveloped portions of the city.
- ³ Definite and consistent principles guided the planning and expansion of the rest of the urban center. It grew out of a process of additive transformations rather than a comprehensive system of land division, although one can recognize instances of a more rigorous division of land blocks on the west side of Hornby Road (land freed for

development by the removal of the ramparts). The primary concern, the relationship between buildings and streets, was expressed in a set of agreements in regard to issues of street hierarchy, nodes, building location and frontage.

- ⁴ In the late 1970s, the Save Bombay Committee and, in succession thereafter, the Bombay chapter of INTACH (Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage), the Indian Heritage Society, and the Bombay Environmental Action Group mooted the preservation of key landmark buildings. Their representation took the form of a series of lists submitted to the city planning authority, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Bombay (the BMC). This approach marked a radical departure from the conventional view that conservation was the duty of the Central or State departments of archeology. For the first time, the conservation group were suggesting that the very authority they daily took issue with on matters of civic governance, should henceforth be the custodian of the city's built heritage.
- ⁵ The legislation bill was one of the first signed by the new Shiv Sena government that was elected to power in the State of Maharashtra in 1995.
- ⁶ In the 1977 BMRDA had banned office buildings or conversions to commercial uses in the island city of Bombay to encourage the decentralization of the CBD in the larger Bombay Metropolitan Region. Therefore the incentive in the conservation or heritage legislation to allow commercial uses in the heritage precincts was a big break from this policy and therefore perceived as an important incentive.
- ⁷ The Deutsche Bank etc. recently bought and restored two important heritage properties in the Fort Area. The American Express, Standard Chartered Bank, the Bank of the Middle East have all spent substantial amounts over the last three years restoring their heritage properties.
- ⁸ There appears to be an overemphasis of the British model of conservation with a great bias and dogma towards material conservation and its authenticity. This is further reinforced by the active involvement of the British Council Division in the support and sponsorships of conservation oriented training programmes and perhaps their implicit political agenda to conserve (as authentically as possible) colonial icons.

Moreover, it is often not financially viable to restore or preserve a building (in a conservation area) for various reasons ranging from the availability and exorbitant costs of craftsmen and traditional materials to the limitations in terms of space usage. It is in situations such as these, that it is far more relevant, at least as a first step, to invent legislation which focuses on urban form (mass, height etc.) rather than architectural detail and ornamentation. In fact, it is imperative that Urban Arts Commissions, Heritage Committees and Conservation Groups should widen their emphasis from the present obsession with

architectural style to issues of urban form. In order to conserve precincts within a city or for that matter even to create new city centers, it is not solely the style of architecture that needs attention but the overall urban form that will make possible an appropriate architecture. For it is extremely difficult to legislate anything as nebulous as aesthetic taste and this perhaps cannot be attempted as the sole strategy when implementing area conservation.

- ⁹ The Municipal Corporation has proposed special hawking zones in the city—areas where they perceive hawking will not interfere with pedestrian and vehicular traffic. This seems unlikely to be accepted easily by the hawkers as they presently locate along busy routes which are ideal locations for business.
- ¹⁰ Another important factor to its advantage is the proximity of prime residential properties of Bombay from the Fort area which are necessary to accommodate expatriates and the high-income professional related to banking and financial institutions.
- ¹¹ A crucial issue related directly to the recycling potential as well as the physical state of the Fort precinct (and also most parts of South Bombay) is the Rent Control Act. Today as a result of this Act it has become unviable for landlords to maintain their properties on account of inadequate returns. This leads to intensified sub-divisions of the premises as well as lack of maintenance. Together both these factors not only cause the building to look decrepit but a strain on the structural systems of these buildings while simultaneously overloading other infrastructure like watersupply and electricity in the entire precinct. And quite often, the combination of haphazard sub-divisions and sub-standard or overloaded electrical systems turn the building into virtual fire traps! Thus to affect any rejuvenation of the building stock in the Fort precinct, the Rent Control Act will have to be critically examined and amended appropriately safeguarding the tenants as well as making upkeep viable.
- ¹² It has been recommended in a recently prepared McKinsey and Company report of SICOM (State Industrial and Investment Corporation of Maharashtra), that the JNPT (Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust) which offers more efficient facilities than BPT (Bombay Port Trust), is capable of handling larger traffic, and could be developed into a world class facility as it has plenty of land available to do so. By downsizing BPT activities the valuable land that BPT sits on could be freed for urban renewal adjoining the Fort area. For if, all the port related activities move to the JNPT across the harbour, an incredible amount of properties could be made available to compensate for any deficiencies the Fort Precinct might have for a Financial centre.
- ¹³ Even if it is not viable to move all government offices to New Bombay, at least some offices that have little need to be located in Bombay (Rural development, tribal welfare etc.) could be moved. Moreover, this would
- considerably reduce the pressure on the Fort Area and its adjoining office district of Nariman Point.
- ¹⁴ Here, issues such as financial incentives for particular types of uses, safeguarding employment patterns, and ensuring that existing landuses are incorporated in the planning process at the Greater Bombay level would have to be addressed. That is to say the area be considered in a much wider context. For, any such conservation strategy would carry the responsibility of ensuring no displacement of population or that Economic hardship is not imposed on present users. Or more positively to ensure that fair financial incentives be provided to make preservation and conservation of buildings a worthwhile and even beneficial exercise for users and owners of listed buildings. Thus, Conservation strategy for the Fort would have to be an integral part of a coherent policy of economic and social development visions for the larger Greater Bombay area. In fact, master planning schemes or visions for Greater Bombay or New Bombay should have had in-built into their proposals the creation of area conservation zones like the Fort precinct. For it is obvious that to give impetus to growth in these so called counter magnets would necessarily require capping growth or re-defining the use and role of older parts of the existing city.
- ¹⁵ The city administration has to necessarily play its role as a facilitator—i.e. to provide financial and other incentives to encourage the conservation of precincts and buildings. Just as the government provides infrastructure for new urban development, it cannot be absolved of this lead role in conservation. However, the question of role like this raises is how realistic is it for the government to prioritize funding for urban conservation given the multitude of pressing needs of the city viz. slums, infrastructure etc. It is precisely for this reason that financing mechanism have to be dynamic enough to be self-sustaining by harnessing the inherent potential that lies in the precinct itself.

