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Can the architectural project offer new ways of interpreting, reading, and understanding heritage and the patrimonialization process?

What are the investigation tools and design actions useful for strengthening the relationships between heritage and context?

How can heritage sites best be valorized, while defining ways to sustainably use heritage and actions for its protection?

Starting from an idea of heritage seen as a *sense of time and a sense of place*, this book poses a hypothesis: that the perspective of the project, at architectural, urban and landscape scales, can be taken as an interpretative key through which to analyse potential and critical issues related to the tourist valorization of heritage.

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Between Sense of Time and Sense of Place

Between Sense of Time and Sense of Place

edited by
Mauro Marzo
Viviana Ferrario
Viola Bertini

Designing
Heritage
Tourism
Landscapes

The series brings together a number of studies dedicated to the phenomenon of heritage tourism. A driving force for territorial regeneration processes and, at the same time, a factor in the alteration of the nature of places, this particular form of tourism represents a field of investigation for a vast number of disciplines.
Open to dialogue with different fields of knowledge, the essays of the series present research focused on the relationship between heritage, landscape and architecture.
In this framework, the analysis of contexts and the project's cross-scale perspective are assumed as lenses through which to read the potentialities and the critical issues related to the touristic use of material and immaterial assets. Can architectural design offer new ways of knowledge and interpretation of heritage? What are the analytical tools and the design methodologies useful for establishing a dialogue with that sense of past and sense of place proper to the concept of heritage itself?
The series answers these questions by illustrating the results of research, teaching experimentations and design explorations which, in light of the complex problems posed by tourism, address the study of the relationship between architecture and the historical city, the transformation of landscapes, and the delicate balance between protection and the use of heritage.

Brazil, *Rio de Janeiro from the Corcovado viewing platform*, 1934. Fondazione Mazzotti photographic archive c/o FAST – Foto Archivio Storico Trevigiano della Provincia di Treviso

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BETWEEN SENSE OF TIME AND SENSE OF PLACE

DESIGNING HERITAGE TOURISM

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Banganga Tank in Mumbai

Sacred space and urban imagination

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In the introduction to *An Outline of The Master Plan for Greater Bombay* (1948), N. V. Modak and Albert Mayer identified the actions envisaged by the Bombay Master Plan as useful proposals 'to relieve traffic congestion, insanitary housing conditions and cramped industrial development in the City'. In their role as Special Engineers for the Bombay Municipality and Architect & Town Planning Consultants in New York, Modak and Mayer were proposing a large-scale plan for a city like Bombay which, together with its suburbs, had excellent prospects

> such as a favourable geographical position, an excellent harbour, good rail and air communications, a reasonably good road system, a flourishing textile industry, etc. On the other hand, Bombay and its Region suffer from certain topographical shortcomings – relatively small percentage of useable land because of the mountainous and swampy areas in large proportion to the whole regional area – a rather elongated shape that hampers good planning, a very high residential density and absence of zoning. Bold planning indicated to overcome these disadvantages. The Master Plan presented here takes into account all these disadvantages and in the light of the anticipated development, suggests a feasible solution).[1]

One of the first modern urban planning tools was thus drafted in 1948, a few months after India gained independence. Aimed at initiating a process of urban redevelopment and promoting a rapid expansionary policy in the pursuit of a new Bombay, the plan drawn up by Modak and Mayer heralded urban transformation strategies dedicated to delocalisation. Although it was not adopted, the plan's strategic orientation would have led to the creation of satellite cities linked to industrial areas beyond the northern extension of Thane Creek, in an attempt to decongest Bombay by reducing its population density.

The region's particular orography and land scarcity determined Bombay's shape, bounding it within established geographic limits. In this sense, the city is the result of a monumental project to reshape the terrain[2] and exploit the city's strategic location for commercial purposes. Seven islands were progressively connected by means of massive reclamation efforts employing landfill materials. The Mumbai of today, overlooking the Arabian Sea, is the result. The conditions were thus created for increasing commercial and migratory flows in and out of what would become India's most important port city. After 1948, other urban plans sought to propose solutions for the city's high density, as well as the lack of housing and infrastructure. Exploring the concepts of 'equity', 'mobility', and 'space as a resource', Charles Correa's plan for *Navi Mumbai*[3] proposed different categories of intervention in support of urban planning for a *New Mumbai*. Despite the relocation project calling for the foundation of a new Bombay in the south-eastern territories, the city continued to grow without interruption, achieving extremely high levels of density within the informal settlements that are still scattered across its peripheral and central areas.[4] The recent *Development Plan for Greater Mumbai 2014-2034* proposes various strategies to address the issues of population density and traffic: a new north-south highway project is expected to relieve urban traffic and reach important parts of the city, while other programs aim to redevelop informal settlements.[5] Developing along the west coast and reclaiming

land from the sea, the Coastal Road introduces junctions and leisure areas. Along the same coastal strip and near the rugged Malabar Hill area lies the Walkeshwar slum, a compact settlement that has gradually reached the historic constructed area around Banganga Tank,[6] an ancient devotional cistern. Banganga Tank is an autonomous spatial unit, formed by a wide, shallow depression bounded by a continuous system of steps – the *ghat* – which follows a trapezoid shape. A rhythmic sequence of steps delving below ground level, the *ghat* encourages contact with the water and the ritual activities that take place there. Originally a water reservoir and ancient basin used for ritual ablutions, Banganga is Walkeshwar's identifying and symbolic element. If water seems to have lost its sacred origin in the West, assuming an almost exclusively utilitarian value, in India – where traditions are renewed on multiple occasions through natural everyday practices – water retains its central role as an essential element of place. Explaining the value of the *ghat*, Roberto Calasso states that

> in *satras* lasting a year, officiants built a new body, piece by piece, member by member. Every segment of the ritual corresponded to a part of that body. […] The opening rite is 'a flight of stairs because it is always with a flight of stairs that one enters the water'. This is the origin of the ghats still studding every place in India where one enters water: at Varanasi on the Ganges, but also at innumerable other rivers and in reservoirs. Stairs, which in the West evoke ascension to heaven, in India are first and foremost the correct way to descend to the waters, which are every beginning.[7]

In this sense, the Banganga Tank's architecture references the *ghat*'s archetypal nature, confirming the role of a structure designed to relate Varanasi and Mumbai, two geographically distant cities united mythologically by the waters of the sacred Ganges.[8] The architectural value transmitted by Mumbai's oldest tank, a significant water reservoir and extraordinary example of cultural architecture upheld as one of the city's major archaeological sites, identify it as a significant destination for the Hindu community as well as a site with strong tourism potential. The sacred spring's mythological origin is confirmed by the water that continues to flow inside the tank, nurturing the Ganges' ritual celebratory practices. The sanctity of the place is further confirmed by the presence, in the central point of the cistern, of a *skambha*,[9] an *axis mundi* facing the temples arranged along the edge of the pool. Besides signalling the cistern's proximity, the *skambha* indicates the origin of a built system that developed around the water, identifying devotional routes punctuated by a succession of small temples, quantitatively ascribable to the sacred number 108.

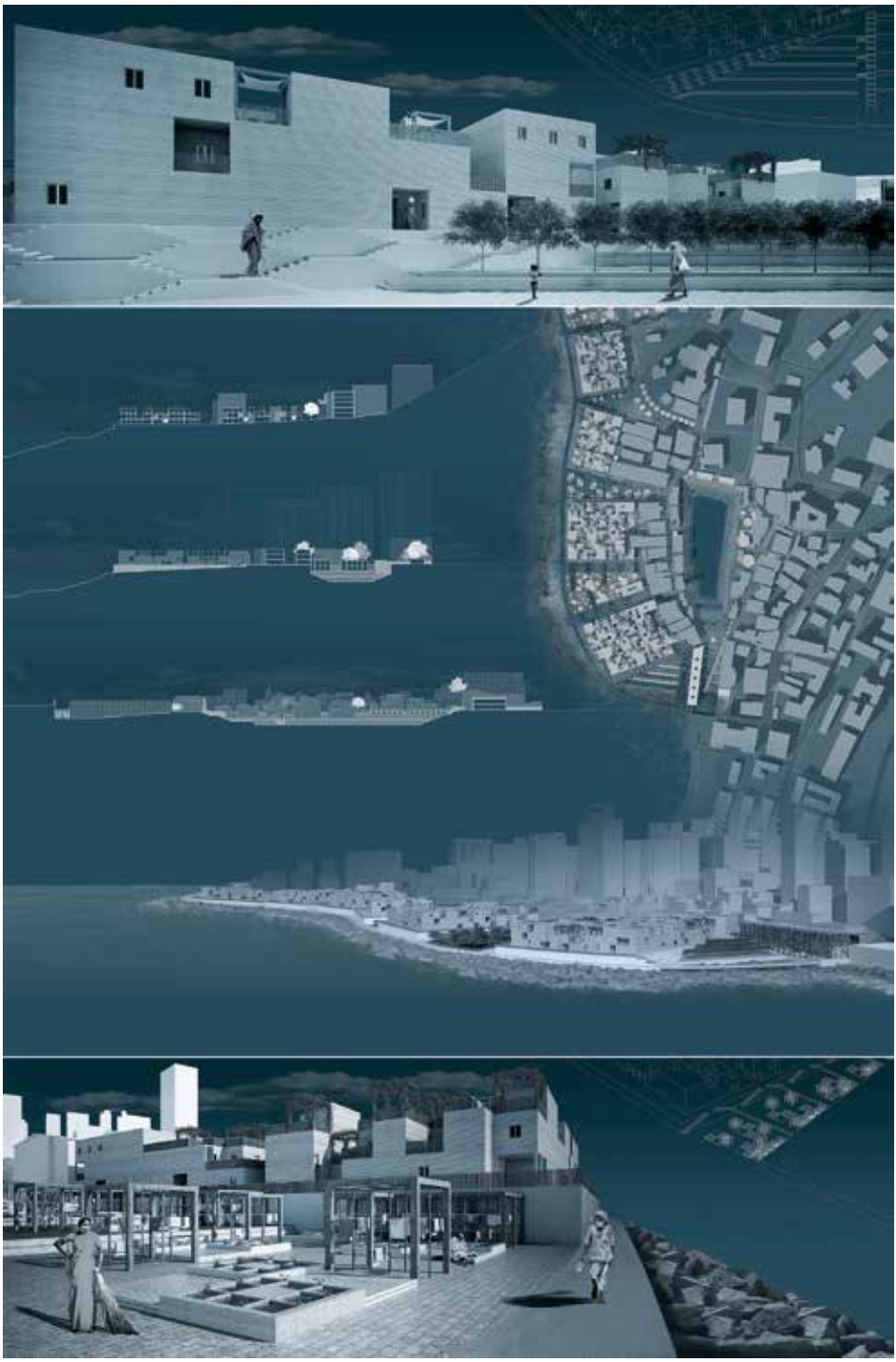
The activities celebrated in the temples demonstrate the close relationship between water, architecture, and context, though failing to exploit the architectural and cultural potential of a site in a state of semi-abandonment. The expansion of India's major cities over the last 50 years has also led Mumbai to saturate the scarce available area, subjecting it to the logic of global development. In this context of progressive expansion, attention to and respect for Mumbai's cultural heritage has, unfortunately, proved lacking on many occasions. The Walkeshwar area, where Banganga Tank stands, has not been spared, although several

initiatives were undertaken to safeguard the cistern at the end of the 1980s. While its inclusion as a restricted site has enabled the preservation of its character and architectural structure, the designation as a *protected monument* (1995)[10] could not stall the process of unrestrained building that has altered the ancient nucleus of Walkeshwar, which grew up organically around the cistern.[11] The absence of clear urban planning rules has clearly favoured the development of an incoherent urban fabric, consisting of residential towers designed to raise land values near the sea and informal, slum-like residential settlements. Thus the peculiar relationship that connected the cistern and temple constructions, distributed along the circumambulatory movement of the *Parikrama*, has been compromised in part. Despite the strong potential of the cistern's architecture, which lends itself to hosting cultural events and attracting increasing numbers of tourists,[12] the surrounding area appears totally devoid of facilities and services to accommodate religious and secular tourism. The state of decay of the temples overlooking the pool and most of the surrounding buildings, as well as the design of the public space, are paradoxical when compared to the site's archaeological value.

The most recent survey of the area adjacent to the cistern-conducted by Eric Parry,[13] a lecturer in the Architecture Department at the University of Cambridge-dates to the mid-1980s.[14] His work was instrumental in promoting the plan to restore the cistern; however, it could not prevent the construction of incongruous buildings near the site, nor the proliferation of superfetation that disfigured its character and swallowed up elements of architectural identity like the *deepastambas*.[15]

The study of the Walkeshwar area, carried out as part of a larger investigation of India's water architecture, has led to the recognition of its foundational elements and the development of strategies aimed at the site's architectural and urban redevelopment. A series of projects united by common objectives propose various solutions for the area. The projects start from the premise of regeneration, assigning local inhabitants an active role by involving them in operations directed at gradually reshaping informal settlements to improve public space. The process is divided into incremental phases aspiring to economic, organisational, and environmental sustainability; residents become the protagonists of actions overseen by the committee for the protection of Banganga. They are entrusted with protecting the architectural heritage and propagating centuries-old traditions. The Brahmins' precious cultural heritage, fuelled by exchanges with local inhabitants and visitors, would help to amplify the centrality of Banganga Tank, making the need for visitor accommodations even more evident. Urban regeneration processes would lead to the creation of spaces for customary activities and places to celebrate rites traditionally held near water.

Redeveloping the informal housing that has sprung up along the waterfront in a way that respects residents' way of life, the projects call for the configuration of a new built fabric that draws elements from traditional Indian dwellings that favour the relationship between private and public spaces, and between internal and external space facing the street. Through a settlement framework based on incremental aggregative units, the proposals strive to guarantee a sense of community



New waterfront and Dharmasala, Walkeshwar area, Mumbai. © M. Manelli, R. Alessandrini.

Incremental settlements and public space at Walkeshwar, Mumbai. © M. Dellapasqua, E. Savini.

and communal living by introducing innovative housing solutions. The alternation of recreational functions with residences and visitor lodging reconciles spatial qualities with traditional social needs.

The *dharmasala* type,[16] for example, of which some evidence remains in the area to the south of the cistern in the form of ruins, suggests a reference for the design of modern hotels offering tourists a particular collective form of living. Taking some of the identifying characteristics of vernacular architecture that are open to interpretation through the use of sustainable materials, the modern *dharmasala* is conceived as a building that connects Banganga Tank and the sea, in the hypothesis of triggering a substantial redefinition of the waterfront and expanding public space: now totally lacking. Residents are almost exclusively employed in makeshift laundries located near the sea; this has led to a reconsideration of such activities, introducing healthier elements. Taking Banganga Tank as a reference, the projects propose the organisation of a system of tanks interspersed with residences, which may be converted into open spaces and reused for different purposes. The mounting of temporary structures could expand inhabitants' employment possibilities and serve as poles of attraction for tourists. The transitory character attributed to public space thus fits into what Mehrotra describes as the kinetic condition of the city, characterised by

> its movement and the place-making of its residents in the form of festivals, rituals, impromptu bazaars, and events. The kinetic city has largely replaced the static city (its physical architecture) as the primary and most dynamic aspect of urban India. […] If conservation of the built heritage in India is to be relevant (useful) it will need to embrace the kinetic city and accommodate the dance of its residents.[17]

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Notes

1. N.V. Modak & A. Mayer, *An Outline Of The Master Plan for Greater Bombay*, Bombay Municipal Printing Press, Bombay, 1948, p. 718.

2. Prior to English colonisation, Bombay consisted in a seven-island archipelago: Mahim, Worli, Bombay, Colaba, Little Colaba, Mazagon, and Parel. The English glimpsed in the island configuration a Bombay, i.e. a good bay. In 1782, English governor William Hornby sponsored the Hornby Vellard Project, which unites his name with the term *vellard*, from the Portuguese *vallado*: embankment or fence. The appearance of a single tract of land had already begun to emerge by 1836, continuing to claim new land from the sea until 1862.

3. See Charles Correa, *The New Landscape*, The Book Society of India, Bombay, 1985.

4. 'There were 6779 people per square kilometre in Mumbai in 2990. In some areas of central Bombay, the density has risen to 386,250 people per square kilometre: the highest population density in the world. The inhabitants are not evenly distributed across the island city. Two-thirds of residents are crowded in 5% of its total area, while the richest residents, enjoying the greatest protections, monopolise the remaining 95%', in S. Metha, *Maximum City. Bombay città degli eccessi*, Einaudi, Milano, p. 18.

5. See UDRI, *Planning for Mumbai, The Development Plan for Greater Mumbai 2014-2034*, UDRI, Mumbai, 2014.

6. Constructed in 1127 by Lakshman Prabhu, a minister at the court of the kings of the SIlhara dynasty – which governed the seven-island archipelago until 1343 – and rebuilt in 1715, Banganga Tank is Mumbai's oldest cistern. It is located south of Malabar Hill, near the coast overlooking the Arabian Sea.

7. R. Calasso, *L'ardore*, Adelphi, Milano, 2010, p. 305.

8. Banganga draws its name from the epic poem Ramayana, which narrates how Rama, searching for his wife Sita, who had been kidnapped by the demon Ravana, stopped for a long time at this site and, parched, asked his brother Lakshman to bring him water. Shooting an arrow (Baan-), Lakshman caused water to flow out of the earth, which the myth ascribes to a tributary of the Ganges River (-Ganga). A spring located in the northwest corner of the Banganga Tank's indicates the exact place where the arrow struck the ground: the place where freshwater continues to flow out and fill the cistern.

9. *Skambha* or *stambha*, 'pillar, support, column'. The term is often used in a metaphorical sense to indicate the cosmic column connecting the heavens and the earth. In the Atharvaveda, the *skambha* is the scaffolding supporting creation, in A. L. Dallapiccola, *Induismo. Dizionario di storia, cultura, religione*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 2005, p. 254.

10. 'In the 1970s, the then Municipal Commissioner declared Banganga as a 'No development Zone', followed in 1987 by a preliminary notification by the Maharashtra State Archaeological Department listing the tank area under the Protected Monuments Act. This notification was made final in October 1991. In the same year, the Banganga Conservation Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of the Municipal Commissioner. The Committee's member include the Secretary department of Education of the Government of Maharashstra, the Director of Archaeology, the director of the Price of Wales Museum, the Director of Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation and members of the the Bombay chapter of the Indian Heritage Society', in R. Mehrotra & S. Dwivedi, *Banganga, The Sacred tank*, Eminence, Bombay, 1986, pp. 7-8.

11. *waluka ishwar*, literally sand idol, in reference to Shiva, one of the main Hindu gods.

12. Supported by the Indian Heritage Society, the committee to enhance Banganga Tank sponsors an annual music and dance festival around the tank to communicate the complex's historical importance. The first festival, organised in 1992, was a success, affording the site great visibility. See R. Mehrotra & S. Dwivedi, *Banganga, The Sacred tank*, op. cit.

13. 'Only five years ago Banganga, the one major tank left in Bombay, was threatened by a municipal pIan to cover it and turn it into a bus depot; today it stands in a state of majestic disrepair encroached upon by the virtually unrestrained greed of land speculation. It is further threatened because current legislation in India allows only for the protection of individuaI monuments, and neither the tank itself nor any one of the 33 surrounding temples are considered worthy of protection in themselves', in E. Parry, 'Ritual of the city', *Architectural* Review, no. 1086, 1978, p. 14.

14. Indian architect Charles Correa's sojourn at the University of Cambridge as a visiting professor from 1985-86 certainly nurtured Parry's interest in Banganga Tank.

15. Marking the entrances to the cistern and indicating the direction of the sea, the *deepastambhas* identify *light towers* that underline Banganga Tank's role as an archetypal temple, revealed by the empty space the ghat bounds.

16. Collective building with a courtyard structure, designed to host the faithful on pilgrimage.

17. R. Mehrotra, 'Conservation and Change: Questions for Conservation Education in Urban India', *Built Environment*, vol. 33, no. 3, p. 342.