

A Matter of Understanding : Urban design strategies to integrate street vendors in Mumbai

by

Sagree Sharma

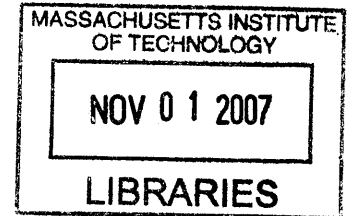
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Abstract

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by **Sagree Sharma**

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on August 20th 2007 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master in City Planning**.

Abstract

Resistance to informal markets appears related to a growing desire to modernize among citizens of developing countries. These markets, in their indigenous, often chaotic, form, are viewed as symbols as poverty and backwardness. Their appearance is increasingly becoming undesirable to citizens seeking to replace the local with the global, redefining their identity in a globalizing world. Street markets provide a valuable amenity to the city and it is inequitable, imprudent and impractical to remove them because they fail to fit into a newly emerging notion of what urban public space should look/be/operate like. They have thrived, often despite strong opposition from the government, and now even some citizen groups, because they provide a necessary and efficient service.

This thesis explores whether, instead of absolute rejection or resigned acceptance of these markets, good design offers a better solution. It inquires into Mumbai's structure and how the street vendors use civic space to inform a new design creating an equitable integration of the informal markets into the emerging modern paradigms of urban design. The thesis presumes that small-scale street markets are an essential and effective form of retail and explores design strategies that address the concerns raised in resistance to street markets while incorporating the needs of the vendors. It proposes that an external disinterested mediator might successfully bring the stakeholders to consensus by creating a common equitable and sustainable solution through effective conflict management and good design. I generalize from this case into how designers might take on conflict mediation roles through appropriate design, which helps re-conceive a solution to conflict that is considerate to the concerns of all involved parties.

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Preface

Afzar sells t-shirts on a by-lane off of Linking road in Bandra, Mumbai. His shop is a frame created by four bamboo sticks held together at the top by another four sticks. Two sides of this frame serve as display panels for his t-shirts and the other two frame a walkway for his customers and those that pass through his shop to a women's accessories store that is part of a shopping arcade at the ground floor of a residential building. The owner of the store has a lease for the property and a license to sell his wares. Afzar, however has neither of those. He operates on the sidewalk outside this store and carries his shop home with him every night. When I asked Afzar if he worried about his wares being confiscated in an eviction drive or being evicted/arrested by the police, he replied with confidence that he wasn't too worried since he had an '**understanding**' with them.

I heard this word over and over again in the course of my interviews with the vendors. They all claimed to have an understanding with the local police and/or the BMC^{1*} authorities etc. The understanding is really just a bribing system. The vendors pay an unofficial fee to the personnel, responsible for curtailing or displacing them. These personnel, on the other hand, changing nothing in their policy towards the vendors, only look the other way for a short while. The vendors receive no paperwork for this 'fee' neither is there a time limit that defines its validity. So although the vendors are constantly paying a price to subsist, their status is never changed to that of a renter or legal operator.

Often times despite having vending licenses and permits, they are still perceived as illegal. In my interviews I learned that the police, civic officials and even citizens assume their illegality merely because they are street vendors. This illegality stems from their occupation of space, since they don't own or lease retail space and operate on public land, they are perceived as intruders and encroachers. One reason for this might be that while the government issues them licenses to operate on civic property, it also makes occupation of sidewalks, park fences, footbridges etc illegal. Street vending, which is most effective in areas of high pedestrian traffic, like sidewalks, footbridges etc, is trapped between this dichotomy of the law. The city keeps evicting the vendors, who keep returning to do business, which leads to the vendors and the city being trapped in a continual vicious cycle born from economic imperative and ambiguous legality, leading to exploitation, recurrent enforcement, etc.

* BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation is a city level governing body that controls most public properties, amenities and infrastructure in Mumbai.

There has been considerable debate over the right of street vendors to exist in the cities in the present informal, spontaneous manner. Despite the numerous studies that suggest how valuable an asset the markets are to the city, and the irreplaceable amenity that they provide, with each new strategy for the urban development of Mumbai as a cosmopolis, such indigenous and informal forms of civic existence are sidelined and marginalized.

In my opinion, this is a result of the growing belief that street markets are antithetical to modern urban environments. Mumbai has long been enamored with the dream of being India's Singapore or Shanghai for a while now. It is increasingly evident from the visions of the city painted by politicians, civic consultants and many citizens, that street vendors, markets and hawkers are not perceived as a congruent part of that vision. I have failed to come across any literature or publication from the governments side that explored ways to integrate the vendors into their ideas for a modern Mumbai.

This thesis is not an analysis of whether street markets should exist. Instead, I take their existence as given, and ask whether and how informal street markets can meet the economic needs of their buyers and sellers while acknowledging and responding to the realities of a modernizing Mumbai. Doing so requires redefining the relationship between the informal sector and the civic government (Bhowmik 2007). This thesis explores opportunities for urban planners and designers to create contextual, appropriate and sustainable forms of urbanism for the city and its people.

Being an architect and urban designer, I approach this problem through a design and spatial perspective. I believe that intelligent and appropriate design can mediate complex problems. I explore this perspective in this particular case by attempting to develop innovative ways for the street vendors to occupy the streets of Mumbai while accommodating the modernizing constituency's concerns. It analyzes the complaints made against street vendors to establish the parameters for designing an appropriate space for street markets in Mumbai.

Sagree Sharma

Introduction

Most of us, no matter where we grew up or live, are familiar with the weekend market, the monthly farmers trade, the *haat bazaar*, or some other kind of temporal street trade. Farmers bring in batches of their seasonal produce to reach their clientele directly, small time manufacturers peddle their wares to sustain their business at its scale and marginal unskilled laborers sell whatever they can as an alternate means of employment (Bhowmik 2007). Street vending is ingrained in most urban cultures and can be seen in some shape or form in most cities and towns in the world. But this well established form of retail has been struggling to find its niche in urban environs for a while now. Although, they cater to a wide range of the urban population; people from all economic, social and religious statuses; there has been growing disapproval among these same people with regard to the street markets in their cities. In Punjab, India, local residents moved court against food stands in their neighborhood (Singh 2006); in Mumbai, residents complained against vegetable vendors on their street and upon their eviction, built planters to prevent their return, in spite of losing a convenient service (Shapiro - Anjaria 2006). Similar instances are heard of in Africa, America, Mexico city and many other places where street vending is a common form of retail.

Like most developing countries, India is actively adopting forms of urbanism that are concurrent with those established in the developed world. The flip side is that it is denouncing things that do not fit within the framework of what is developed/modern. With the intent to beautify or clean up their cities, the governments are evicting street vendors, licensed and unlicensed from regions under their jurisdiction. The markets, in turn, have persistently returned and set their roots in the same spot again. And this cycle of demolition followed by reinstatement followed by demolition has been continuing for a while now, each side sticking to its guns in a perpetual conflict of interests. Albert Einstein said that the definition of Insanity was, "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." If this were held to be true, one wonders what drives the outlook of those that are engaged in conflict over these markets and the urban space they occupy.

The pedestrian population in Mumbai makes streets and public spaces attractive vending zones and the vendors are naturally drawn to them. The layout and network of public transport make for certain strategic catchments where sellers have access to their clientele and citizens to objects of daily need and desire. Most street vendors belong

to the lower economic strata, cannot afford to lease or buy retail space in Mumbai and hence congregate in these zones. Their ad hoc gathering in such places, compounded by the scrapped-together nature of their stalls and carts, gives them a disorganized and shabby appearance, one that is easily equated with chaos and crime (Gartner and Segura 1997). As norms of civilized appearance change with a modernizing society, the street markets with their patched together look are easily slotted as undesirable because their appearance. There is increasing belief that the growing informal markets are related to the growing migration from rural parts of India into Mumbai. Mumbai enjoys a reputation as *'the city where no one goes to bed hungry'* and that explains why it holds such a large stake as one of the country's prime migration magnets. The city has historically drawn rural populations in search of work and anonymity from a repressive social structure (Srivastava and Sasikumar 2003) Several poor and disadvantaged people travel to the city to make a break from the institutionalized caste system in several parts of rural India drawn to the promise of unbiased employment and equal opportunities for their children. A considerable number of these migrants to Mumbai are absorbed by the informal sector. At the same time it is also true that a large proportion of the previously formal workforce of Mumbai has gradually gone informal. Bhowmik (Bhowmik 2007) demonstrates how various members of the organized (Charmes 1990) labor force turned to the informal sector in the absence of adequate employment and compensation in Mumbai in the wake of the textile industries gradual collapse. In 1996, 68.1% of the working population in Mumbai was employed in the informal sector (Das and Roy 2007).

A loose definition of 'informal sector' is largely responsible for the partially legal status of this workforce (Gerxhani 2004) (Charmes 1990). There are political, economic and social connotations of the term 'informal sector' and often legality is not a restricting criteria. Ambiguous regulation against informal sector do not clarify the kind of informality that is considered illegal and hence lead to blanket evictions and displacements. Jonathan Shapiro Anjaria explains how *'the experiences of hawkers in Mumbai, as elsewhere in India, have taught them not to fear a regulatory state, but a predatory one, a state that constantly demands bribes and threatens demolition, against which a license provides security'* (Shapiro - Anjaria 2006). But this license is also not absolute, for it offers conditional and often partial security. It offers vendors the right to sell but no viable space to do so. An unofficial and yet instituted system of bribery, between the informal street vendors in Mumbai and the local police officials, allows the former to continue to operate in civic spaces despite repeated government directives to displace or dispose of them. In the various interviews I conducted I found that they refer to it as an 'understanding'; an arrangement between the vendors and the law enforcers that thrives in the absence of accessible licensing procedures for small-scale temporal street vendors.

The average bribe collected from the vendors in Delhi in the late 1990s was Rs480crore per year [about \$120 million] (Kishwar 2001). One wonders why the government would marginalize a sector that has the ability to unofficially¹⁰

generate such revenue. Why are the vendors illegal and who deems them so? CEPT student P.K Das (Das 1998) reveals how archaic anti-vendor regulations are in India and how the current law is word-for-word the same law in effect in England in the 1920s. The laws have been altered in England since then, but still remain instituted in India. The transformation of the mechanism of bribery to legal tax requires rewriting such policies and organizing the informal sector. The biggest deterrents of this overhaul are the entrenched corruption and lack of legal accommodation (Shapiro - Anjaria 2006). The eradication of corruption and institution of an efficient legal system are ongoing attempts by several public service organizations in India. As is the case of all social reform, this too is a gradual process, moving slowly but surely.

But even if corruption was countered, the vendors legalized and legal protection made accessible to all, there is no space within the city to house these practices under the existing norms and forms of retail space. In dense developments such as Mumbai, space is extremely contentious. Being locked in by the sea on three sides, there is only so far that Mumbai can physically expand (Dwivedi and Mehrotra 1995), while its population growth shows no sign of slowing down. This places an extraordinary amount of stress on the land and resources of the city and requires that we reconsider current notions of habitable and usable space and its occupation. There is a need to revisit the norms for retail space in an attempt to identify how relevant they are to today's urban environment, especially in cities like Mumbai. If the function of a bridge is to connect two sides of a dividing entity, is that the only purpose it can serve? A creative approach to retail space allocation and use might help ease the complaints of the street vendors while assuaging the misgivings of their opposition.

It is worth exploring if instead of a bribe-based contract, real understanding can be mediated between the informal vendors and the city they service through effective design mechanisms. The designer as an external disinterested mediator might successfully bring the stakeholders, the vendors, citizens and civic authorities, to consensus by creating a common equitable and sustainable solution through effective conflict management and good design.

Research Question

This thesis is aimed at exploring solutions to the spatial aspect of the street vendors-city dispute. Even if appropriate policies are implemented and equitable, accessible licensing procedures put into place, it will still need to be resolved how the vendors will use civic space if at all. Spatial reconfiguration will play a major role in the integration of street vendors into the city's formal fabric. In an attempt to unravel this aspect of the conflict, the thesis asks the following questions:

1 - Why, despite concerted efforts at social and economic levels, is there growing resistance to the formalization of street vendors in Mumbai, India?

The social and economic value of street vendors in Mumbai has been proved over and over again in the recent past. The mass, scale and reach of this community make it an effective medium for distribution of products among the citizens. They make locally manufactured, low-cost products available to the lower and middle class at the same time providing cheaper alternatives of luxury goods to the upper middle class and exotic options of wares to the entire citizen mass at reasonable prices. One questions then, why their existence and value is not factored in to the city's policies? One is also given to wonder if the question of legality has much to do with their undesirability.

The conflict between the vending community and the city resembles something like coalition politics where the rationality of one coalition is at odds with that of the other. It emerges as a conflict of viewpoints, where the affluent faction sees the vendors as 'outsiders' (Shapiro - Anjaria 2006), signals of poverty, and harbingers of unhygienic conditions, chaos and crime. The vendors are unable to respond to these critiques largely because of their unorganized and untrained nature. The thesis explores this tussle of perspectives in an attempt to better understand the roots of conflict and look for ways to reconciliation without political conflict, between the opposing coalitions.

2 - How can the spatial concerns of formalization and/or rehabilitation in an extremely dense and hyper-developed city be equitably addressed?

In cities that are less dense than Mumbai, formalization of informal vendors is accompanied with their rehabilitation in some distant region of the city or with the creation of designated market spaces where the vendors are all accommodated. However, in a city as dense as Mumbai, such a solution is virtually impossible. In the cases where it has been attempted, it leads to a privatization and mall-ification of the markets. Through a study of space occupied by the vendors in the city, this thesis hopes to explore options to incorporate the vendors into the city's physical space without disadvantaging the vendors or compromising on civic concerns.

3 – If and how design can mediate and help resolve the existing status quo between the vendors, city officials and citizens?

The physical occupation of civic space, aesthetics and the shaping of urban form, hold huge stakes in any solution to this problem. The citizens want clear and safe access to civic space, the city authorities want the city to appear and develop like its first-world counterparts and the vendors want a legal and hassle free right to operate. It is these criteria that beg the question, if good design can offer a solution that addresses the concerns of every stakeholder. Can Design save the day?

Methodology

Mumbai has developed its current size and form by expanding northward in the years immediately following the independence of the country. By the late 1960s the city had reached a limit to how far it could go without usurping other towns (Dwivedi and Mehrotra 1995). This northward growth has ensured that civic conditions are rather consistent at any point along an east-west section while varying considerably along any north-south section.

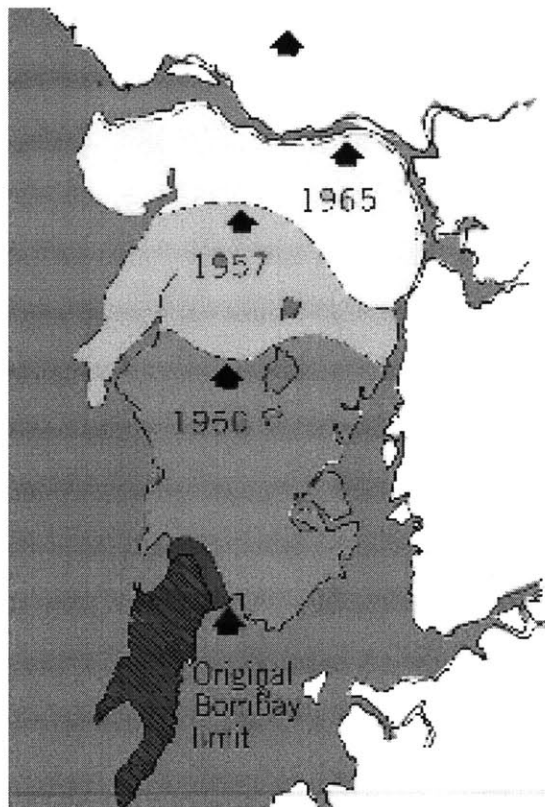


fig. 1 – Growth of Mumbai post independence

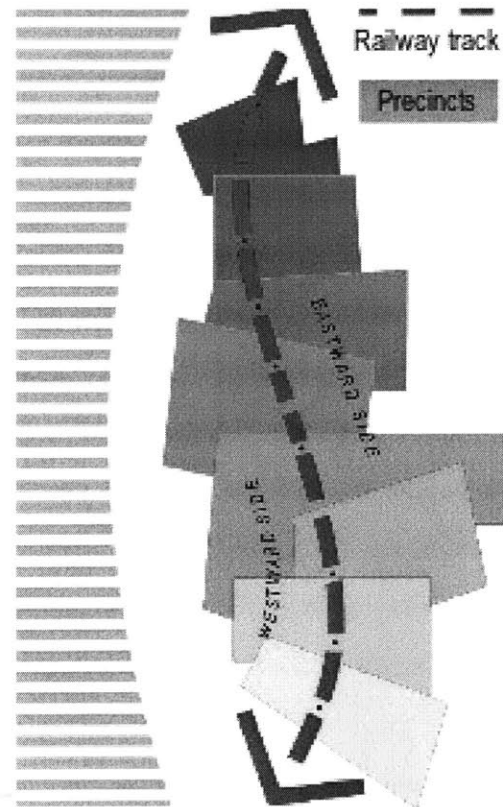


fig. 2 – Precincts divided by train tracks

The geography of Mumbai, makes for an easy selection of sites along varying urban character. The city of Mumbai comprises of several smaller precincts that were assimilated into the city's boundaries as the city expanded. These smaller regions within Mumbai are old villages or groups of villages that were slowly integrated into the fabric of the city. Each has its own railway and bus station, fire station, police station and post office. Given the shape of Mumbai, these regions are mostly laid out in a linear fashion running north to south. They are connected to each other

through an efficient network of trains that runs through them much like a central spine. The most popular method of travel for most Mumbaikars^{2*} is to walk or take a bus, taxi or auto rickshaw to the closest railway station and then take a train to the region where their destination is located; upon disembarking from the train they again walk, or take a bus, taxi or auto rickshaw to their final destination. It is an extremely efficient web of transportation and most people rely on it to get around. In Mumbai, either side of the train tracks is identified as the 'east' or 'west' part of the various regions. For eg: In the suburb of Khar [which used to be the Khar village], the area to the sea-ward side of the rail tracks is known as Khar-west and the other side is known as Khar-east. There is one railway station per precinct, which is located centrally and is easily accessible by buses and auto-rickshaws that run from the station to the various parts of that and other parts of Mumbai.

From my observation of the city, I categorized the locations where street vendors congregated to facilitate the selection of target sites for the purpose of this thesis. They are:

- 1 – foot bridges.
- 2 – main shopping streets near colleges, offices, recreational facilities etc.
- 3 – streets immediately outside a railway station.
- 4 – other heavily used streets in the suburbs [main offshoot of the highway etc]

A key factor in the concentration of vendors in these locations is walk-ability – the ease and ability to walk to and through these locations. Also the fact that these are parts of the natural paths that people traverse on a daily basis on their way to and from work or other business about town.

In my conversations with vendors on all of these locations I found that they were all operating on civic property that was managed by the BMC. In some cases they used fences to properties that were private but their businesses were largely located on sidewalks, streets, beaches, over gutters and on the footbridges. For initial observation I chose street markets in seven such precincts relying on my local knowledge, and the markets' popularity for my selection.

2 * like 'new yorker', a term indicating citizenship of Mumbai

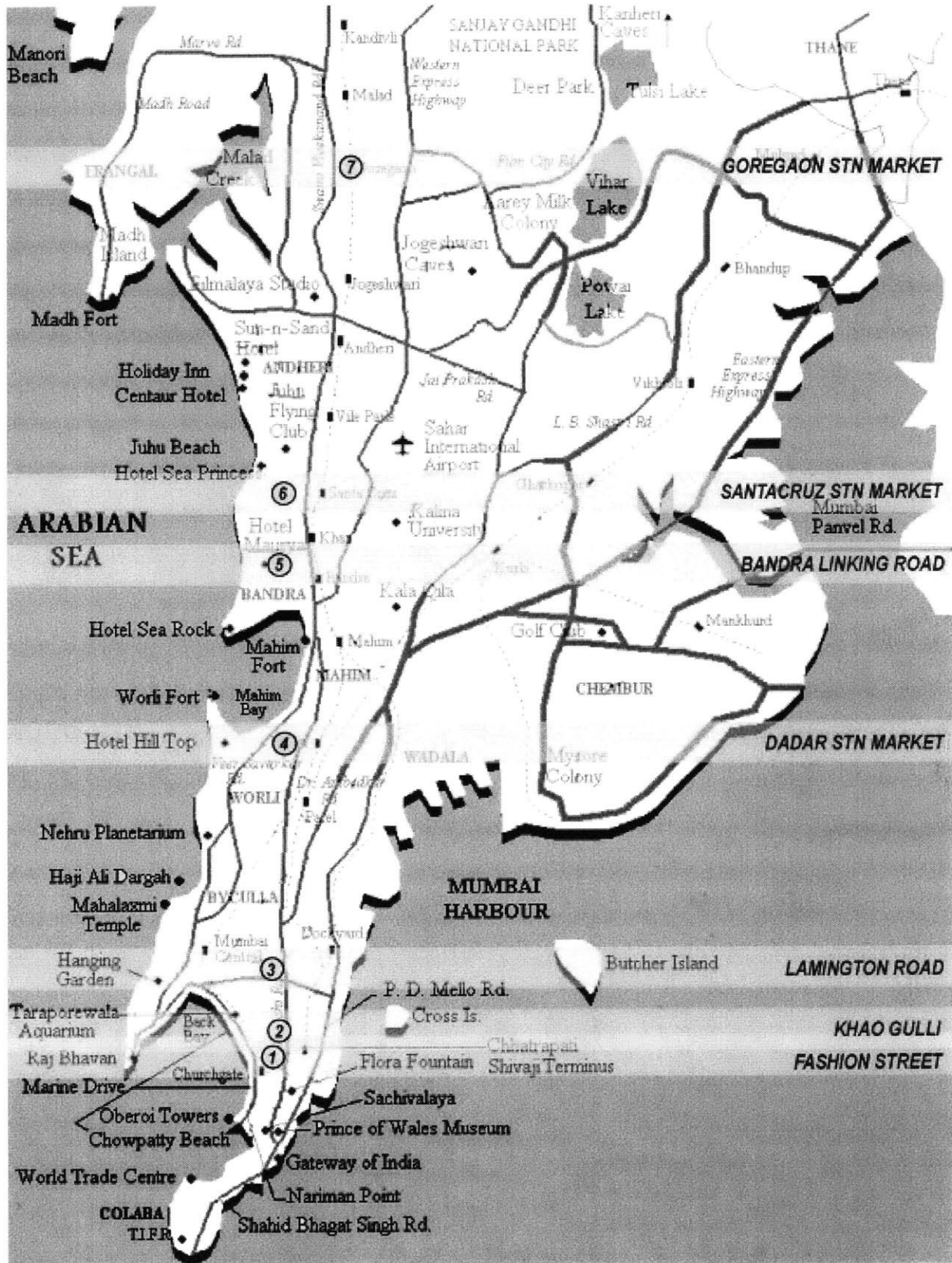


fig. 3 - Map of Mumbai marking the selected markets for study

1 – Fashion Street in Churchgate

As the name suggests, the Fashion Street market sells fashion ware – clothes, jewelry, shoes, bags etc. Largely stocked with factory-rejected supplies and some by small time manufacturers, the market caters to the younger demographic that frequents the various educational institutions that surround it. Although the official name of the road is M.G. Road, everybody, including cab-drivers, policemen and tourists, recognize that stretch of the road as 'Fashion Street'.

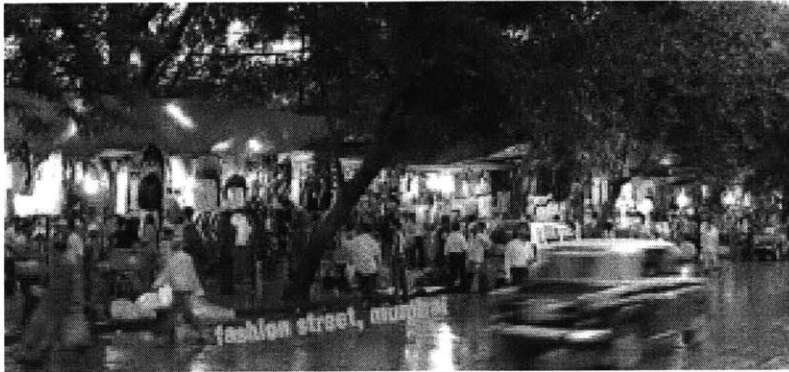


Fig. 4

2 – Khao Gulli

An unusual but very famous street in Mumbai is the Khao Gulli in Churchgate off of V Thackersey Marg. Literally translated as Eating Lane, it is a street market of food stalls. Surrounded by a number of corporate offices and colleges, the street offers fresh food to those who work or study in the vicinity. The market came together on a by-lane leading to a short-cut across Cross Maidan, which is used by several people as a quick means to get across. High pedestrian traffic, no vehicular thoroughfare and proximity to the offices and colleges makes this an ideal spot for food vendors to congregate.

3 – Lamington Road

Lamington Road is another locally famous name for an electronics' street market in Mumbai. The official name of the street is Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Road, but it is still known by its old name because of the market that has existed there for over 40 years now. The street market sells electronic products ranging from locally made cheap items to globally known brands and high-end objects. There are a number of old established electronic shops in the area, and the street market capitalized on their fame and ability to pull clientele. Now the street market has its own clientele and draws people from all over the city for discounted electronics.

4 – Dadar vegetable market

Dadar station is one of the busiest stations in the city. It serves as a junction between the two distinct rail tracks, the western and central and therefore sees considerable commuter traffic. Since a number of people disembark here to change tracks or modes of transportation, the area right outside the station draws huge numbers of produce vendors who sell fresh produce to commuters. The scale of the market is so huge that it is also dissemination ground for vendors who sell fruits and vegetables elsewhere in the city.

Another important market in Dadar is the flower market, in a bylane off the station road, that sells all kinds of flowers loose, bouquets and garlands. This market came about due to the popularity of the Siddhivinayak temple in Prabhadevi, an adjacent precinct to Dadar. Since most devotees pass through Dadar station to visit the temple, this bylane serves as excellent venue for a flower market.

5 – Bandra Linking Road

The suburb of Bandra is home to several educational institutions and hang-out venues for the younger crowd. It is also home to some of the higher end real-estate and hence attracts a richer resident demographic. This has resulted in the development of a shopping area with a number of shoe stores that cater to this affluent section of the population. Bandra linking road is home to most of the popular shoe brands in the country. As a response to that, there have sprung up in the past 3 decades, a number of informal shoe stalls right across the street from the big stores. Even though, their product is markedly different from that selling in the shops, in terms of style, fashion, durability and price, the vendors cash in to the reputation of the area as a shoe buying zone.

6 – Santacruz station market

Santacruz station is flanked on both its sides by vegetable vendors that cater to the commuters who live largely in the precinct of Santacruz. This was a smaller market than the one at Dadar or Bandra and did not draw people from other parts of the city to shop here. This market was an example of the various station based vegetable markets that exist in almost every suburb in Mumbai.

7 – Goregaon station bridge market

The Goregaon station bridge market is one of the many bridge markets in Mumbai that capitalize on the bridge's heavy pedestrian traffic. The market sells objects of daily need like belts, caps, watches, calculators, scarves, slippers etc.

The bridges in Mumbai offer a unique spot for vendors to sell such wares to their target population while they are on their way to work or home.

Categorization

Upon observation of different kinds of informal markets, in different parts of the city, I categorized them into two categories:

- 1 – markets that sold specialty products. i.e. designated shoe markets or electronics or food or fashion-wear markets.
- 2 – markets that sold objects of daily use and need i.e. markets where all kinds of daily-use objects could be bought in one spot. Within this category, there are two kinds of markets; those that sell daily food, vegetables, fruits and other food related products i.e. products that are largely purchased on a daily basis; and those that sell other commodities of common use like pens, alarm clocks, handkerchiefs etc.

This categorization was relevant not only in terms of wares and products but also in the location they picked and the space they occupied. The first kind of market usually occupied stretches of roads that were near some sort of collection area for their clientele. For e.g. Khao gulli is located near colleges and corporate offices, Shoe market at Linking road is located near important hang out areas for youngsters on a popular and old shopping strip. The second kind of markets gravitated towards transportation nodes. It made sense for them to locate themselves strategic to the traffic going to or coming from work, so they could maximize their sales of everyday products and produce. Indians being sticklers for fresh produce, naturally take advantage of these markets near their transport zones, by shopping for the day's meals in the evening on their way back from work.

For this thesis, I chose to map and depict two such markets, so I would be able to demonstrate the two particularly different kinds of street vending situations. I studied Bandra Linking road as an example of a specialty market in a dense midtown part of the city; and a pedestrian bridge in Goregaon as a market of common commodities.

Mapping

The mapping of the markets was carried out by approximation, because of the scale of the markets and the need to be inconspicuous while measuring distances. The vendors are extremely wary of surveyors and interviewers and hence a lot of measuring, drawing and mapping had to be done in the guise of shopping or passing by. Although the vendors were happy to chat off the record, they were mostly opposed to the idea of their stalls and surroundings measured and recorded. Constant exploitation has taught them to be overly cautious. I used paces and measured objects to get an approximate idea of sizes, heights etc. Also, I applied general heights and sizes from the couple of stalls that I was able to measure.

The mapping was conducted over one entire day at the selected spots. I surveyed the change in the physical occupation of the selected sites, every three hours and recorded those changes. Also mapping of pedestrians and shoppers was done through an interview process where I asked randomly selected pedestrians what their purpose was in that space. These interviews were also conducted every 3 hours for 30-40 minutes each at either ends of the street. This ensured that most pedestrians walking the length of the shopping strip were recorded as either shoppers or passersby.

Due to the approximate nature of the mapping process, the depiction is mostly in diagram form and is not to scale. However, having been trained as an architect, I am certain that my approximations and proportions are very close to the actual.

Interviews

I interviewed about 40 vendors for the purpose of this thesis. Only vendors who had been selling in the same area for over 2 years and who had been selling the same ware for over 2 years were interviewed. This was to omit people who were still not institutional members of the informal market, fringe vendors who sold stuff seasonally or when they could. Essentially this ensured that I interviewed small time entrepreneurs who handled their own business and were owners of their own businesses. These vendors had a greater stake in the situation and hence could offer more information about the current conflict between the city and the vendors.

The questions I asked them were:

- Do you have a permit/license to sell your product?
- Are you officially allowed to use the space you use to set up shop?
- Are you evicted as part of eviction drives aimed at clearing out informal markets from the city?
- How do you prevent being evicted or your material from being confiscated when that happens?
- How much bribe, if any, do you pay to the law enforcers responsible for evicting you?
- Do you have any reservations towards paying a tax for your business?
- Where did you procure the material to construct your stall/shop?
- How did you decide how much space to occupy?
- What do you do with the trash that your stall generates?
- Would you be willing to conform to a materials regulation that makes your stall safer and easier to construct even if it costs money?
- Where do you live?
- Where are you originally from? (migrant/local)
- Where do you think the thrust to evict you comes from? Why?
- Has the springing up of high-end malls impacted your business?

Street Vending

To maximize their outreach, all street markets are located strategic to areas that their target consumer population frequents most. This leads to certain patterns of location and the creation of two distinct categories of markets. Vendors selling objects of everyday domestic use like brooms, vegetables, flowers, alarm clocks, hair clips, napkins etc tend to congregate near major nodes of transport like Train stations, bus stops, and auto-rickshaw stands. These markets are much more diverse in the nature of their product, their sales technique and the kind of space they occupy. The other kind of street retail is that of particular products like shoes, electronics, food, books or clothes; products that cater to a niche market and hence influence the vendors to locate themselves strategic to places that would serve as catchments for their clientele. These are usually streets slightly removed from the transport nodes, close enough for easy access and yet distant enough to generate an identity and mass of its own. However, all the strategic positioning and business know-how aside, the vendors still end up occupying government owned, civic land.

The BMC – Brihan-Mumbai Municipal Corporation is a city-level governing body that is responsible for the maintenance and governance of the city's civic land. They are also directly involved in matters of urban development, both private and public, transport and infrastructure. Most public land lies under the jurisdiction of the BMC and they work in conjunction with the city police to govern these spaces. The two examples of street vending that I chose to study all operate on civic property; the pedestrian bridge in Goregaon, and sidewalks and a previously vehicular by-lane in Bandra.

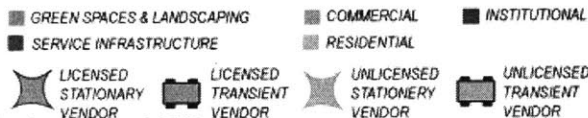
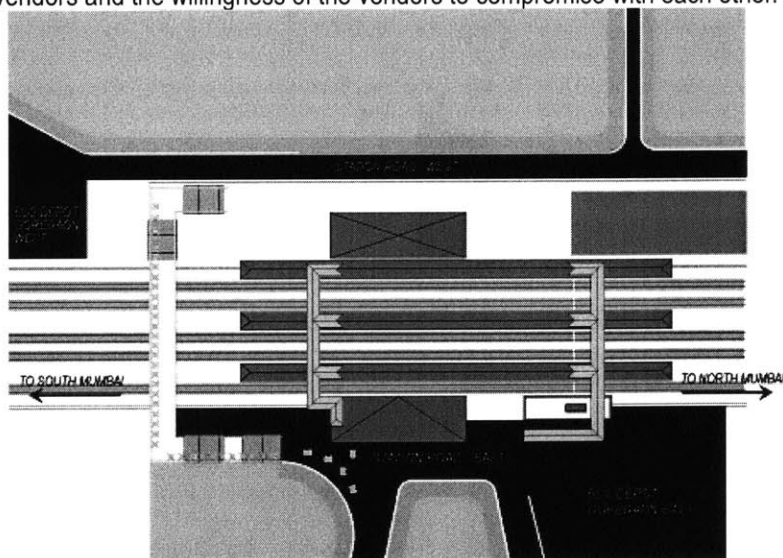
The railways lines in Mumbai run north-south and dissect the various precincts in two. It is a dividing marker and to its seaward side lays the western half of the precinct, while to its leeward side lays the eastern half. For eg. Ghatkopar station divides the suburb into Ghatkopar east and Ghatkopar west. At each railway station in the city, there is at least one BMC owned bridge that offers a thoroughfare between its two sides. These are pedestrian bridges not accessible to vehicles or wheelchairs. They are raised over the tracks considerably, about 30ft, and offer no protection from the sun or rain. These bridges are very basic in their construction made of only a slab and handrails on the sides. Each station is abutted by a road on either side that is usually a one-way road that is part of a loop leading vehicles to and from the station. The immediate area on either side of the stations is also where there is dense commercial

development. All major shopping locations in a suburb are usually walk able from its station. All major buses in a suburb also run right along the station, as do the auto-rickshaw and taxi service providers. Because of this very dense and efficient network of transportation resources, a majority of Mumbai's population prefers public transportation over private.

Goregaon Bridge

Goregaon railway station has three bridges that connect the east and the west precincts of Goregaon. Two of these bridges are owned, managed and maintained by the Indian Railways. The third bridge is owned by the BMC and is occupied by vendors. It is about 16ft wide and the vendors occupy about a third of that space, which includes their stall and space for the customer and the vendor to interact. They limit themselves to one edge of the bridge propping their stalls on the handrail.

The vendors' stalls are made of scavenged material, a frame created by uneven, unfinished bamboo stalks, sticks or metal rods holding up a roof made of tarp, gunny bags and/or cloth sheets tied together with different kinds of ropes. The vendors managed their spaces and maintained their line of occupation based on an understanding with each other in the absence of a formal uniting organization. Most vendors carried their wares back with them at the close of the day leaving their dismantled stalls tied to the handrails wrapped up in tarp. There hadn't been any cases where one vendor encroached on another's space, although there had been some small scuffles over leaking overhangs or dangerous stall constructing materials. These scuffles were resolved among themselves through the mediation of other vendors and the willingness of the vendors to compromise with each other.



Notes on bridge occupancy over one day

9am – At the beginning of the day, majority of the stalls are up or are in the process of being set up. Vendors arrive between 7am and 9am and start setting up their stalls after which they spend up to an hour organizing their wares. They put all kinds of scrap together to set up display areas and mechanisms. There is relatively low shopper traffic in the mornings and evenings during rush hour. Late morning, early afternoon and early evening is the time when there are more shoppers on the bridge than people just going across.

12noon – By noon all the stalls have been set up, the vendors have done some business. They are mostly sitting inside their stalls and interacting with customers as they come up to them. The traffic on the bridge is thin and the ratio between shoppers and thorough farers is almost half and half.

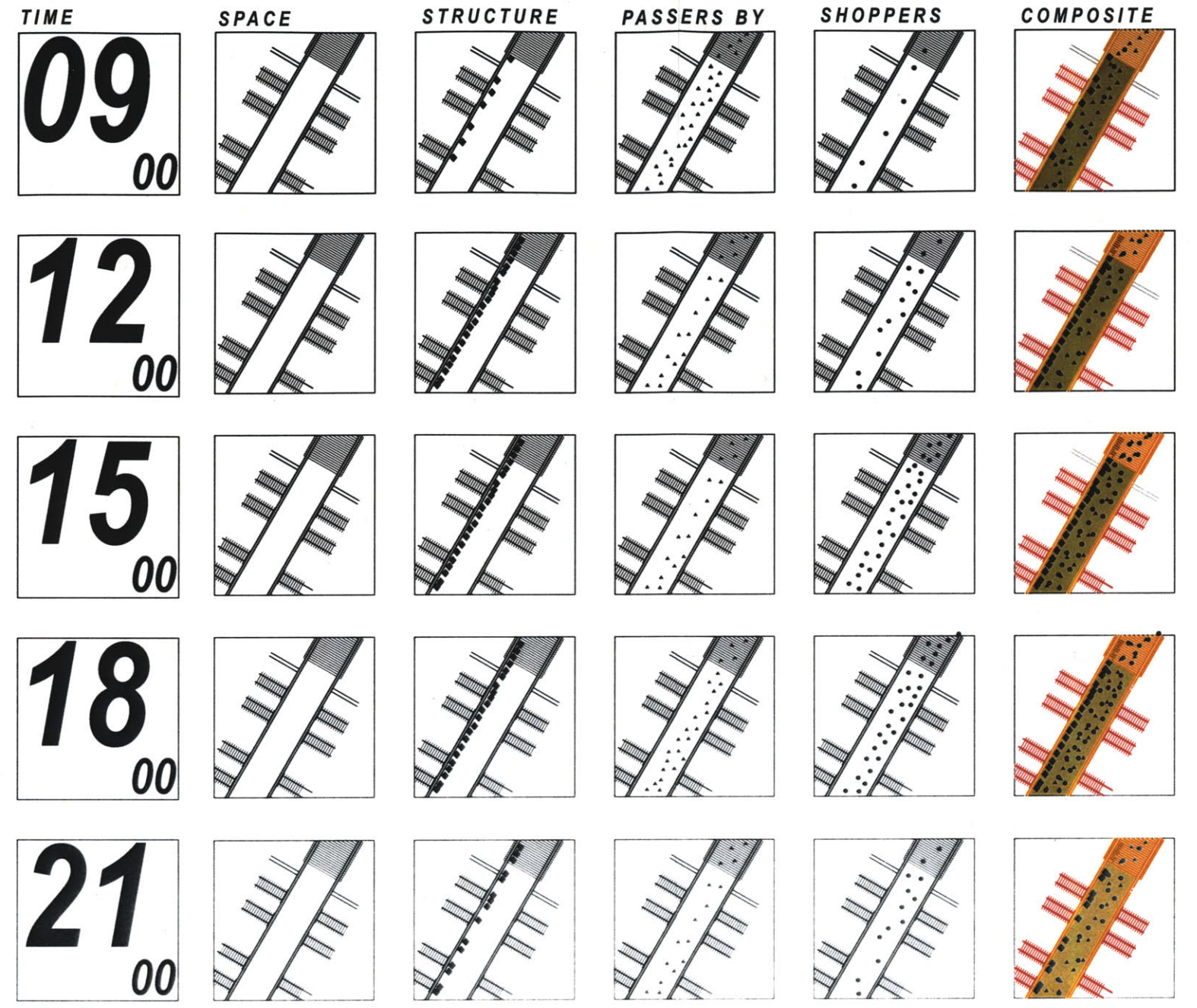
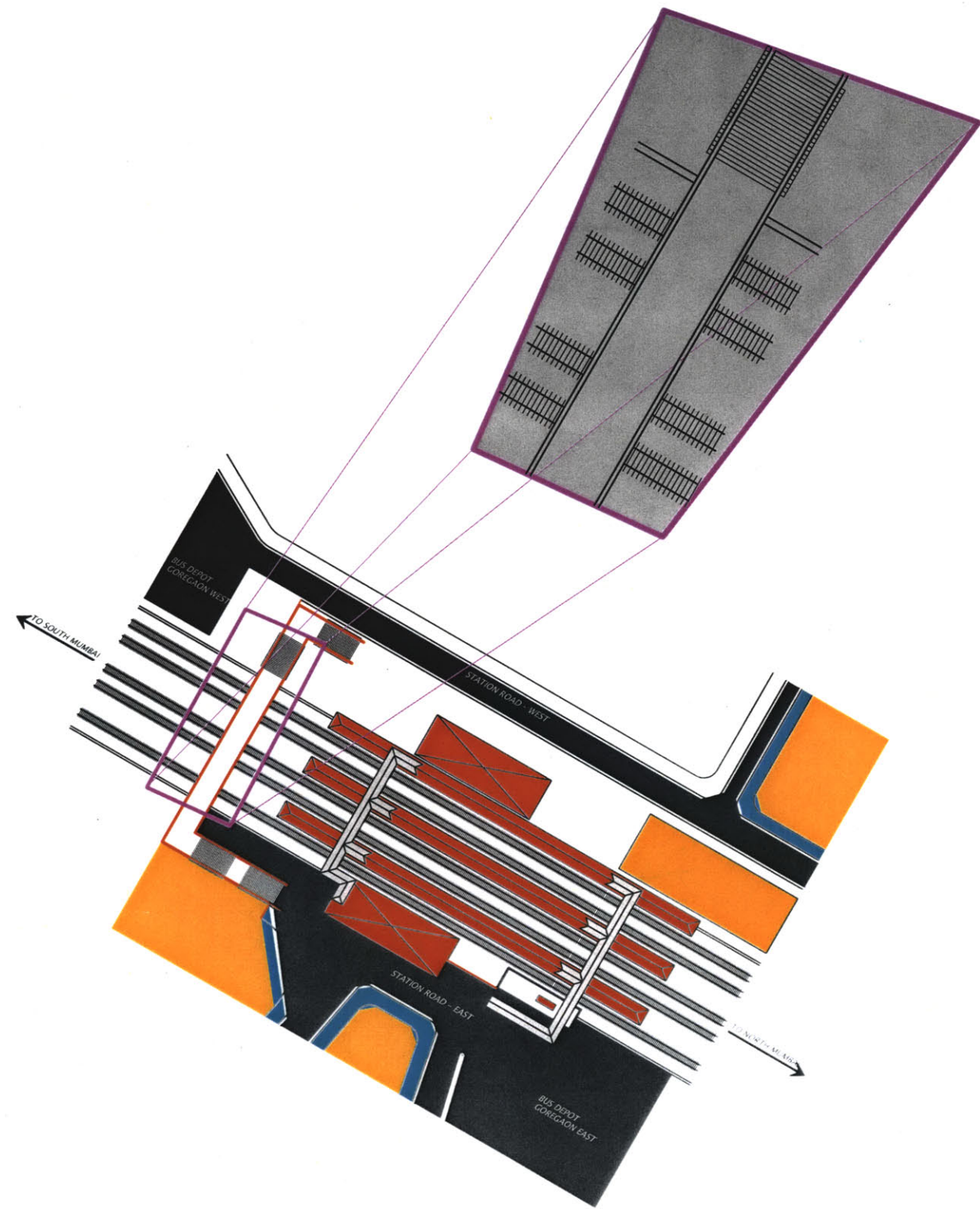
3pm – The shopper traffic on the bridge has increased and the vendors are now manning their stalls from in front of them calling out to pedestrians inviting them to come look at the wares and consider the prices.

6pm – The traffic on the bridge has increased considerably although the shoppers have decreased. The vendors are still standing outside their stalls and calling out to people. Fewer people stop and make purchases though.

9pm – The traffic on the bridge is still high although there is a fair mix of shoppers and thorough farers by now. Some vendors are packing their stalls up. By 11pm, they will all have gone.

Observations

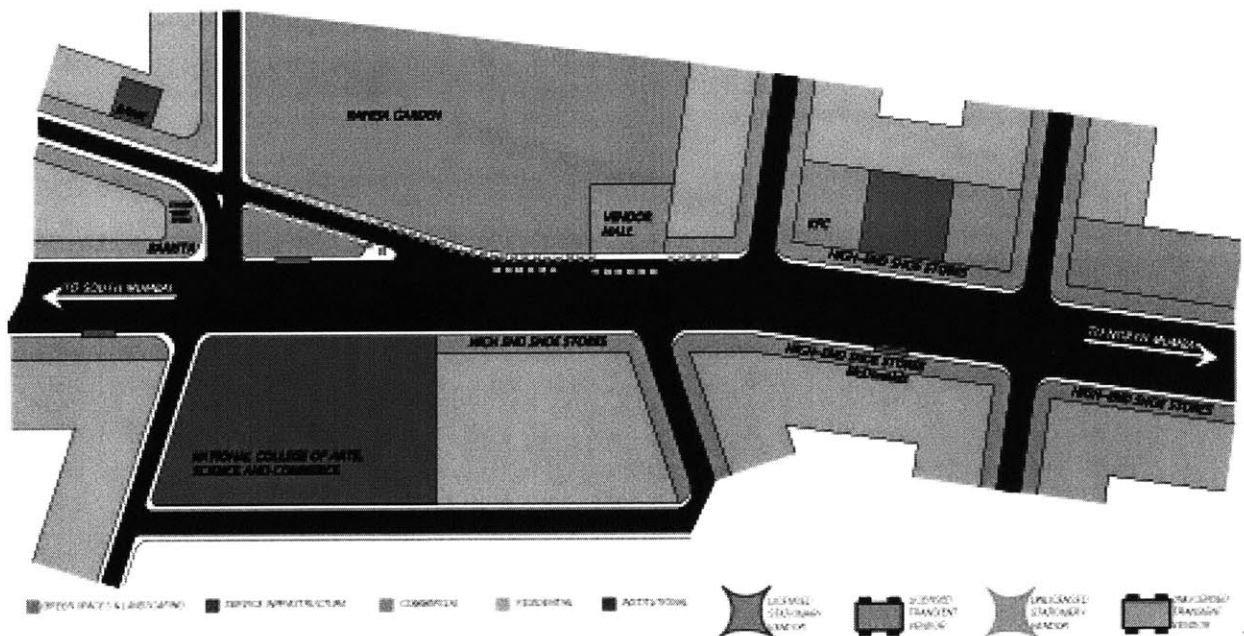
- 1 – The vendors maintain a line of occupation that is self decided and enforced through mutual understanding.
- 2 – Most vending stalls are made of a framework of sticks or rods covered with some sort of sheet material.
- 3 – Stalls do not seem to hinder or block pedestrian traffic.
- 4 – There is no designated space for disposal of trash, and it is usually tossed right off the bridge.
- 5 – Most of the material for the stalls was scavenged and in some case was hazardous (rusted nails) and unhygienic (moldy sheets)
- 6 – The stalls were self-constructed and took a while to assemble or dismantle.



GOREGAON STATION BRIDGE
DAILY USE COMMODITIES SELLERS

Bandra Linking Road

Bandra is a popular mid-town suburb of Mumbai. There are several educational institutions and corporate offices here as well high end residential developments. Due to its central location it is a preferred location for offices, restaurants, clubs, and shopping centers. There has been a recent explosion in Mumbai of the mall typology of shopping venues and Bandra is one of the most sought after areas by mall-developers. Not only because of its location and real-estate value or demographics, but also because Bandra is already ingrained in local memory as a shopping hub. Bandra's reputation stems from the various opportunities the precinct offers shoppers. For decades people have been flocking to Elco market for fashion ware and linking road for shoes and other accessories. Linking road, for very long, sported the high-end shoe stores in the city side-by-side with the bargain vendors selling cheap footwear options to the rest of the population. The popularity of the shoe sellers draws other vendors like belt sellers, sandwich makers, peanut sellers etc. The vendors have appropriated a by lane that connects the RD Patkar marg as it merges into Linking road. Their presence along this by lane, which extends beyond the extent of the sidewalk, discourages vehicular traffic and creates a sense of enclosure which only shoppers are invited to enter. This by lane has been taken over by vendors for over 10 years now. Since the flow of traffic from RD Patkar marg is not heavy at all and since an alternative means of getting to Linking road is only 2 minutes longer, there seems to be no opposition to the loss of this by lane as a vehicular road.



Notes on the market street over one day

9am – some vendors arrive early and set up shop. It takes them up to 45 minutes to completely organize their displays and overhangs etc. The street is frequented largely by thorough-farers at this point. There are some incidental shoppers, people traveling to work or college pausing to buy something, but there aren't any serious shoppers out.

12noon – More vendors have set up their stalls, some are still arriving and will be ready soon. The shopper traffic has increased as students come into the colleges around the street and look for a way to spend their lunch breaks. The through fare pedestrian traffic has thinned down considerably. By this time there are also transient vendors selling things like peanuts, hair clips etc by moving through the crowd and advertising their wares.

3pm – By this time almost all the vendors have arrived and set up their shops. The shopper traffic has increased considerably and the street is extremely crowded. The proximity of a major bus stand contributes greatly to the arrival of most shoppers at this hour when there are almost no commuters going to work.

6pm – This is the most crowded time of the day, when there is choc-a-bloc pedestrian traffic all along the street. The shoppers have increased in number. There are very few thorough farers if at all. The street is extremely noisy at this point, but not an obstruction to any kind of traffic because of its position.

9pm – Some of the transient vendors have left. Some of the stall owners are also in the process of packing up. But the market is still abuzz with the voices of shoppers and vendors. In another hour the crowd with dissipate quite fast and the market will have shut down by 10:30/11pm.

Observations

- 1 – the vendors are organized and maintain their spots and lines of occupation.
- 2 – they maintain cleanliness in and around their stalls
- 3 – they do not obstruct flowing traffic (not considering the fact that they have appropriated a vehicular road)
- 4 – their stalls are made from largely the same materials, they have mostly purchased the material and are responsible about their safety and proper use.
- 5 – Most vendors carry their wares back with them at the end of the day, but some leave them locked up in their stalls which are like wooden booths standing on the pavement. They are not concerned about theft.
- 6 – The vendors do contribute to the noise on an already noisy road.
- 7 – The vendors hold licenses to operate and are contesting the government's eviction plans in court as a united organization.

Analysis

From the observation of these two sites, it is possible to identify features or practices of these markets that illicit resistance from the city government and population. Some of them are:

1 – Unsafe infrastructure. Street vendors mostly employ scavenged material to construct make-shift shops and often these materials are discarded metal or wooden poles or sticks that are rough, unfinished and sometimes plain hazardous due to nails or glass pieces that are still attached to them.

2 – Noise pollution. In order to attract passers by to their wares or shops, street vendors take to calling out loudly and advertising their wares and prices. This adds to the existing noise and chaos in these places that are already noisy due to the high pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

3 – Unhygienic and dirty surroundings. In the absence of any real governing entity and organization among themselves, the vendors do not maintain their surroundings responsibly and do contribute to trash and unhygienic conditions. However, in areas where they were organized, or areas that were maintained regularly by the BMC, the vendors took care to maintain their surroundings.

Of all the markets I saw, the one at Bandra Linking Road was the cleanest, had the most number of licensed vendors and made the least noise. In some parts they also had custom built, closeable shops that were made from purchased and not scavenged material. It was also the only formally organized market of the three. While vendors in Santacruz were not united under any organization, the Goregaon vendors were organized among themselves as a natural community of vendors who work together. Only the Bandra vendors were united as members of the Bombay Vendors Association, an umbrella body that advocated their rights and enforced internal regulations. They had also self selected a representative from among themselves who carried their voice to court proceedings etc. This gave them much more power and led to their organization being more structured. A more structured organization was able to self-regulate on matters of cleanliness, hygiene, place of operation etc and had more political presence when represented in larger city wide or national meetings.

What does development look like?

More and more people from non-English-speaking cultures are becoming increasingly proficient in the language. It is more a matter of convenience than choice. It is not that the 'English' language is more articulate or evolved than Chinese, Swahili, Arabic or Tamil. It is only a common ground for people of different tongues to communicate. For reasons of convenience and effective communication, it is fast becoming a universal language. Similarly, urban design is also tending towards a common denominator.

"Because building (a house) is a cultural phenomenon, its form and organization are greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs."

– Amos Rapoport

The book 'House form and culture' (Rapoport 1969), explores the premise that individual or indigenous culture plays a huge and essential role in determining house form. It examines various examples of dwellings around the world to explore how physical and cultural conditions find expression in the design of houses. As the book assesses economics, construction material and technique, site conditions and other practical constraints on dwelling design, it also evaluates the impact of intangible criteria like religion, family structure, relation of house to settlement etc. Rapoport makes the argument that the meaning of house form has changed with the evolution of society and that the increasing complexities of modern life have led to a generalization of several culture-specific values and practices, like language, like music, like urban design.

Cities too are a cultural phenomenon and hence, by extension of the quote above, the size, scale, form and organization of cities, all over the world, ought to be informed by the individual cultural environment to which they belong. We find some evidence of this in cities that came into being before the industrial revolution; before western technology and building practices had traveled to them. There one can easily explore whether and how Rapoport's claim about residential architecture can be extrapolated to the urban scale.

The inception of towns and cities was a premeditated and planned process in the distant past of human civilizations. The ruins of the settlements of the historic Harrappa and Mohenjo Daro civilizations offer us a window into how the structure of the entire town was based on the local climate, social and cultural practices and hierarchies (Fletcher 1896).

The organization of institutional, civic, and service structures with relation to the social practices and the layout of the town to effectively drain and clean it, are just some of the ways the town plan responds to the immediate natural and man-made context. The same is true of ancient Egyptian cities. Their form, spatial organization and hierarchical location of buildings, which is unlike any other elsewhere in the world, is testament to some sort of intrinsic rationale at play in the process of building those cities (Eid c1992).

Cities of the civilized world in the more recent past were also built on the grounds of some sort of indigenous rationale (Olsen 1986). The cities of Varanasi, Venice or Salvador are examples of cities that owe their physical form to some singular identifiable factor that dominated all others in their environment. In the case of these three cities, this factor was religion, nature and politics respectively (Fletcher 1896). These are some of the many cities that are identifiable by unique characteristics that determined their urban form and existence. Varanasi, developed as a temple town as it was considered one of the most sacred pilgrimages for Hindus. In Venice, the rationale of streets, squares, transportation and housing is informed by the water that they stand on and Salvador was built as a trade and political capital, an island that served as the center of Portuguese power for a long time.

If one conducts an observation of all cities in the world that possess a unique character, specific only to them or the region they are situated in, one finds that not too many new cities come to mind. Pre-industrialization cities are distinctly different from one another and certainly so from the ones that were developed after industrialization. Cairo is nothing like Tunisia or Jaipur, and yet there is a commonality among these cities; and that is the reference to local culture that they make through every plaza, market, street or riverbank. On the other hand, Jaipur and Chandigarh share no such commonality despite belonging to the same macro-culture.

Even within historic cities, most areas that developed after the 18th Century are not congruous with the parts developed before. Lets consider Jaipur, for example. The old city of Jaipur was designed in 1757 for political reasons as the stronghold of the King Sawai Jaisingh (Shah and Sharma 2001). Axial main streets that reinforced the monarchy's power and status and upheld the position of religion in the matters of the state were complimented by narrow organic internal streets and interconnected courtyard houses that responded to the harsh and unrelenting climate, while offering the citizens a scale and quality of space that they were attuned to. The arcaded market section of Jaipur is renowned for its climate responsive structure; one that sets the buildings back from the street by an arcade's width which serves as protected circulation space outside the shops at the street level and as a terrace for the public to watch monarchical and religious processions from during the days and as a cool, safe place to sleep on during the hot summer nights. This section is a distinct feature of Jaipur's urban design and has been celebrated for very long as an effective response to both, the climate and the culture of the region. However, when one turns their attention to the post-independence₃₃

development in and around Jaipur, one finds is a completely different kind of urban fabric. It is a concrete forest, full of generic concrete boxes and broad streets that look or feel nothing like Jaipur; that are not formed, built or clad to respond to the climate or the culture of the city. The arcades are gone, terraces are reduced to balconies and windows have glass shutters in place of the latticed *jali*. It seems unlikely that a city would acquire a form that is so incongruous with its culture, climate and regional identity.

And yet this is true of many Indian cities as they develop in an every dense-ifying urban environment. There is definitely an alternative, driving factor that informs the sensibilities of urban designers and developers and which is currently superseding the value of contextual and climatic representation in urban design. What is the country's vision for its contemporary cities that is resulting in a new and generic aesthetic? Thomas Merton once said, "*You are made in the image of what you desire*" Perhaps this is true of cities as well?

A City develops an identity over time; the political capital, trade center, education hub etc. That identity gets embedded in physical form and in turn informs citizens' identities. The people then reflect their identity back onto the built form, either through the act of building or by influencing urban policy. This exchange is a lot like a conversation with a constant exchange between the city and its citizens. And it is possible to decipher what one is saying by observing the response of the other, i.e. it is possible to understand citizens' aspirations, values and attitudes by observing the development of urban form.

Jacob Burckhardt (Burckhardt) studied 14th and 15th century Italian politics for clues that offer an insight into the essential nature of their civilization. He extrapolated general cultural traits from how people conducted themselves in one aspect of their cultural existence, which in this case was political. David Olsen (Olsen) applies this rationale to the cities, postulating from their form and development, the cultural make up of society at the time when the cities evolved in that shape. He suggests that cities are *complex but legible documents* that can reveal interesting facts about the principles, ambitions, hopes and dreams of those that inhabit, govern and shape them; documents that are forever evolving and that eventually become singular canvases on which vestiges of different times can be simultaneously observed and studied.

To the eyes of an architect and urban designer, the formal developments of their environment are considerably loaded with meaning. There are multiple layers of information behind every façade that is replaced, every storey added. Observations of developments in urban form, in conjunction with urban policy analysis, can shed considerable light on the nature of the people affecting and affected by these developments; their values and culture, aspirations and ambitions, hopes and dreams. For e.g. if one considers the beautiful latticed windows of Jaipur, one finds chronicles of

the regions artistic heritage and evidence of women's secondary status in society for whose containment and veiling the windows were designed such. In today's times the skyward explosion of buildings in Dubai, pervasive sprouting of glass façade's in tropical Mumbai, and the proliferation of malls and entertainment centers in Lagos all point to a shift in the way the citizens imagine their city and by extension, themselves – as modern, global citizens (Robison and Goodman 1996).

With cities like Mumbai and Lagos, there is a deeper story to tell. One notices post-colonial developments imitating the economic strategies of their colonial masters (Seminar 2007 Spring). There seems to be an ingrained sense of subservience that then dictates policy-making, governance and economic development. But as travel and information and technological exchange become easier, this imitation is visible in physical form as well. Counterintuitive to the relevant response to local climate, buildings in Mumbai are increasingly clad in glass and aluminum sheets. Vision statements by politicians and private developers include catch-phrases like 'world-class' 'modern' and 'imported'. The people of Mumbai now see themselves as global equals of their western counterparts. But in this race for globalization, there is also a discarding of indigenous and local ethos. A modernizing population now identifies street vendors as symbols of poverty and being under-developed and is willing to forgo its benefits in order to conform to growing image of what their city should look like. The transition of the traditional street vending in Mumbai and other cities in India from an acceptable and convenient form of retail to an undesirable urban activity is an example of this exchange of identities between city and citizens.

If someone revisits a street they grew up they might be saddened and lose their sense of place because of the loss of a tree that use to be on that street, which is now displaced for a building. They might feel that the street has lost its meaning to them now that the tree is gone. The loss of street vendors from Mumbai is not only the loss of a vibrant and efficient form of retail, it also takes away a sense of meaning from the many places whose identities and sense of place are inextricably linked with the markets that operate there (Norberg-Schulz 1988). Clearly one cannot be unreasonably nostalgic in the face of change and development, but one can be considerate of the past when modernizing; for more reasons than pure sentimentality. The loss of familiar features often detracts from ones understanding of a place. It can dilute or alter the meaning that the place held before it was changed (Norberg-Schulz 1988). This can lead to a tendency to either unyieldingly grab on to the vestiges of a past time or abandon all relation with the place, giving its development up as a lost cause. One might be accurate in saying that the residents on the street can hardly protest if a tree is removed to make room for a building as cities get denser and demand for urban development grows. True. But what the residents of the street do have a say in is what kind of building comes up on their street; what kind of development replaces the tree. They have a say in making that development reflective of a street that perhaps held trees dear, or₃₅

was rather green or pedestrian-friendly etc.

It is commonly accepted that economic developments of post-colonial countries often follow the path of their predecessors even after the rule has lifted. This need not be true of urban development. With examples such as Japan we already see how alternative practices of city development exist and work. Tokyo has managed to acquire the coveted 'world class city' tag while maintaining its contextual relevance. It is understood that modernization of urban centers like Mumbai is inevitable and that as the city modernizes, it will change the forms and meanings of everything from its past into its future. But how it does so, how streets are modernized or shops are reinvented can be deliberated upon. All modernizing cities do not need to go the same route.

Cities like Mumbai, Dubai and Lagos are representative of their country's degree of development and global presence. They are their country's icons of modernization. In a world where 'developing' is a denigrating phrase and where all countries aspire to the coveted cache of '1st world', aesthetics make a big difference. Looking developed and modern is deemed an effective way to be considered 'developed' (Gartner and Segura 1997). An increasing number of urban designers, planners, sociologists are noticing the generic image and nature of cities as is seen in some of the prominent cities of the 1st world. Downtown Chicago resembles corporate Toronto, which is much like downtown Melbourne. And in the prominent cities of the developing world there is heightened fervor to catch up with the ones listed above or others from their cache. Dubai aspires to be the Switzerland of the Middle East while Mumbai aspires to become the Indian Shanghai.

This aspiration stems from the global condition of dichotomy; the world is divided into the 'developed' and the 'developing'. The dynamic that is established by this dichotomy and the same-ness of the 'developed' world leads to a direct import of sensibilities into the developing countries.

It is obvious that as Mumbai reinvents itself as a modern, world-class city, the street vendors will experience extreme pressure to keep up with that change and the inability to do so will seriously jeopardize their subsistence. In order to keep up with this change in their city, the street markets can either conform to the mall-ifying that is happening currently or they can devise their own paradigms for modernization. It is possible to generate solutions that respond to this need for upgradation while being inclusive to the marginal populations.

Defining the Conflict

As Kevin Lynch suggested, the *hierarchies and segregations* instituted by colonial rule are merely adopted and carried forward by the *native elite* at the end of the colonist's reign (Lynch 1981). This is evident in the way the politicians, industrialists and other urban elite have sought to shape Mumbai in the past few decades (CM-Task-Force 2004). Their vision of Mumbai is one that equates them with citizens of the cities they consider desirable, or superior. Hence, continuing the tradition of the colonist's prejudices, they are intolerant of the native poor and marginal. They consider the informal workforce to be dispensable and wished they could be tucked away from visibility while still providing the amenity they did to the city. The creation of Pudong-like hinterlands (Bombay-First and McKinsey&Co 2003) full of industry that would service the cosmopolis, was a favorite recommendation among many as an alternative to allowing vending in the city.

My various interviews and conversations with people, who were not part of the vendor community in Mumbai revealed to me that there was growing disapproval for street vendors among business owners, store-keepers, shoppers and other non-poor people in the city. A common lament I heard was, "just look at them! They are so untidy/shabby/disorganized" or that "they block traffic, they cause traffic jams etc".

An analysis of the various stakeholders in this situation and their needs and misgivings might reveal more information on how to resolve the conflict. With this in mind, I deconstructed the conflict defining the stakeholders, their demands and reservations.

1 – City Government, politicians, industrialists

In order to understand why street vendors are not considered desirable in Mumbai anymore, it is important to look at what is considered desirable. With that in mind, I studied the Chief Ministers task force summary, the agenda of the Bombay First initiative and the McKinsey Mumbai First report to get an idea of what ideal the future of Mumbai is being driven towards by the visionaries of the city. That shed some light on why street vending and other such vernacular activities find no place in the visions for Mumbai's tomorrow.

Bombay First is an initiative that aspires " to make the city (Mumbai) a better place to live, work and invest in.

It aims to serve the city with the best that private business can offer. It will achieve this by addressing the problems of today and the opportunities of tomorrow, through partnerships with government, business and civil society.” Its founding membership consists of the top officials, chairmen/director etc of some of the country’s leading companies. It is a subset of the Bombay City Policy Research Society whose trust is comprised wholly of these officials.

The Vision Mumbai report was commissioned by the Bombay First initiative to “ solicit recommendations to transform Mumbai into a world class city”. A perusal of this document reveals that there is no place for the poor in ‘world-class Mumbai’. Given their brief, the McKinsey group do very well at charting out the course that Mumbai must take in the next 10 years. Their instructions were to suggest how Mumbai might be considered a world-class city from a developing country. The cities it aspires to be likened to are Shanghai and Singapore. So it is no wonder that McKinsey suggests the creation of a ‘Pudong’ near Mumbai.

The McKinsey report puts it quite aptly, “Though several very valid recommendations and reports already exist on Mumbai, what is really needed is for Mumbai to undergo a change in mind-set...” unfortunately the change they propose is inequitable, inappropriate and irrational for a city like Mumbai. It is very interesting to note the various parties that McKinsey identifies as key stake-holders for Mumbai’s transformation. The list includes, major government institutions, businesses and NGOs, an assortment that is glaringly exclusive of the poor and unorganized sector which, at the moment, amounts to 65% of the city’s population.*

Unfortunately, due to the political will and influence that these segments of the citizenry hold, it is important to take their aspirations for their city into consideration when addressing this issue. The ‘native elites’ wish that their city appeared developed and modern. They compare their city to Shanghai and seek to import that aesthetic in order to prove themselves equal to their global counterparts. They did not appreciate the poor appearance of the vendors coupled with the unmanageable scale of the informal sector. Their major misgiving was that the vendors are disorganized and make the city seem backwards and undeveloped, discouraging global industry and population from coming to the city. Their demand was for a more modern, global looking Mumbai

2 – Citizens

The citizens of Mumbai all rely on the informal sector in some way or form. The informal markets are not for the poorer class alone. Several upper-middle class citizens looking for dispensable party wear frequent Fashion Street. The same is true of the clientele at Lamington road and Linking road, Bandra. Being sticklers for fresh fruits and vegetables, most citizens buy their produce daily or biweekly. Therefore the citizens share a complex relationship with the informal street vendors. They need them for the service they provide, but also grudge them their shabby appearance, which prevents Mumbai from being considered a world-class city and its citizens, worldclass citizens. This is clearly reflected in citizens reaction to the eviction drives against vendors, where they side with the government.

Their prime complaints against the street vendors, apart from how shabby and vernacular their appearance was, were that they were unhygienic, noisy, a traffic hindrance and that they used hazardous material in the construction of their stalls. These misgivings were important to understand from the point of finding a solution to the problem.

3 – Street Vendors

The desire to appear modern and sport the emerging global aesthetic that reinforced that paradigm was echoed across all three groups of stakeholders. The street vendors themselves did not reject the expectations of the other two. It seems that on the vendors' end it was more a matter of not having guidance and access to finances to enable a physical transformation in-keeping with this desire. They bemoaned the inaccessibility of the licensing procedure, the corruptibility of Mumbai cops and other civic officials and the unsympathetic attitude of the city towards the space they occupy.

I infer the following after analyzing the stands of the three main stakeholders

1 – the city's desire to appear modern is not mutually exclusive to the subsistence of street vendors; it is only portrayed such. The example of Street Vendors in Ahmedabad³– demonstrates that rather effectively. It is possible for street markets to exist in a developing modernizing city.

2 – The complaints about cleanliness and hygiene were echoed across the board, the vendors agreeing that cleanliness was their biggest detractor, suggesting that perhaps the lack of an organized system was more to blame than anything. In the absence of an efficient trash collection and disposal system, it was each man on his own, which made the simple task of maintaining neatness a daunting chore. Lack of an accountability factor within and outside of the vending community meant that no one enforced regulations of hygiene or provided support or facilities to maintain the vendors'

3 – described later in the thesis on page 44

surrpoundings.

3 – the vendors provide a service, which in most cases will prove ineffective if they are moved out of the strategic spots they occupy. So there needs to be some creative spatial organization that allows them to occupy strategic locations and still respond to the concerns of the other stakeholders.

4 – The complaints about the vendors' appearance can be responded to with minimal intervention and a makeover will help not only win over the detractors but also make the streets a pleasant and more comfortable place to shop, thereby benefiting the vendors twice over.

Designer as mediator

“Leadership takes place in the context of problems and challenges...(it) becomes necessary to businesses and communities when people have tough challenges to tackle, when they have to change their ways in order to thrive or survive, when continuing to operate according to current structures, procedures, and processes no longer will suffice. We call these adaptive challenges. Beyond technical problems, for which authoritative and managerial expertise will suffice, adaptive challenges demand leadership that engages people in facing challenging realities and then changing those priorities, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to thrive in a changing world.”

Ronald A. Heifetz

Anchoring Leadership in the Work of Adaptive Progress
The Leader of the Future 2: Visions, Strategies, and Practices for the New Era
Ed. Frances Hesselbein & Marshall Goldsmith (2006)

Designer as Mediator

In the present commercial environment, good urban design is often compromised in the interest of being conservative with immediate budget or time. Due to the multi-party nature of stakeholders in a planning process, envisioning a common long-term plan is an arduous task. Each stakeholder brings a separate interest to the table that the plan must cater to; interests that cannot always co-operate (McAdam, McCarthy et al. 1996). It is this aspect of coalition politics that forces urban planning to be myopic, when ideally it should be designed for the long term. Frequently stakeholders opt for quick fix-solutions that require minimum negotiation and end up compromising on the sustainability and long-term value of the plan. Such short-range solutions inevitably end up running aground in a small span of time, many times even exacerbating the problem they set out to address.

As Matthew Carmona, leader of the research on the Value of Urban Design report, says, *“Better urban design adds value”* (Carmona 2001). Some hallmarks of good design are simplicity, timelessness, and that it solves the right problem (Graham 2004). A rigorous process of design can help solve complex problems because it looks for the best possible solution instead of the quickest or one involving least friction among decision makers. The value of good design when solving complex multi-layered problems is indisputable, not just in urban planning. To consider a couple of analogies; well-designed software requires fewer upgrades, is less susceptible to bugs and viruses, provides the

service it was designed for and is thus great value for its money. Well-designed shoes fit comfortably, run well, weather according to their use, and allow for healthy wear and workout. The shoe and software might be costlier than other options in the market, but if they outlive and outperform their competition with lesser maintenance, then their economic value exceeds that of the cheaper alternatives. Similarly buildings, sidewalks, squares, or urban policies that are designed to maximize long term sustainable service to the community they were created for, are valued not only by their financial cost but also by what they save the community through efficient operation.

Sometimes good design is also Re-design (Graham 2004). If a process, product or concept is proving problematic when trying to achieve certain results, at times instead of problem-solving the solution lies in redesigning. A designer can take the problem solving process back to the drawing board stages and demonstrate to the stakeholders how it might be redesigned for optimum results. The ability to start afresh and bring an objective perspective to each stage of deliberation enables the designer to assess solutions for long-term viability. As a third party, non-stakeholder entity addressing problems that require rethinking of values, procedures and/or structures, a designer can prove to be an effective mediator between parties. He/she can help them develop a solution that works best for them by facilitating them with design skills and sensibilities and bringing a fresh disinterested perspective to the table. Being an outside consultant, the designer can also facilitate the stakeholders' conception of a common vision or plan. When faced with the dilemma of solving complex problems, it is important for the stakeholders or decision-makers to work towards the same goals. Coming to consensus over the various aspects of the solution can be difficult, but is central to a sustainable, equitable and long lasting solution. The designer can create scenarios that facilitate the consensus. For e.g. they can generate multiple solutions that address the diverse interests in varying manners and to a range of degrees for the involved parties to pick which ever works best for them.

Complex urban problems that require a reconsideration of existing systems, structures, and ways of thinking are harder to resolve in the absence of effective leadership. In such *adaptive challenges* often times '*the people with the problem are the problem, and they are the solution*' (Heifetz 2006). Often something intrinsic to a particular group of people becomes the root of a problem but its solution may also come from within that group. For appropriate, equitable solutions to emerge, it is necessary for the stakeholders, the people directly affected and involved with the problem, to play an active role in finding the solution. They can plan from the inside to address the concerns of everybody who has a direct stake in the problem.

In the absence of effective conflict management negotiations between people having diverse, conflicting or unaligned stakes in a situation are often derailed. Often times, stakeholders lose sight of the big picture and are unable to move past identity politics and form mutually benefiting coalitions with each other. They end up placing themselves⁴²

and others in silos, which further segregates their interests and hampers problem-resolution. This is frequently the case with urban plans instituted through a top-heavy, bureaucratic method, where the decision makers do not have the insider's perspective to make good trade offs and compromises. They either view the diverse interests in an urban problem as mutually exclusive, or cast them such in order to garner more governing power. Since they don't have vested stake in the situation, there is little incentive for them to invest themselves towards long lasting solutions. Due to their external perspective, they often make a decision for the sake of it, investing their energies only to keep the process short, inexpensive and favorable towards their preferred constituency.

It is in the case of tricky impasses like the one between street vendors and civic decision makers in Mumbai, that effective and equitable conflict resolution is a must. Not only do the stakeholders need to be empowered with a say in the decision making process, but an objective mediator is also required to help them conceive of new solutions that are mutually benefiting. An urban designer, who can help them envision a common vision (McAdam, McCarthy et al.) and ways to achieve it without disadvantaging any particular group, can play such a role. The discipline of design enables the urban designer to take the conflict apart and resolve its individual components while also developing cross cutting solutions that address all concerns on the table.

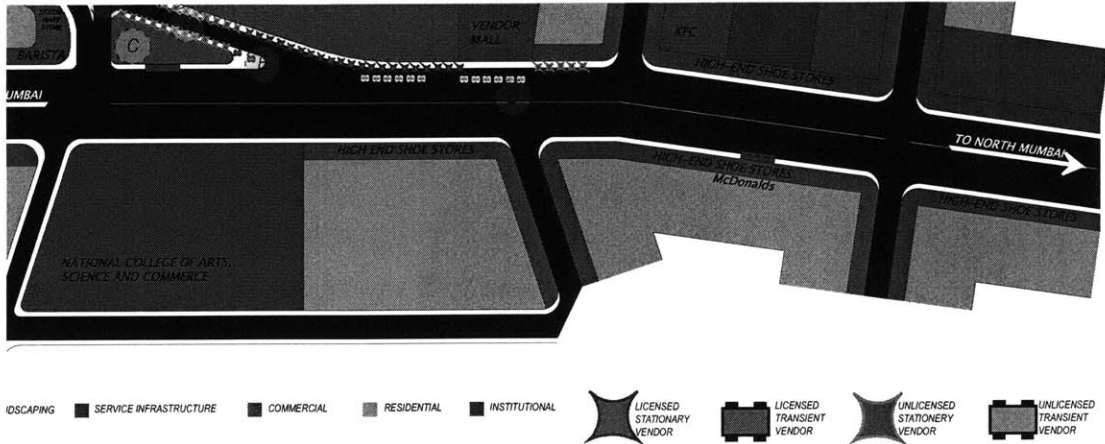
For a designer mediator to be truly objective, their place in the process cannot be partisan to any one group. Hence, taking a leaf out of Joint Fact Finding (Susskind et al), I propose the idea of joint commissioning, where the stakeholders together commission one or a group of urban designers and solicit their ideas to choose the best from. This maintains a transparency of process also ensuring that financially or politically empowered parties are not aggressive towards the vendors and that the vendors have access to finding a mediator and developing a solution that is inclusive of their requirements.

With the two examples I studied, for example, a few minimal design interventions coupled with some policy reform can completely transform the quality of the spaces the markets occupy, the shopping experience and most importantly, the vendors way of doing business.

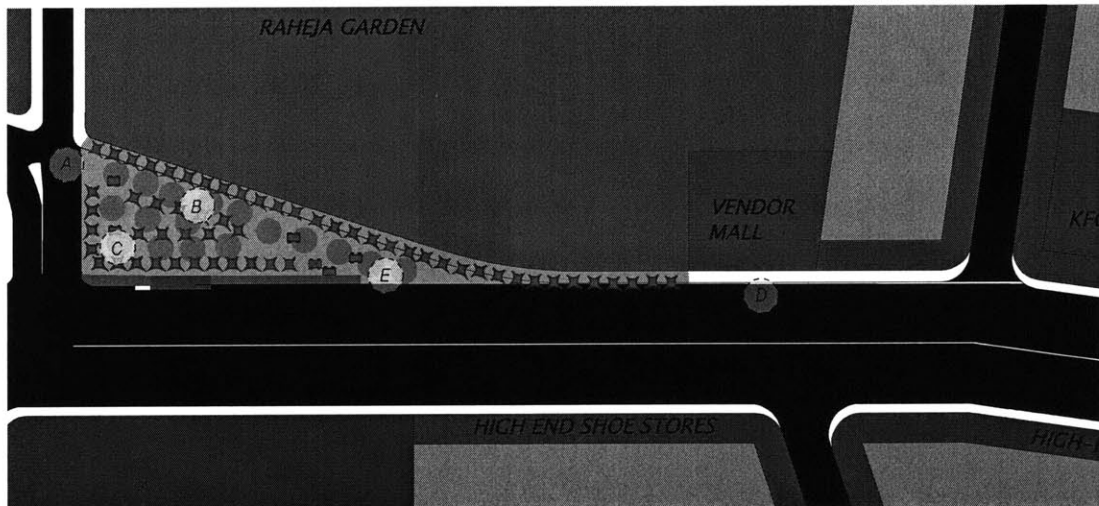
In case of Bandra, the official conversion of the street to a pedestrian plaza that spreads across the green traffic island and forms an enclosure that leads off of the street shops and becomes a place for shoppers to stroll and shop and enjoy road side food without being hassled by traffic or chaotic stalls and carts. The setting up of permanent platforms that identify stall space, and the construction of a common roof that spans along the street will ensure that vendors do not resort to picking up hazardous material for their stall construction.

As for Goregaon, the bridge, which is currently a property for the BMC to maintain, can be transformed into a revenue generating entity simply by the construction of space for the vendors to do their business. The construction⁴³

of foldable, closeable stalls for the vendors will eliminate the scrapped together shacks offering the vendors a place to stack and leave their wares in the night. The folded down roofs can also be used as advertising surfaces to generate extra revenue that can be directed into the maintenance of the bridge.

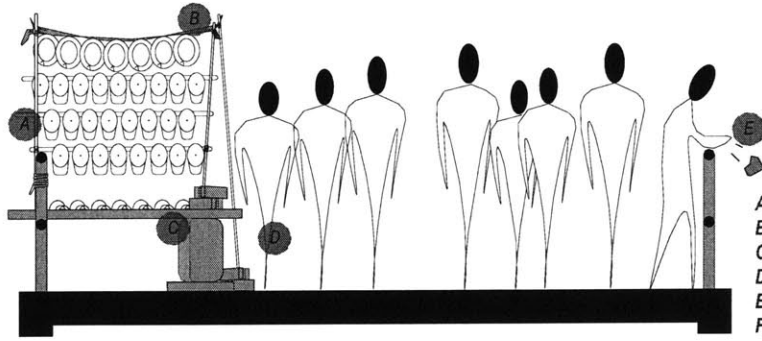


TLENECKING CAUSED BY STALLS BLOCKS TRAFFIC
 WDED, CHAOTIC STREET AND DANGEROUS STALL CONSTRUCTION
 ACCESSIBLE PATCH OF GREEN SERVES NO PURPOSE SINCE THE STREET IS CLOSED
 VENDORS ENCROACH ON THE ROAD WITH MAKESHIFT STANDS AND CARTS
 TRANSIENT VENDORS ENCROACH ON ISLAND SPACE



ICATED ENTRY INTO MARKET AREA OFF OF SIDEWALK AVOIDS CLASH WITH TRAFFIC
 IN, SPACIOUS AREA FOR STALLS AND SHOPS
 ED, SEMI PERVIOUS PAVING AND TREE MAKES PLEASANT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.
 ICATED SHOPPING AREA WILL PULL SMALLER CARTS ETC TOWARDS ITSELF.
 NSIENT VENDORS CAN BE OFFERED A PATH TO MOVE ALONG INSIDE THE SHOPPING AREA.

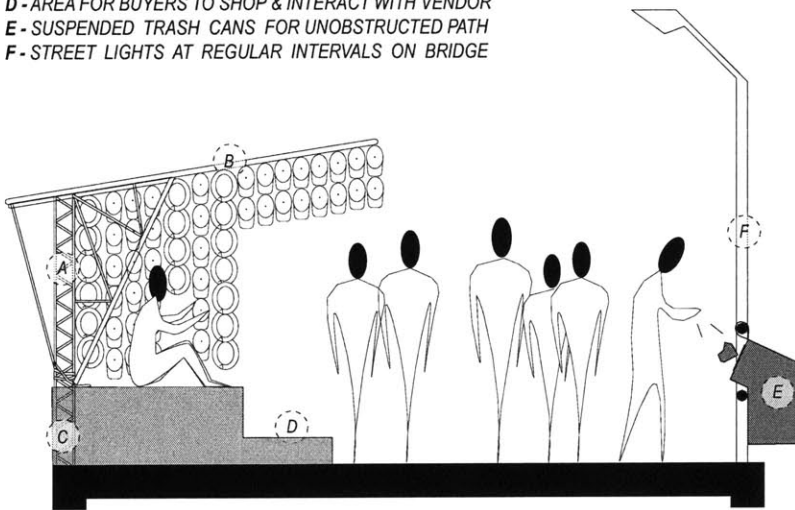
EXISTING



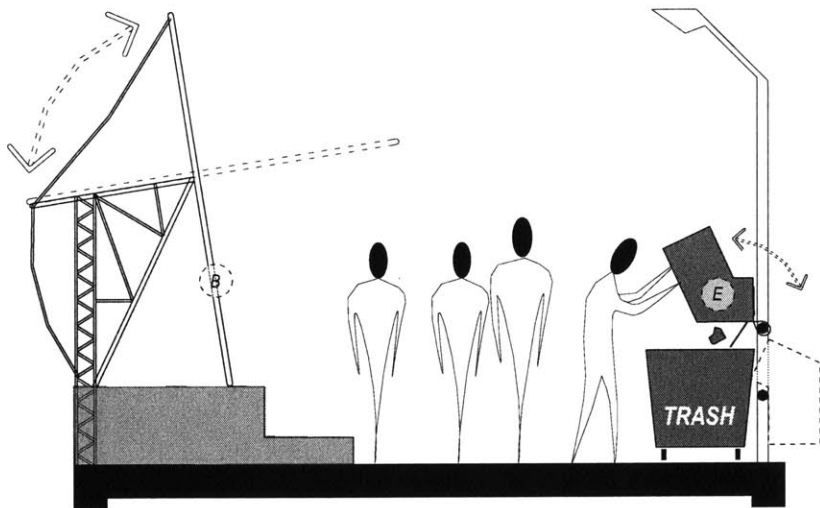
- A - METAL/WOODEN RODS PROPPED TOGETHER
- B - TARPULINE / CLOTH / CARD BOARD SHEETS
- C - SCRAP MATERIAL STAND FOR DISPLAY ONLY
- D - BUYERS OBSTRUCT PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC
- E - TRASH TOSSED OFF BRIDGE ONTO TRACKS
- F - INADEQUATE OR NO LIGHTING ON BRIDGE

- A - METAL COLUMNS SPACED BY CHAINLINK METAL FENCE
- B - CORRUGATED METAL/PVC SHEET FOR FOLDABLE ROOF
- C - HOLLOW RAISED PLATFORM FOR DISPLAY & STORAGE
- D - AREA FOR BUYERS TO SHOP & INTERACT WITH VENDOR
- E - SUSPENDED TRASH CANS FOR UNOBSTRUCTED PATH
- F - STREET LIGHTS AT REGULAR INTERVALS ON BRIDGE

PROPOSED - DAY TIME



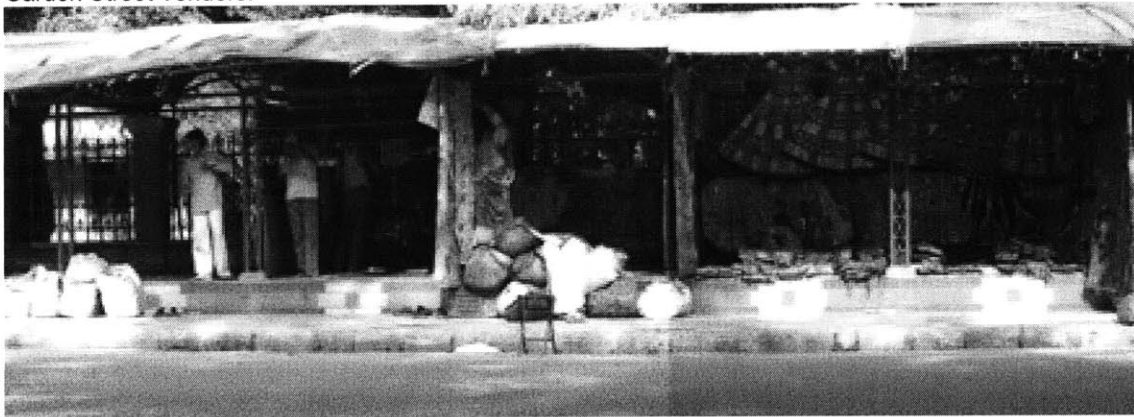
PROPOSED - NIGHT TIME



Examples of successful interventions in India

Two examples come to mind when thinking of design/ redesign solutions that helped mitigate or resolve a conflict. They both used design to come up with a solution that had not been considered before but that all conflicting parties could agree with.

The first one hits close to home for the Mumbai street vendors. It is the reorganization of Ahmedabad's Law Garden Street Vendors.



gamthi sellers setting up shop for the evening at Law Garden, Ahmedabad, India.

The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) championed the cause of the *gamthi* clothes sellers along law garden and pushed for their inclusion in the plans for redevelopment. The result was the creation of raised platforms, marked selling spaces and a framework for displays. The redesign of the sidewalk took into consideration the space the vendors need for selling, for the customers and for passers by.

The earlier model of selling clothes on this street required vendors to bring their own stall, set it up, prop up their wares and take it all away at the end of the day. Since there was no organized way to decide who set up shop where, the vendors use the 'first-come-first-served' method of arriving early and grabbing spots. This cause considerable chaos and friction among the vendors as well. Also, latecomers invariably ended up occupying part of the road or other narrower sidewalks. The new design provides equal sized stalls for each vendor. Some vendors have rented two adjacent stalls because of the size of their business. Each stall has a fixed monthly rent and is the vendors' responsibility to keep clean. The raised platform negates the need for any kind of table. And the framework

photo credit: sagree sharma 2007

for display and coverings ensures that the vendors don't use dangerous materials for the stalls. Due to its minimal nature, when the vendors are gone, it doesn't seem cluttered or obstructive and gives the road a wider, more spacious appearance.

From what used to be a noisy, disorganized, and exploitative street market, the section of Netaji Marg abutting Law garden has been transformed into a tourist destination where one can buy local made *gamthi* clothes from the people who make them. It has reduced the vendors hassles by formalizing them and giving them fixed places to operate from. It has assuaged the local citizens complaints of crowding and chaos by ensuring that the vendors do not encroach upon the road. They have addressed the city's need for a organized market by designing it appropriately.

Another example of design alleviating the concerns of parties locked in conflict is that of the Delhi Cycle Rickshaw redesign by IIT Delhi. Students of a redesign class at IIT Delhi came to the rescue of cycle rickshaw drivers who were facing eviction after the government came under fire from human rights organizations demanding the removal of these manual powered vehicles. The original cycle rickshaws weighed upto 90kilos when empty and had to be peddled around the city with passengers in them for the rickshaw drivers to make a decent living. To help the rickshaw driver community plead their case and subsist in the city, the students designed a much lighter [50 kilos] cycle rickshaw. Its ergonomic design ensured that the driver would have to exert much less force to go a longer distance. The project, started initially as a design course, is now funded through citizen philanthropy and is a roaring success.

Revisiting the Dilemma

The value of street vendors to Mumbai has been reiterated numerous times. They provide affordable, accessible products to the citizen at the same time acting as suppliers to small time manufacturers in the country. We know that the informal sector can generate a considerable amount of money as bribe and that if that figure is converted into taxes, it will turn into a revenue-generating sector. We also know from the sheer scale of the markets that they employ a huge number of people from the poorer class in the city. Unskilled and uneducated parts of the urban population are easily absorbed by this sector and are able to earn a decent living without resorting to unlawful means. As Saket Bhai, a shoe seller at Linking Road pointed out, the government cannot ban a means of employment without creating new ones and the creation of so many jobs as to accommodate all the vendors is a gargantuan task. As other cities in India are slowly realizing* [delhi article, chennai article], formalization is the only way to go.

In the process of formalization, the legal, financial and social arguments are pretty well formed. The national policy for street vendors has outlined very clearly the steps that the government and vendors organizations need to take in order to officialize the vendors community. However, the resolution always sticks when the question of rehabilitation or displacement is raised. The city of Mumbai is too small and too dense for the vendors to continue on the way they do and in the spaces they occupy and the prospect of being displaced to areas outside the city with lesser clientele is unacceptable to them.

One of the biggest hurdles in resolving this situation is the limiting assumption that spaces are limited to their intended use only, if a space comes to contain people, activities and/or objects that it was not originally programmed for, then that is a violation of that space. This constricted understanding of space and its occupation fuels this conflict and detracts from the development of effective solutions. We assume that the vendors cannot occupy certain kinds of civic property because of how those properties were originally envisioned for the city. A bridge is restricted to being a crossover instrument and can be nothing more beyond a way to get across. If we dispel these rules and attempt to envision solutions for this problem that do not take any of the old rules as given, perhaps it is possible to find an answer that pleases everyone across the board.

We can reconfigure urban space to extract its maximum potential if we open ourselves to the possibility of

multiple or flexible uses of spaces in the city. A suspension of rigid programming rules can be an effective strategy when trying to organize informal activities. The friction between program and use of space will be greatly reduced upon the creation of 'free zones' (Koolhaas 1989), conceptual neovas where existing notions of space are dispelled for a more informal occupation.

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