



tactical city

tenali rama and other stories of mumbai's urbanism

rupali gupte

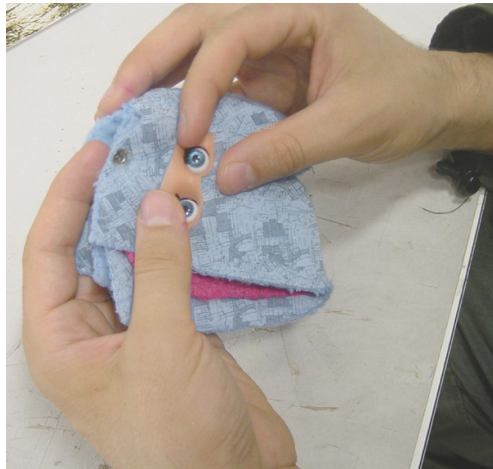


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m.arch thesis submitted to cornell university, 2003

rupali gupte



Abstract

Tactical city

The contention of the thesis is that conditions in most third world cities have gone beyond the means of any rational positivist planning. One needs new EYES to see the present conditions and new TOOLS to operate and perhaps a new IMAGINATION to intervene in these contexts. TACTICAL CITY is such a tool.

TACTICAL CITY derives its name from Michel De Certeau's thesis where he distinguishes between 'tactics' and 'strategies'. "Strategy is the mode by which legitimated power operates from within a designated field; through language, political structures of representation, the assignation of gender roles, the regulation of space, discourses of the body and so on. In short, it is the productive mode of hegemonic power. A Tactic, by contrast, has no proper site, discourse or language, of its own - it insinuates itself into the other's place. It adorns itself in the other's garb, speaks through the other's language, and because it has no fixed address or permanent mode, never consolidates its own achievements or preserves its conquests". De Certeau says of legitimated power, as a counterthesis to Foucault's argument of the ubiquitous nature of power, "If it is true that the grid of discipline is everywhere becoming clearer and more extensive, it is all the more urgent to discover how an entire society resists being reduced to it, what popular procedures (also minuscule and quotidian) manipulate the mechanisms of discipline and conform to them, only to evade them and finally what ways of operating' form the consumer's (or dominee's) side of the mute processes that organise socioeconomic order"¹.

While DeCerteau talks about Tactics as mute processes in society, TACTICAL CITY on the other hand, is a means of consolidating and representing the achievements of 'Tactics'. It is an attempt to bring them to mainstream discourse and to understand how they come closest to bridging the chasm between the aspirations of the city (its people) and the dominant imagination. Tactics, it is understood, have a distinct latent creative energy, one that can be harnessed to address the problems of the city.

Tactical City in the light of such an understanding is a new direction in imagining the city. Practice here is constituted as a set of tactical negotiations that contribute to the dynamic production of the urban. This is an attempt to formulate a methodology towards contextual investigation and intervention.

TACTICAL CITY is fictional but builds on research undertaken by the author and various constituents in the city of Mumbai. Through fictional means it plays on the creative potential of tactics mentioned earlier and brings certain canons of architecture and planning to book with a playful troubling of its theories.

¹ Michel de Certeau, Practice of Everyday Life

Acknowledgements

This book would not have been possible without the support, in various forms, of a number of people - by way of guidance, criticism, love, trust or random statements. It would be presumptuous to say that all of whom I acknowledge approve of the book. Nevertheless they have influenced me, whether I know them personally or through mediated means. The influences are so fresh in my mind that I can point out particular statements they made, that took me through the journey of this book. These are listed here. I daresay these are the only influences. I mention the acknowledgments in random order.

Nasrine Seraji : “You are doing a *Learning from Bombay*, why don’t you just say it?” after a mid term review of mixed reactions

(Nasrine Seraji is the Chair of the Architecture Department at Cornell Univer sity.

Laura Briggs :“You have to tell your story better”. “Architecture is an enabler”

(Laura is an Assistant Professor at Cornell University. She played the role of chair of my committee with perfection. I thank her for her active criticism and constant pushing.

Lily Chi : “In Milan Kundera’s ‘Art of the novel’ the role of fiction is to avoid closing the gap and coming full circle but opening up possibilities of a dialogical space”.

(Lili Chi is an Associate Professor at Cornell University. I thank her for her unceasing support and incredible insight.)

Werner Goehner : “... this is like Italo Calvino’s invisible cities”

(Werner Goehner is a professor at Cornell University and teaches urban design and theoryof architecture and criticism)

Jim Williamson : “Let me tell you the story of the sophists. The Greeks called the sophists liars.....The sophists used their knowledge of rhetoric not to pursue the truth but to win arguments, linking sophistry and sophistication to deception and trickery”. Tactical City aims at such sophistication. It is a city that seizes opportunity when it can and resorts to tactics - deception/ trickery.

(Jim Williamson is a visiting professor at Cornell University. Jim’s insightful stories and observations were of great help to the thesis)

Neema Kudva : “The Tactical always existed. It existed through the colonial city, the socialist city and is not only a product of the global city. There were always resistances”

(Neema is an Assistant Professor at Cornell University in the City and Regional Planning department. Neema’s expertise in Planning and deep understanding of the nuances of the context were invaluable.)

Prasad Shetty : “The way you understand is the way you see and the way you see is the way you intervene”

(Prasad Shetty is my best friend and has been my classmate and colleague through my architectural education and practice. His incredible ability to see and understand the bigger picture in every situation is an invaluable trait, I have always, though mostly unsuccessfully, tried to teach myself.)

Arjun Appadurai : In Modernity at large: “Imagination, especially when collective can become the fuel for action. It is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighborhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labor prospects. The imagination is today the staging ground for action, and not only for escape”.

(Arjun Appadurai is a Professor of anthropology and of South Asian languages and civilisations and is currently teaching at Yale University)

Raoul Bunschoten: “How to See”

“How to Play”

“How to Tell”

“How to Act”

(Raoul Bunschoten teaches at the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam and is principal of CHORA , a non profit organisation. His methodological questions in the Urban Flotsam have been of great importance to the thesis.)

Rem Koolhaas : “How to write a manifesto – on a form of urbanism, for what remains of the twentieth century – in an age disgusted with them? ”

(Rem Koolhaas is principal of OMA. He conducts design research into current urban architectural conditions in various parts of the world. His incessant drive to understand new urban phenomena and his immense faith in research is a great influence to the work.)

Roemer van Toorn: “ How to make Architecture Politically?...Jean Luc Godard once said : ‘The problem is not to make a political film but to make film politically’The focus of this essay is my concern that an architecture operating in this fascinating condition of transition is in need of a political agenda too. Most designers just embrace what is out there without being aware or willing to develop positions other than what the market already projects. We are in need of a political stance, a positioning, or a constant becoming, within which a project goes beyond the agenda of global capitalism. This political stance has to be different from the ones we know from the past.”

“At first the much celebrated technique of the retroactive manifesto, discovered by Rem Koolhaas trying to operate from within the economy with a paranoid critique, managed to generate alternative worlds within the near perfect simulations of consumption. But in the design economy there is the very real danger that the seduction of the paranoid critique can shut us up far more effectively than violence and repression ever could”.

(Roemer Van Toorn is the head of the PhD programme at the Berlage institute. His very lucid writing and unfailing voice calling for change in a world of architectural theory and design seduced by the status quo is an immense hope. I only came across his writing at the fag end of my thesis but it is very exciting to see someone share your views.)

Michel De Certeau: “Strategy is the mode by which legitimated power operates from within a designated field; through language, political structures of representation, the assignation of gender roles, the regulation of space, discourses of the body and so on. In short, it is the productive mode of hegemonic power. Tactics, by contrast, has no proper site, discourse or language, of its own - it insinuates itself into the other’s place. It adorns itself in the other’s garb, speaks through the other’s language, and, because it has no fixed address or permanent mode, never consolidates its own achievements or preserves its conquests”

(Michel de Certeau, a cultural theorist; his *Practice of Everyday Life* has been extremely influential; where he articulates the difference between tactics and strategies. De Certeau sees ordinary people as developing ‘*tactics*’ (an ‘art of the weak’) that he contrasts with the ‘*strategies*’ of the dominant elite.)

Gautam Bhatia: Gautam Bhatia in his extremely witty book, Punjabi Baroque, cynically lays bare the state of Indian architecture. He argues that architecture becomes the vehicle of the well-to-do Indian to show off his wealth. Through what follows as a comic drama between the architect’s desires and the idiosyncratic fantasies of the client a monstrosity comes to life in the urban landscape, something that defies all previous classification. Bhatia, finding it necessary to coin new names for the monstrosities, classifies them as Chandni Chowk Chippendale, Tamil Tiffany, Marwari Pragmatism, Bania Gothic, Anglo-Indian Rococo, Punjabi Baroque...

(Gautam Bhatia is an architect, writer and critic, and has authored many books on architecture; the book that most influenced me was ‘Punjabi baroque’, where he concocts, in an extremely humorous vein, entirely new architectural styles like the Punjabi Baroque, to explain the inexplicable new architectural practice developing in India.)

Annette Shwartz : “there is no human left any more”, in response to some contemporary architecture.

(Annette Shwartz is associate professor and acting chair of the dept. of German studies at Cornell university who is interested in Romanticism; Realism; twentieth century literary theory; psychoanalysis; philosophy of language. Her course ‘Metropolis and urban sites in literature’ was a strong influence on this book.)

Anirudh Paul : “What is the BIG IDEA ?”

(Anirudh Paul teaches at the Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute of Architecture and Environmental Studies (KRVIA) in Mumbai where I did my undergraduate studies, and heads the Design Cell, a non profit organisation attached to the Institute that is involved with research and design in the city of Mumbai.

Sen Kapadia : God is a hook to hang your worries on.

(Sen Kapadia was the first director of KRVIA and a large influence on his students. A thorough modernist at heart, Sen was the first person to make us think of existential questions)

Subodh Dhairyawan:

(Subodh Dhairyawan has retired as Professor of Architecture from KRVIA. Subodh, as a repository of ideas brought new meaning to architectural education and practice for me.

Kaushik Mukhopadhyay :

(Kaushik Mukhopadhyay is an artist practising in Mumbai and teaching at the KRVIA. His ways of asking the most poignant of questions but in the most playful of ways is something that will stay with me forever.)

Aai, baba, tai : “We love you”

“We trust you”

“What is your thesis?”

“What does it MEAN?”

(My family’s complete trust and support have in many ways been the most important ingredients of this book)

I would also like to thank the following people for their unfailing support:

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My students at Cornell University

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12 Mumbai, 2003

Introduction: The setting; a brief history

I shall start here by introducing briefly the history of the city I will begin to distort.

Some basic facts about Mumbai that will help locate the critical mass of the position that Tactical City takes: Mumbai presently has a population of 12 million and is the largest city of India. India's population itself is more than a billion, and contributes to 1/6th of the world's total population. Presently 65% of the city's population lives in slums and of the total work force, 90% is estimated as working in the informal economy, which means no bargaining capacity. According to some estimates, this 65% of the city occupies only 8% of the city's land and has minimal or no access to the city's resources. These have been called 'citizens without a city'. The remainder of the land is either industrial land, middle and low-income housing or vacant land in the control of the state. (Appudurai 1990)

The cultural climate of the city post 1990 is marked by ethnic violence against Muslim minorities by right wing Hindu fundamentalism. Simultaneously the city is seeing a lopsided economy with increasing gaps in income distribution and accessibility to living space and basic services. The post 1990s urban landscape saw shifts in the economy from a primary to a tertiary service oriented one. In 1991 the city gave in to international pressure to open up its markets to so called free trade and went through a series of structural adjustments to that effect. This contributed to further rise in inequities in the city contrary to the much touted goal of 'liberalisation as 'a universal path to prosperity'.

One cannot conjure up the present situation without going through the history of the city from its inception. The city has gone through several political and economic shifts and can be analysed and broadly classified on the basis of these as (Design Cell, 2001):

1. colonial city
2. colonial industrial city
3. independent (socialist) city
4. global city

Mumbai's urbanism was constituted with the colonial and so I take the liberty of skipping an account of its pre-colonial history although it is important to touch upon its origins. Prior to the advent of the Europeans, Mumbai, a geographical entity constituting 7 islands was inhabited by settlements of fisher-folk, farmers and toddy tappers. Evidence of the presence of ports in Bassein and Vasai to the north of the city speak of the presence of a trading community prior to the advent of the Europeans.

Colonial city

The Colonial rule can be classified into two periods:

1. Advent of a mercantile economy, one that capitalised on Bombay's natural harbour and maintained trade links between the colony and the core.
2. Industrialisation: Setting up of a production unit in the colony

European mercantile economy

The Portuguese were the first Europeans to occupy the city. In the meantime the British had set their bases in nearby Surat and coveted the Bombay islands for its natural harbour. In 1661 The Portuguese authorities gifted Bombay islands to King Charles II of England when he married the Portuguese princess, Catherine of Braganza. The British built the Bombay Castle and chose to fortify it against attacks from other European competitors and local rulers. They realised that a strong connection to the hinterland would have to be established. This could be facilitated only via the local Indian merchants. The British started giving incentives to traders from the mainland to act as middlemen in their trading activity. For the first time there developed a settlement that was not agrarian but purely based on trade. Several diverse communities such as the Parsis, Bohras, Banias came to Bombay. These communities began to settle outside the fort walls. This came to be known as the native town, morphologically distinct from the low-density fabric inside the fort. The fabric was essentially mixed use with shops on the ground story and residences above, with the entire town doubling as a market place. The 'native' settlers brought with them the artisans of the regions they came. This influence is seen primarily in the intricately carved building skins. These were the beginnings of urbanity in Bombay. The natural harbour was developed and the cotton from the hinterland was sent to the burgeoning mills in England, coming up as a consequence of its process of industrialisation.

Colonial Industrial city

1854 saw the process of industrialisation moving to Bombay. The cotton boom of 1860, as a result of the American Civil War, boosted this process. Many mills were set up during this time. This coincided with the 1857 War of independence where several factions of the Indians in the British army revolted but lost. As a consequence the British Government took over administration of the colony from the East India Company. This gave a further impetus to the process of industrialisation in the city. In 1873 the Bombay Port Trust was established. New industries like tramway and railway workshops, ship building, dyes and chemicals and oil and paper mills were set up. Some of the rich and influential traders shifted to owning mills. This opened up job opportunities & brought a steady stream of migrants especially from drought affected interior regions of Maharashtra to the city. To attract people to work in the mills, mill-owners provided housing. These were called chawls. In course of time, migration increased manifold and the mill-owners could not keep up with the housing stock. As a result densities increased in these housing typologies. To understand the formation of the modern metropolis one only needs to understand the kind of machinery this vast Empire would require to support itself. The accruelement of the parts of this machinery helped form the modern metropolis. Anthony King speaks of this particular relationship as that of the Core and the Periphery (King 1990), the Core being England and the Periphery, its colonies, in this case India. Bombay occupied a unique place in this equation. It was above all a gateway, an entry point to the whole of the peninsula (Patel, Thorner 1995). The city became a portal to transfer wealth to the Core. The machinery required to support the Empire, gave rise to new modern institutions, transport and communication systems and new urban infrastructure such as the railways, the docks and new industries like the cotton mills. Bombay thus had the makings of a modern metropolis, very different from older Indian towns that grew around pilgrimage shrines or royal courts (Thorner).

Planning in the colonial city aimed at specific objectives, to do with the governance of the colony and its overall control. This agenda saw the formulation of specific planning codes and interventions that were embedded in a modern civic consciousness of public health. This consciousness often became a guise that reflected colonial fears that a dense vibrant space could potentially become a receptacle for rebellion. (Chakrabarty 1991). The City Improvement Trust, that took up projects in the city like widening roads in the native town and setting up new townships for the administrative class serving the empire, manifested such fears and controls in its plans. These interventions formed the bedrock of many planning laws in the city that were later simply inherited by the ensuing political structures.

Culturally, Bombay was a window on the west through which new perspectives became visible. (Thorner) Modern Literature in both Marathi and Gujarati originated in the city under the impact of schools set up by British educators and enthusiastic local collaborators. Also significant was Bombay's role in the emergence of the dalit literary movement and the contemporary school of modern painting.

Bombay became the financial heart of the country and a stopover for global capital; a role that was sustained through the shifts in its political and economic structures from the colonial city to the socialist and later to the global city.

Independent (socialist) city

India became independent in 1947. In 1950 the Republic of India was constituted. The colonial rule was replaced by a quasi socialist system of governance with the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru choosing a third alternative; one that did not align with either of the two super powers: capitalist United States or communist USSR. This was the third world, the third alternative. Nehru believed that the other newly independent countries in Asia and Africa too should have the right not to align with either of the two powers and with the help of Tito (Yugoslavia) and Nasser (Egypt) formed the non aligned movement. Under such an alternative many of the large industrial ventures and institutions such as transport, communication, insurance, banking remained with the state whereas private initiatives were allowed in other cases. Within this context the Town Planning Act was introduced in 1954. Under the purview of the Town Planning Act, a sequence of events and policies were initiated – the Rent Control Act, the Urban land Ceiling Act (both forms of assuring an equitable distribution of wealth in the city), a shift towards northern suburbs as the city grew in leaps and bounds, the establishment of the railway system to facilitate mass rapid transport (MRT), the facilitation of a satellite township (New Bombay) to stop the linear growth of the city and to take up some of the load of intensive migrations¹ The government also took up the role of providing housing to the masses.

With independence migration rates increased exponentially.

Laws like the Rent Control Act, FSI and Urban Land Ceiling Act were later instituted under this system, again as a means of ensuring an equitable distribution. 1948: RENT CONTROL ACT: rents were frozen at 1948 rates to prevent the landlords from exploiting the tenants 1964: FSI introduced:(FAR) Restriction on how much one could build on a given plot. 1972: URBAN LAND CEILING ACT introduced: Restriction on how much one person could own. (500 sq. m in the city)

¹ City as Palimpsest, Study of the Native Town, Bombay, KRVIA Urban Studies, 1996

These were primarily the results of the socialist state trying to take up the task of ensuring an equitable distribution of housing. However the introduction of these policies had completely different implications from those conceived by the socialist state. Because rents were frozen at absurd rates, landlords could not take care of their premises. They started falling into states of disrepair. Landlords were apprehensive of letting out their premises. The concept of new rented premises subsequently saw its demise. This gave further impetus to a new profession - that of the 'Builder/Developer', an agent who would put capital together to build houses, which one would have to 'own'.

With concepts of FSI, ULCA, land became a scarce commodity. Overnight land prices shot up. All this made housing very expensive and affordable only to a few. The Government was unable to fulfil its responsibility of housing the burgeoning population. Because it couldn't cope with the demand, a large surplus of migrant workers began setting up their own settlements in the form of slums. These included construction workers, industrial workers and the rest of the population providing labor to run the city's economic engines. The socialist city further saw a take-over of the city from the colonial government by the Indian elite who inherited the legacy of their colonisers.

Global city

Around the 1980s, there was a stagnation in the country's economy. Its industries were accruing considerable losses because of several reasons, one such being a lack of capital poured back into the industries for modernisation. Ideas of dis-investing and opening up the markets to foreign investment were already being formed here. In 1991, the country became officially liberalised. It threw open its markets to foreign investment.

With Liberalisation, the Government saw its role change slowly from being a provider to a facilitator. Various financial schemes and housing loans were instituted in this period.

This period saw a boost in the media-isation of its culture with the advent of satellite television. At the same time heritage laws were constituted to protect some Heritage buildings when there was a realisation of the havoc that some of the blanket laws of the socialist period were creating on the urban fabric and some of the building artifacts in the city.

Large new infrastructural projects like new expressways, flyovers in the city, and new special economic zones started coming up in the city as a result of the new economy.

The Global City saw an increasing polarisation in income distribution and access to resources and a large informal economy started proliferating as a consequences of the new laws of the liberalised economy.



1 Original parable of Tenali Rama and how he got the gift of wisdom from Goddess Kali

Methodology

A fictitious history of Mumbai's urbanism is told here through the character of Tenali Rama. Rama as many Indian readers would know is a witty character from an Indian folklore; who would transform the status quo with his wit. Though the character of Tenali Rama as used in the caste ridden society of India, where discursive practices were exclusively upper caste, is not without its problems, the fictitious nature of the narrative allows one to transform his role in contemporary society.

The character of Tenali Rama is used here for specific reasons. The character's tactical nature is very useful to represent the transformations in the city by tactical negotiations.

Besides, the fact that Tenali Rama is a south Indian coming to Mumbai as a migrant is of significance. South Indians, who were the early migrants to the city, faced a strong resistance by the xenophobic local representatives of right-wing Hindu nationalism. This force has ever since become one of the shapers of the city's urbanism.

The narrative allows one to dwell on a soft reading of the city, the various relations between people, their conflicts and exchanges.

The thesis analyses the dominant imagination of the city through the shifts in its political structure (Design Cell 2001):

1. the colonial city
2. the independent (socialist) city
3. the global city

Tactical City is an alternative history that weaves across this structure.

Apart from constructing the context of the city, fictitious interventions allow one to play with the gap between analysis and design, reality and utopia. Milan Kundera in the 'Art of the Novel' talks about the role of fiction as being powerful, precisely because it is incomplete, which in turn opens up many more possibilities. Further, the amalgamation of various contemporary architects, urbanists and contemporary discursive practices, as a methodological device, into the history of the city in an anachronistic way, opens up new ways of SEEING the city and new possibilities of INTERVENTION. The insertion of modern western theory of architecture and urbanism is used for multiple reasons. The first, being its undeniable relevance to the context of the city, whose urbanism was constituted only through its colonisation. But often through the narrative these discursive practices only become props to legitimise this way of SEEING, at other times to comment on the absurdity of their use in the extreme conditions of the metropolis and to drive home the need for a search for local interventions. This fictitious history of Mumbai's urbanism is not limited to Mumbai but may start reading as biographies of various globalising cities. The fictitious interventions are provincial but pertinent to various third world contexts.

If nothing else, this is meant to be a bedtime story for architects and urbanists.

² Michel de Certeau in the Practice of Everyday Life: “Strategy is the mode by which legitimated power operates from within a designated field; through language, political structures of representation, the assignation of gender roles, the regulation of space, discourses of the body and so on. In short, it is the productive mode of hegemonic power. Tactics, by contrast, has no proper site, discourse or language, of its own - it insinuates itself into the other’s place. It adorns itself in the other’s garb, speaks through the other’s language, and, because it has no fixed address or permanent mode, never consolidates its own achievements or preserves its conquests” Michel de Certeau considers the uses to which social representation and modes of social behavior are put to by individuals and groups, describing the tactics available to the common man for reclaiming his own autonomy from the all-pervasive forces of commerce, politics, and culture.

higher studies and she couldn’t yet convince him to write about the role of the ‘imagination’ in contemporary society, in a book she thought he should title, ‘Modernity at Large’. And here was this simple Rama, talking about such profound things through his very simple humour and sharp imagination. She granted him a boon. She said, “You will be the wittiest person in the world and all your sons and daughters will be as witty as you. You will become the official jester in the Vijayanagar kingdom in the court of Krishnadevaraya. You have to promise me though that you will make sure that all your children are called ‘Tenali Rama’. Well, we’ll put an accent on the Rama for the daughters. You will all use your wit and tact to the benefit of society and always help build a parallel *TACTICAL CITY*, for you will see that the dominant discourse all through history will always be that of the powerful, who will build cities only for the elite and will go to the length of bombing entire nations just to maintain their status quo”.

³ Naom Chomsky, 'Responsibility of the Intellectual' In his 1967 essay, which marked a watershed in the development of opposition to the Vietnam war, Naom Chomsky wrote, "Intellectuals are in a position to expose the lies of governments, to analyse actions according to their causes and motives and often hidden intentions. In the Western world, at least, they have the power that comes from political liberty, from access to information and freedom of expression. For a privileged minority, Western democracy provides the leisure, the facilities and the training to seek the truth lying hidden behind the veil of distortion and misrepresentation, ideology and class interest, through which the events of current history are presented to us...It is the responsibility of intellectual to speak the truth and to expose lies...it is also his duty to see events in their historical perspective...The question, 'what have I done?' is one that we may well ask ourselves, as we read each day of fresh atrocities in Vietnam — as we create, or mouth, or tolerate the deceptions that will be used to justify the next defence of freedom." Here he studied the role of leading American intellectuals in the construction of pro-imperialist ideologies and propaganda, their justification of the use of force by the United States to impose its writ on the rest of the world, especially the third world.

She was thinking here of Michel's² distinction between tactic and strategy. After spending hours with Michel she had finally understood what he was trying to say. He told her that 'strategy' works through political will and is a tool of those in power. 'Tactic' on the other hand, operates like guerilla warfare in the shadow of strategies, seizing opportunity when it can. Michel had no idea what to do with this discovery. She on the other hand had liked the idea of building a *TACTICAL CITY*, one that would encompass those who were left behind by the imagination of the city fathers. Michel tried to tell her that it wasn't one person's work to do so. It had to be a constant becoming.

"The naming of all your sons and daughters 'Tenali Rama'", she said, "will be to ensure that each one remembers that he/she has a higher purpose than just privately advancing their own careers. Promise me all this, and I'll grant you the boon that will last for centuries to come, except if any one of your children shuns the responsibility of the intellectual, that Naom³ will soon write about."

Tenali was only too happy. He had nothing to lose. In the village he came from, anyway there was a tradition of helping one another because the tasks of the village were so networked that they wouldn't survive in a more individualistic society. He had always wondered why people made such a big fuss when Manuel⁴ wrote about the 'Rise of the network society'. For as far as Rama's knowledge went, his networked society had existed forever. Helping others was a way of life and he didn't think it was asking for too much from him. So he promised the Goddess and accepted the boon. Tenali had no idea how much easier it would have been for his posterity to lie quietly in the shadows of an apolitical life. But Tenali was overcome by the power of the goddess who he knew would not take 'no' for an answer.

⁴ Manuel Castells, 'Rise of the Network Society'

Castells points out while theorizing on postindustrialism that we are experiencing one of the largest waves of industrialisation in history (Castells 1996) The increasing penetration of capitalist modes of production to "developing countries" creates also new working class in those countries. This new groups of working class are probably going to organise as previous generations of workers have done, and they will put forward demands on better working conditions and political democracy. It is true that global information networks can be used as means of global control but they may also be used to spread ideas of universal democratic rights, to spread alternative information and to serve as basis for worldwide debate on worldwide democracy

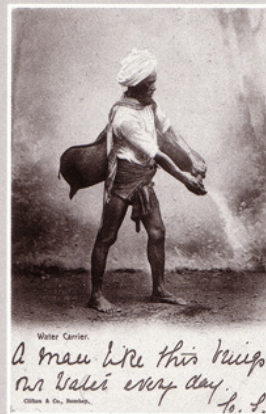
He served the office of jester at Krishnadeveraya's court and named all his sons and daughters 'Tenali Rama' and taught them to call their sons and daughters 'Tenali Ramas' too. And so, though there was an immense confusion at home as to who was being addressed, the father, the son, the daughter, the uncles, the aunts or their sons and their daughters in the extended family, they were always involved in helping the rest of the society with their wit. The large Rama family cut through the various phases of Indian history, from the colonial era to the socialist phase of its independence to the days of a neo liberal world. The Tenali Rama lineage spread through Indian society and you would find a Rama in almost every situation spreading the methods of tact and negotiations that helped build a *TACTICAL CITY*. The multitudinous Tenali Ramas became tactical practitioners all through history.



Top, Native Street Scene. Centre row, Dhobi; Water Carrier; Toddy Drawer; Paanwala. Below, Opium Shop.



A Brahmin (Paanwala) who is the 'king of gentlemen' who does our Saturday work. Some all are well in 1911.



Water Carrier. A man like this keeps on his back every day. 1911.



Toddy Drawer.



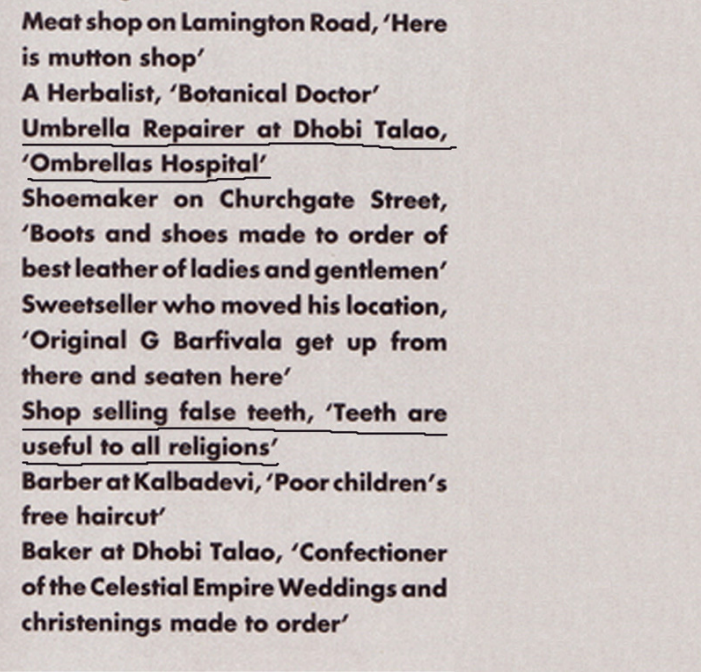
The bazaar areas were characterised by colour, chaos, noise and vibrancy. Most shops had a raised *otla* which served doubly as a display and sales counter. Some of the shop signs in the 19th century were truly charming, for instance:
Meat shop on Lamington Road, 'Here is mutton shop'
A Herbalist, 'Botanical Doctor'
Umbrella Repairer at Dhobi Talao, 'Ombrellas Hospital'
Shoemaker on Churchgate Street, 'Boots and shoes made to order of best leather of ladies and gentlemen'
Sweetseller who moved his location, 'Original G Barfivala get up from there and seated here'
Shop selling false teeth, 'Teeth are useful to all religions'
Barber at Kalbadevi, 'Poor children's free haircut'
Baker at Dhobi Talao, 'Confectioner of the Celestial Empire Weddings and christenings made to order'

Tenali in the colonial city : as a migrant in Mumbai

This is the story of a Tenali Rama sibling who decided to migrate to Mumbai in the year 1857. These days the country was ruled by some handsome white men, who had come to the country for trade but stayed on when they saw that the siphoning of wealth from this place required a more sophisticated machinery. The Sepoy Uprising was just over. They say it had been suppressed. Rama settled in the native town just outside the colonial town where the white men lived with their lovely white horses and their lovely white ladies sometimes indistinguishable from each other. He lived with a relative who had migrated before him in search of greener pastures. To his surprise he found no green pastures - only a brown town segregated from a white one.

Tenali soon realised that he had to pick up a new skill if he had to survive in this teeming city. Suddenly the alienation of the metropolis gripped him. He was wondering why he had moved from the familiar confines of his village where everyone greeted him with respect and life was far more predictable. He then remembered the hunger pangs he had felt in those days of drought and knew he had somehow made the right decision. He knew he had to stick to it now because there was no turning back from here. His family in the village depended on him. He had to put his imagination to work in this strange city. This town of Mumbadevi, this dowry of the Portuguese princess, this seven part archipelago, this city of fortunes, this city packed with humanity was his only option.

Tenali's relative offered him boarding in a room that resembled an agrarian wada typology from the village he came from. This typology had now been subdivided in the new urban situation and had become multi-tenanted. Tenali lived there with his other fellow migrants.

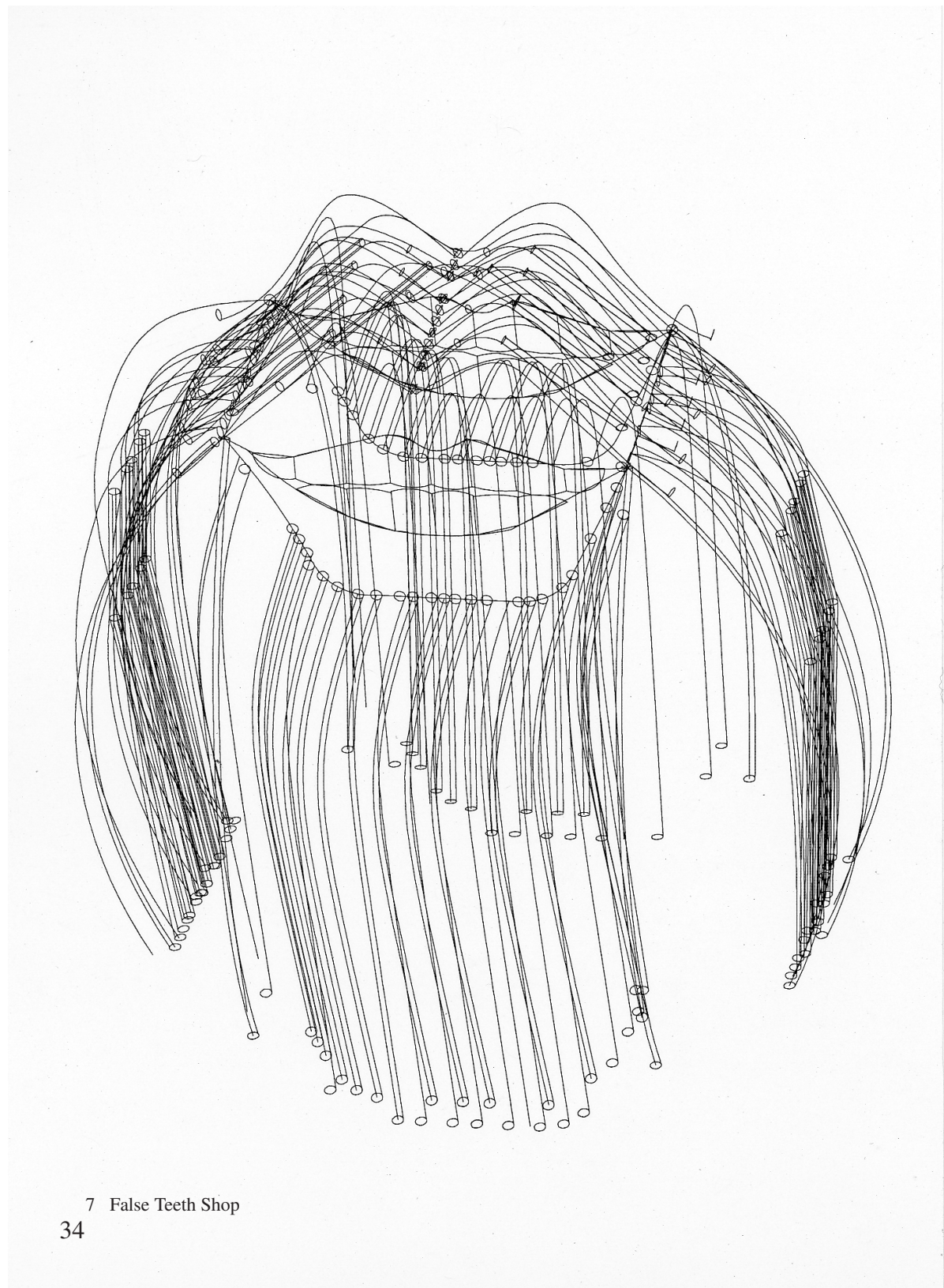


6 Excerpt from colonial documentation of native enterprises

The next day Tenali ventured out towards the white colonial town. Between the colonial town and the native town was a large esplanade. They say it was for shooting range, in case the ignorant, ungrateful army of brown men rebelled again. In the background stood robust stone buildings, a typology that was completely new to him. He was told that it was a Gothic style, a replica of some buildings that were built in England, the place where these lovely white men came from. Anthony⁵ had told his neighbour very secretly, who in one of their gossip sessions very secretly told Tenali that a lot of those buildings were built with wealth siphoned off from this country and other colonies. But they were good people after all and very intelligent too if they managed to build such impressive buildings for themselves. Rama, impressed with what he saw and filled with awe returned home, still racking his brains as to how he should make a living in this city. What could he sell that would be useful to all? There were a wide variety of religions and languages here, something very different from his homogeneous village. Just then he saw an old Marwari merchant walk by. He smiled at him and greeted him with a “Jai Shri Krishna” and he saw the merchant missing two of his molars. He knew the merchant would have to soon part with the rest of his teeth thanks to all the sweet meat shops that were opening up in the streets of the native town. He was suddenly sure what he wanted to sell. He would sell false teeth. “Teeth are useful to all religions” (fig 6) he thought. His ancestors had been engaged in trade with Vietnam some centuries ago and had learnt from them the art of making water puppets. They made beautiful teeth for the puppets. He had inherited these skills and was sure that they could now be used in making teeth for these puppets of the British Empire. Well, he thought, “I’m not being fair thinking like that about them as puppets. After all I am one too. We all have to be puppets sometimes to survive. Wasn’t it that tuneless singer Dylan who once said sometime in the 80s, that we all have to serve somebody? Or words to the effect?”

Tenali, very happy with his new brain wave set about the task of making a billboard for himself. Very painstakingly he drew a set of false teeth and painted the lips a bright red though most of the Indian lips were black either because they were simply born that way or because the tobacco that they chewed made them turn black. But who cared for reality? Reality is anyway one that is constructed through representation. He was finally ready with his beautiful new billboard and he beamed at his lovely piece of art. He thought, “if only I was in Paris right now, I would have made a million on this and would never have to bother about making false teeth for some old foggy Indians”. He was quickly reminded of his name and his family mission and erased these thoughts from his mind.

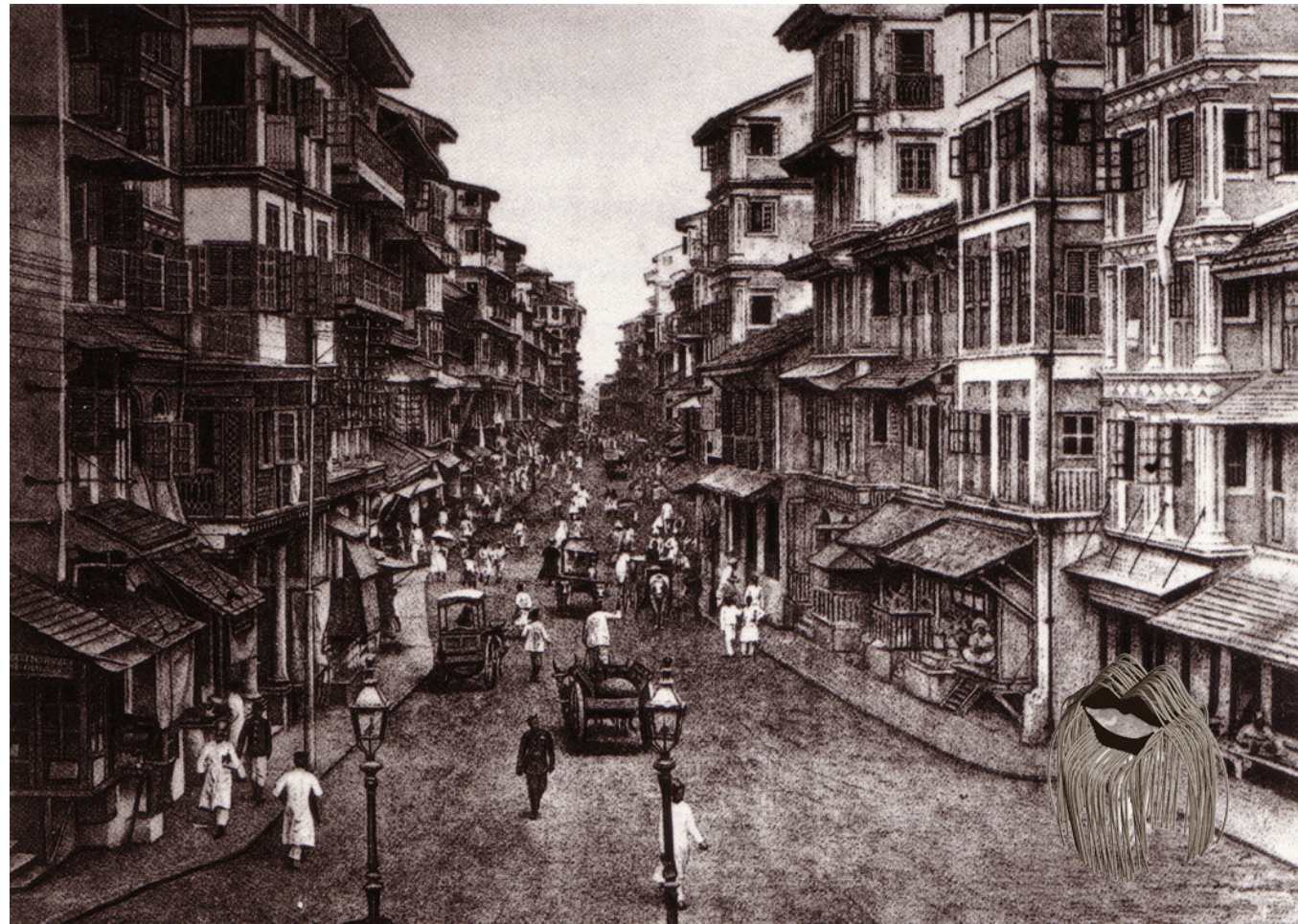
⁵ Anthony King in *Urbanisation, Colonialism and the World Economy* articulates the core and the periphery relationship. He says that the modern system is a world-economy, characterised by a (1) single division and integration of labour and (2) a single set of accumulation-processes. As a consequence, at any given time, the world-economy may be viewed as consisting of two complementary portions: a relatively advanced ‘core’ region and its always less advanced periphery.



7 False Teeth Shop
34



8 Tenali's friend Valmiki who inspired his false teeth shop design.



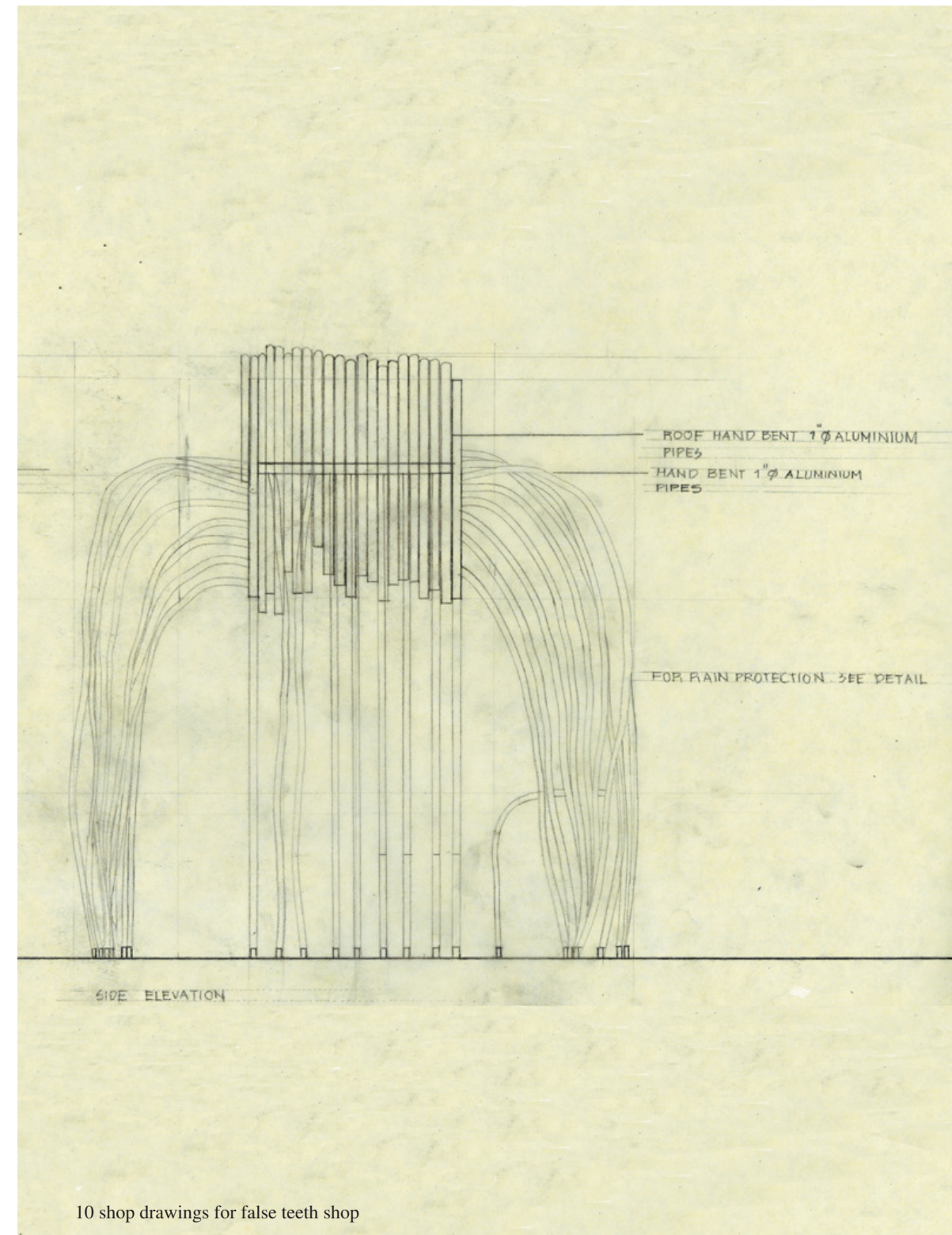
9 False teeth shop in the native town

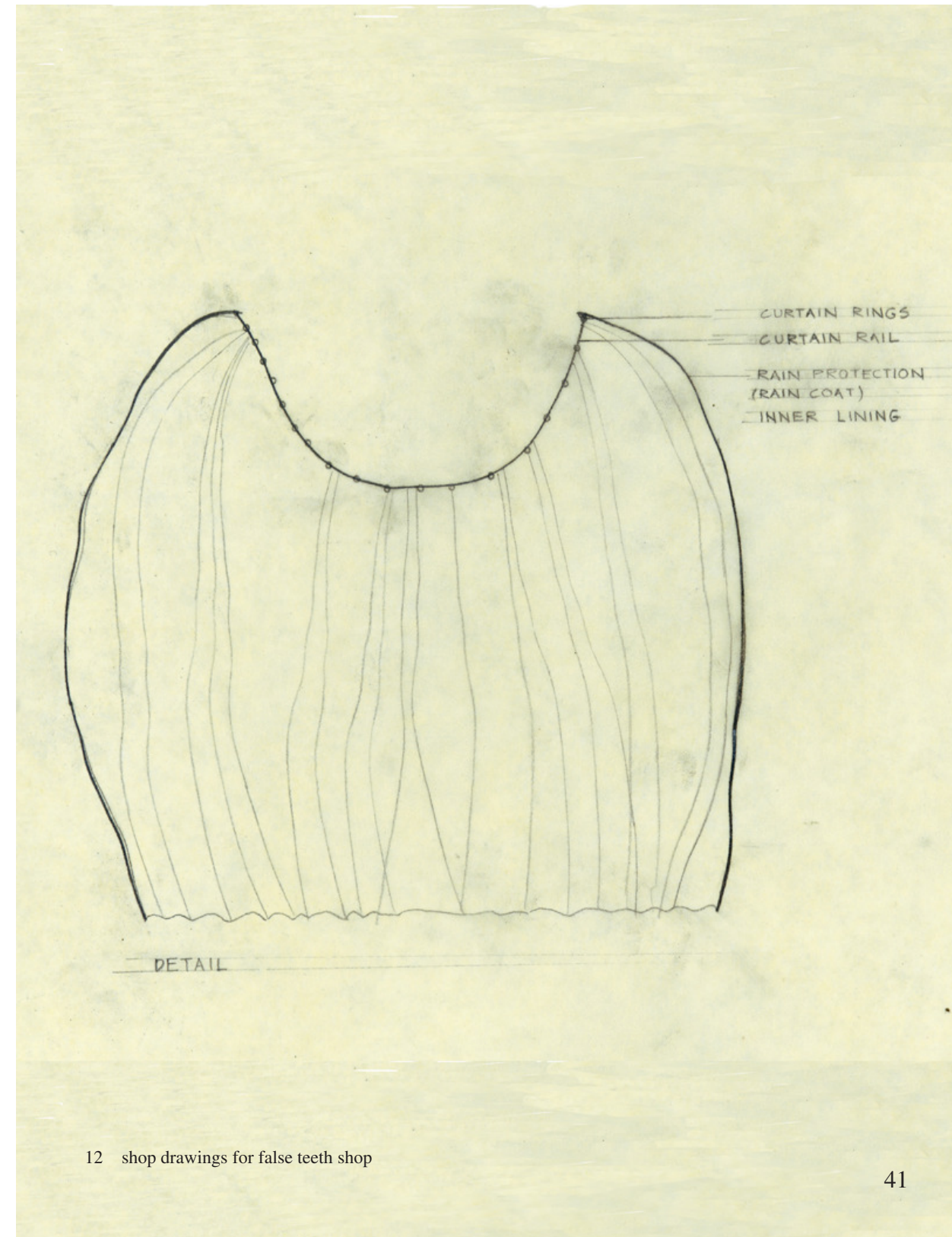
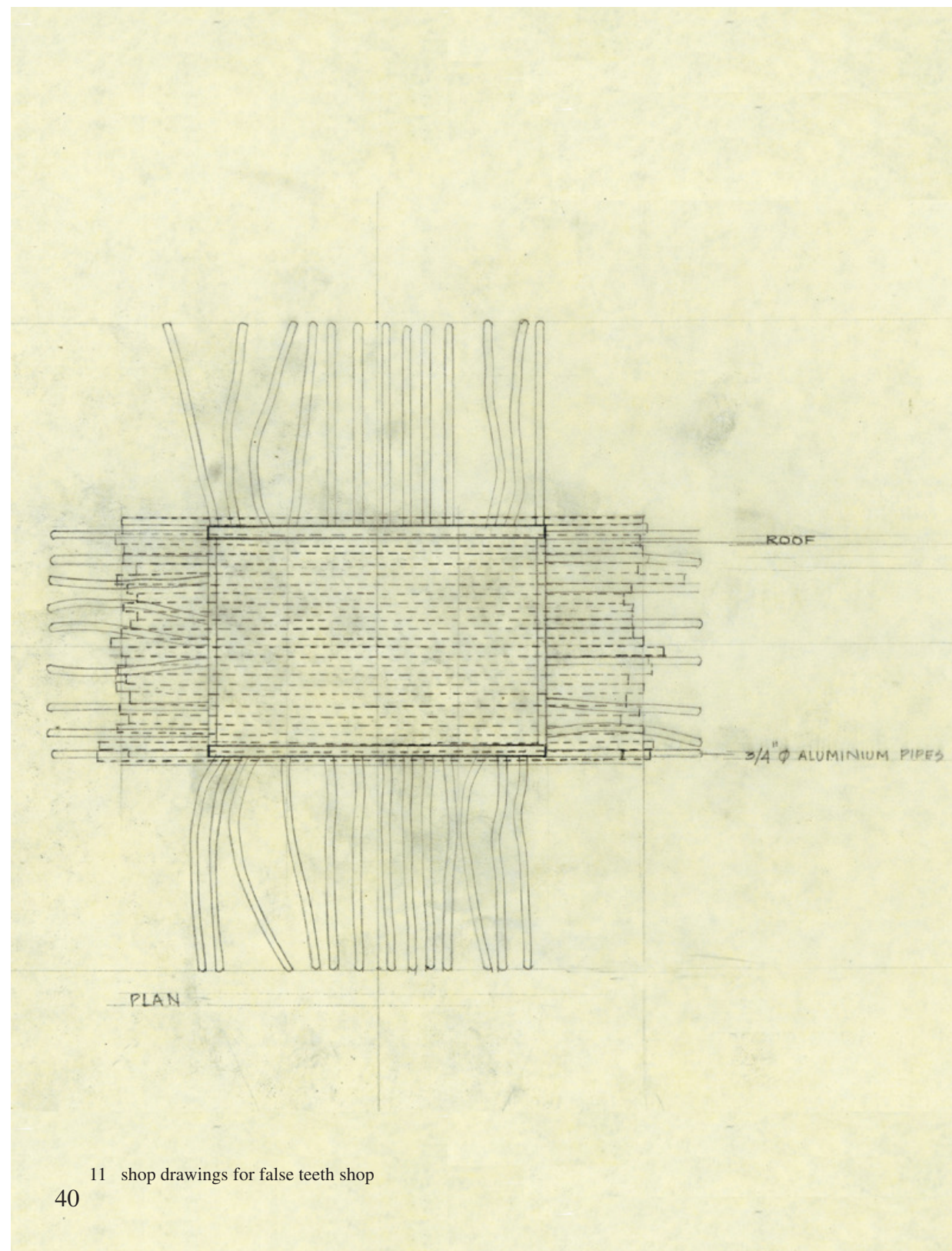
⁶ Robert Venturi *Learning from Las Vegas*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998.

“The duck is that special building that is a symbol; the decorated shed *is* the conventional shelter that *applies* the s y m b o l ”

“No wonder he thought Kali had insisted that we all be named Tenali Ramas”. “It doesn’t take too much time in this competitive world to become selfish”, he thought. To his billboard he attached his beautifully crafted shop. He made his shop with long strands of flowing facial hair that were attached to the jaw, which was his billboard. This was modelled after the visage of his mendicant friend Valmiki (fig 8). Valmiki’s long white flowing facial hair was a perfect setting for his spotlessly white teeth. Tenali was always intrigued by Valmiki’s hair and thought that if Valmiki had managed to grow it a bit longer, it could double as his house.

Tenali made the facial hair from the tons of aluminium conduits that emerged as scrap from the ship breaking yard in the Bombay harbour. He had a friend who worked in the docks packing off the bales of cotton on its way to Manchester, who showed Tenali this material. Tenali bent the conduits to further make them structurally stable. The tropical sun poured in through the cracks in the strands. Manual bending gave the structure a fuzzy appearance of facial hair. In a milieu of so many languages, the jaw would not fail to communicate what he was trying to sell. The facial hair formed the structure and the skin of his shop and a refuge from the hot tropical sun. Tenali devised a rain protection coat that could be swung around a rail as an inner lining. He had managed to make a shop, which his contemporary Rob Venturi would call a duck⁶. Bob, as he was lovingly called always wanted to visit Tenali and see this duck. Venturi was tired of all the sterile architecture around him and was looking for some complexity and some contradiction in his life. He put down a visit to the native Indian town in his little strathmore diary.



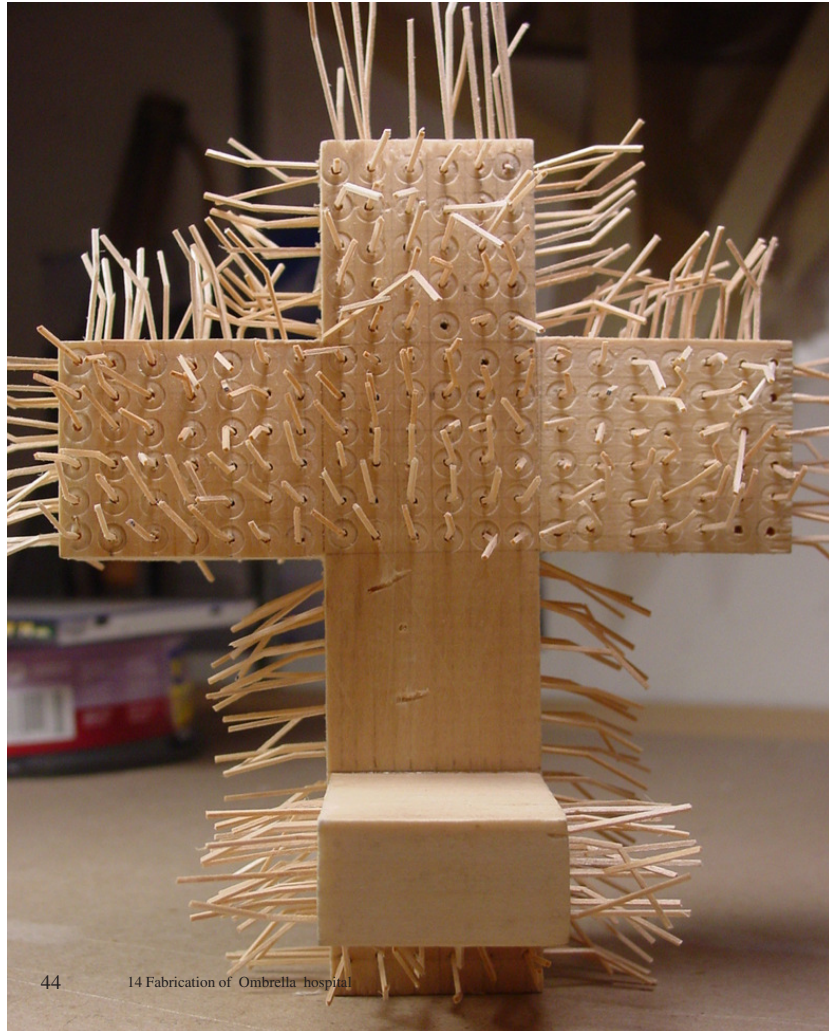




13 Vicchu and his family converted to Christianity

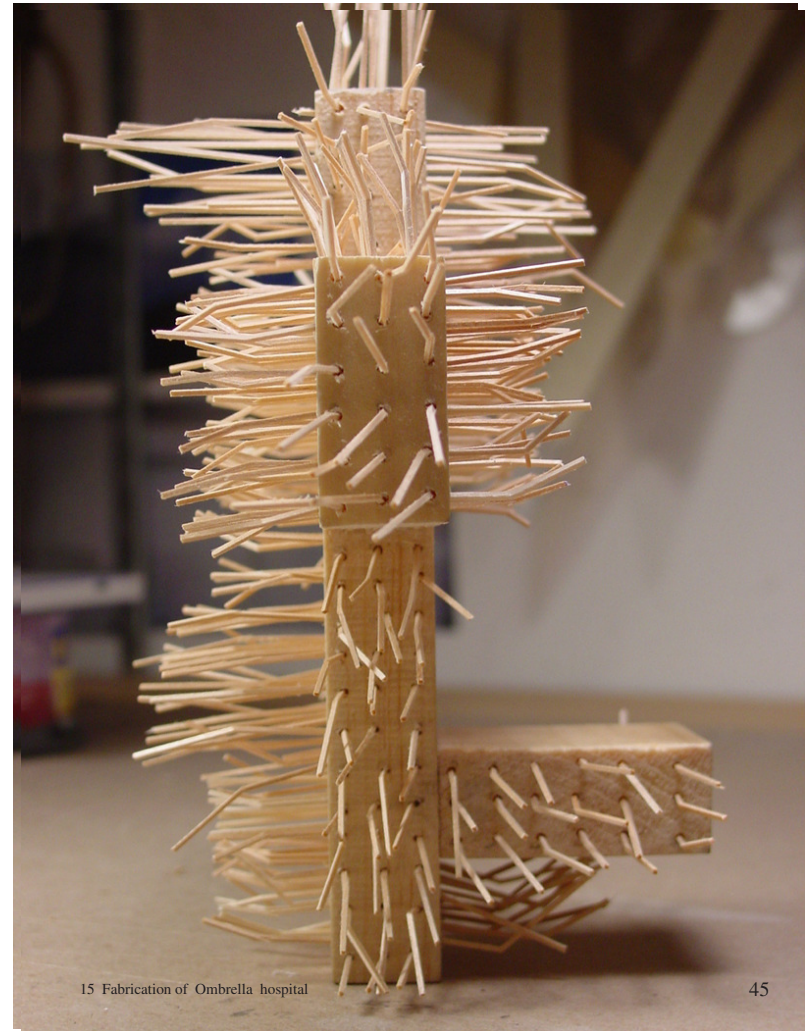
In the meantime Tenali, set about the task of inspiring his neighbours and other fellow natives. Each one came about with new programmes and new designs for his shop. Vicchu, who repaired umbrellas, called his shop 'Ombrella Hospital' He simply didn't know how to spell 'umbrella'. Though Macaulay had already introduced English education in the country by 1933, it had not yet percolated beyond the class of *babus*, who were bred to be Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect. Vicchu, who was a lower caste Hindu, was tired of being demeaned by the members of the higher caste. He found redemption in the missionaries who came with the colonialists. He was impressed with the services of the Red Cross and the humanitarian ideals they stood by. He held the same ideals when it came to being a doctor to all those battered umbrellas. He restored the umbrellas to their original health with the same affection that Florence Nightingale had shown in her work. The shop he made came from the hopes he pinned on his new-found religion and the ideals of the Red Cross he stood by. His shop would be a cross. However, his own experience at the local hospital was a hairy one and the mere memory of that would give him goose bumps. The shop that he finally designed had all his memories, hopes and desires packed into it. His shop was a big hairy cross with goose bumps. The hair would be used to hang his umbrellas from. Sometimes he would hang his own umbrella that would shade him and also act as his signage. On some days when the weather was bad and torrential rains cut the bazaar streets, Vicchu would open all the umbrellas that hung from the skin of the cross and would protect passersby caught without their umbrellas. It was made with material salvaged from the surplus of wooden mango cartons that swamped the newly built Crawford market. The umbrella hospital soon became an integral part of the life of the bazaar.

Now it was Anwar's turn. Anwar wanted to open a paan-bidi shop (a tobacconists shop that sells betel nut leaf that is chewed) but knew he would have to move from place to place, trying to sell his paan. All he had was his trunk, which accompanied him and held his meagre belongings when he left his village. Tenali suggested to him that he could perhaps make his trunk into a shop. The various compartments could open up and hold all the condiments he needed to make the paan. And soon the two set about modifying the suitcase to become a shop. Gulabappa, who always had new gossip, on seeing what they were doing, told them of some artist called Duchamp⁷ she had heard of, who was interested in modifying readymade objects, which he called art. She wasn't sure she said, but she thought that this suitcase they had so ingeniously designed could somehow qualify as this new readymade art. But how did it matter? All that this suitcase was going to be used for was selling *paan* to merchants who needed that extra kick to take them through their tiresome haggling. Soon word spread and Duchamp came by to see this suitcase. He was highly inspired to make his 'box in a valise' when he finally



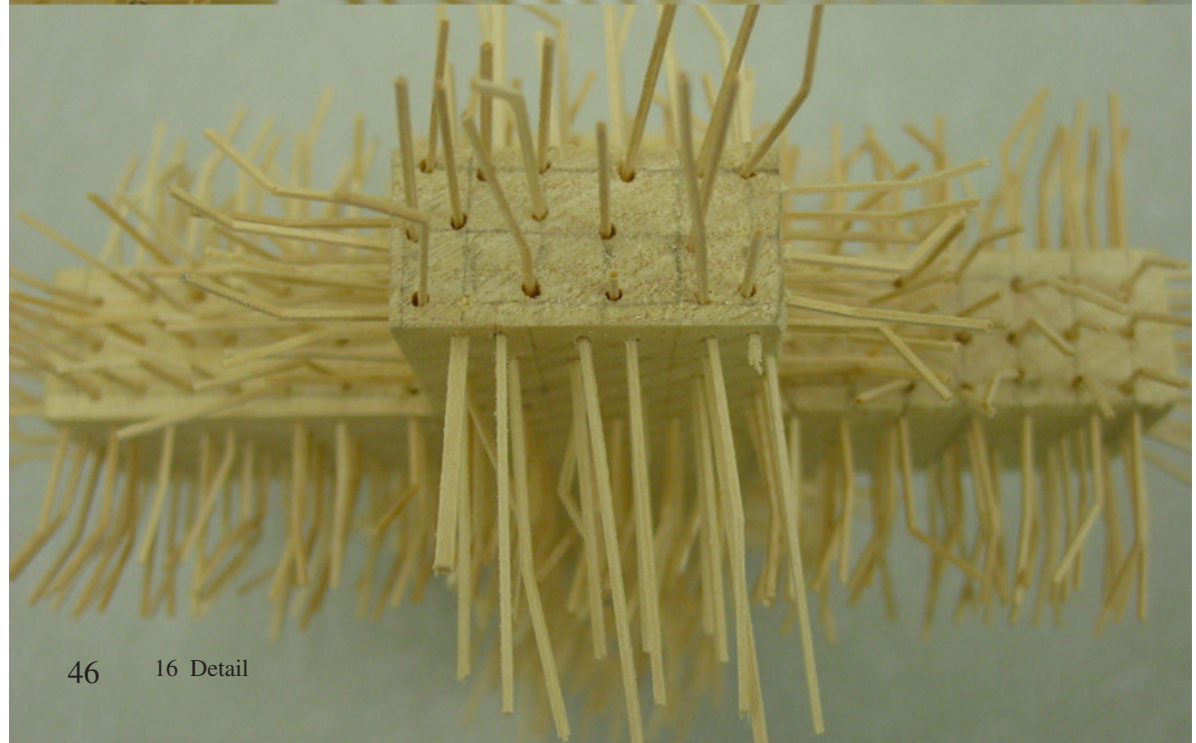
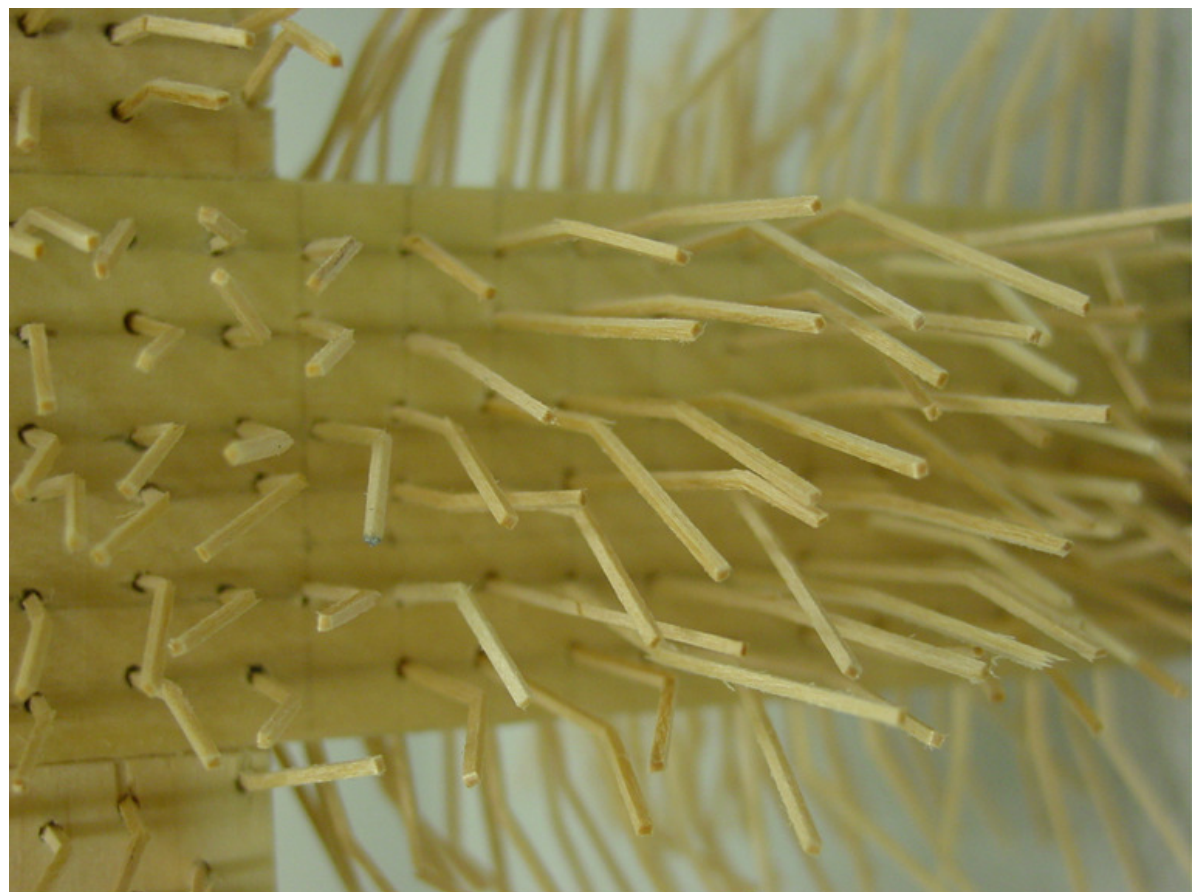
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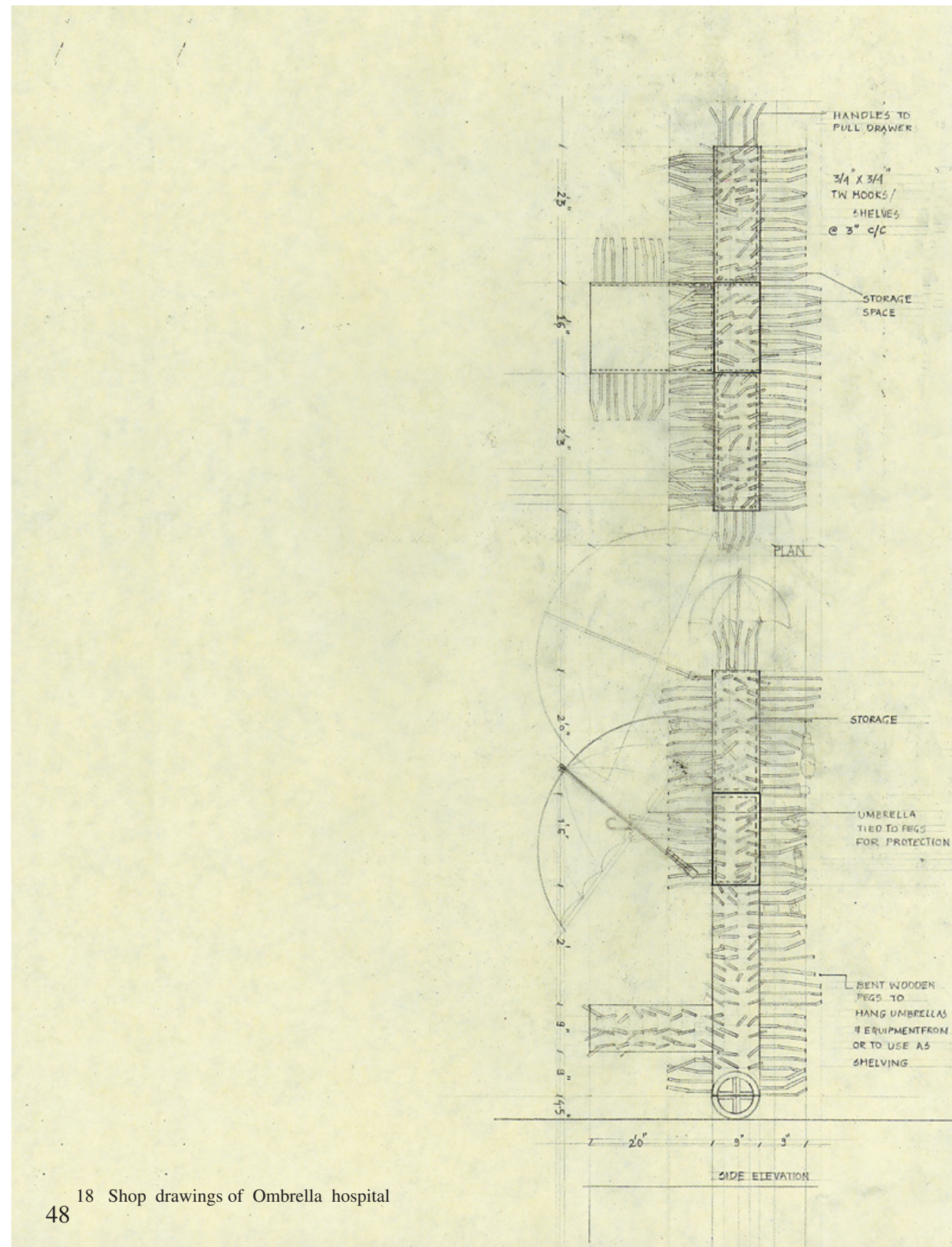
14 Fabrication of Ombrella hospital



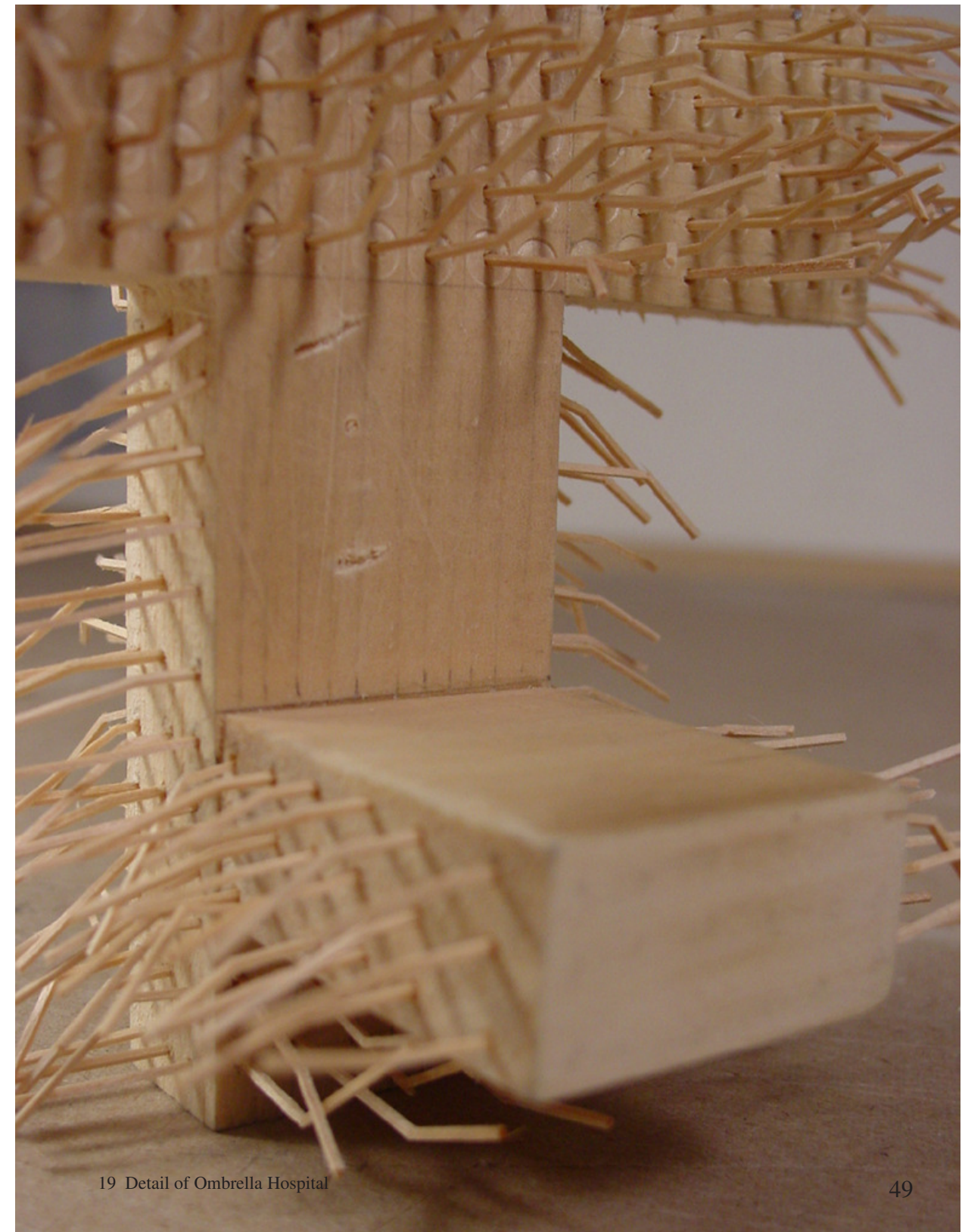
15 Fabrication of Ombrella hospital

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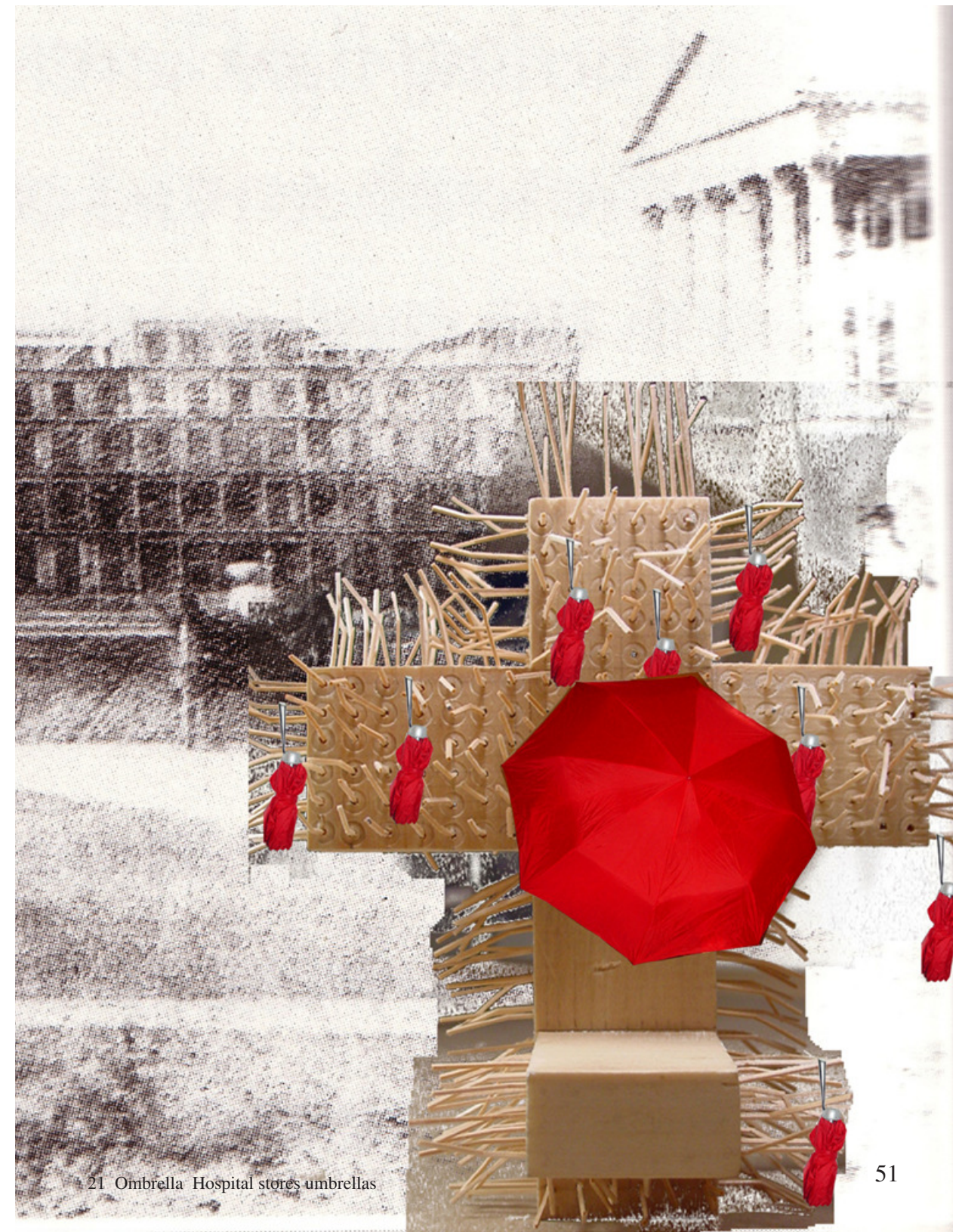
18 Shop drawings of Umbrella hospital
48



19 Detail of Umbrella Hospital



20 Ombrella hospital in the city

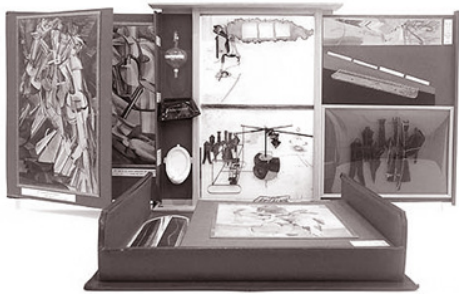


21 Ombrella Hospital stores umbrellas

8 The expatriate Frenchman Marcel Duchamp met the American artist Joseph Cornell in New York in the early 1930s. In the early 1940s Duchamp engaged Cornell to assist him in assembling the deluxe editions of Duchamp's new project, the miniature "museum" of his work, commonly referred to as the *Boîte-en-valise*.



22 Anwar's paan shop made from a modified trunk



Duchamp's box in a valise

decided he had had enough of old Europe and needed to move to young America. He knew he couldn't carry all his artwork with him. It would be too expensive to pay the shipping charges. Anwar's idea appealed to him and he decided to make mini versions of his art work and pack them in a suitcase with several compartments like Anwar's and possibly in difficult times use this contraption as a travelling shop or a museum to display his art at the New York subway. He knew he could make his living that way because by this time people had started hearing about his unusual suitcase and he was on the point of becoming famous. He had his friend Joseph Cornell⁸ help him make 300 replicas of this innovative shop design once he was in America. Soon the streets of Bora Bazaar were filled with innovative vendor designs and signages. Bob Venturi finally managed to arrive on a study trip, funded by the Yale School of Art and Architecture to the native town. He saw these colourful signages and the ducks and decorated sheds. He quickly drafted his studio proposal for a student research of the native town where some of these observations not yet noticed by architects would be studied. This would be followed by a publication he would call 'learning from mumbai'. He smiled happily at his break through.

Tenali, saw the array of designs and was pleased with himself. He had fulfilled his task of serving the community. He wondered if Goddess Kali would be pleased with him. Now it was the task of his posterity, maybe at the Indian Institute of Technology or one of the architecture schools in Mumbai, to take up the task of making better prototypes for travelling migrant labour like himself. But he knew his grandchildren would have to come up with a tactic to fund such projects in a highly patron dependent profession. "Well, he thought, it was up to them to think. How else would they continue the tradition of family wit? Simply inheriting the name was not enough. They would have to prove their wit". Satisfied with his contribution, Tenali Rama, continued to look around for clients with missing teeth.



Tenali's modified trunk that served as his paan shop



23 Industrial chawls and celebration of the Ganesh festival

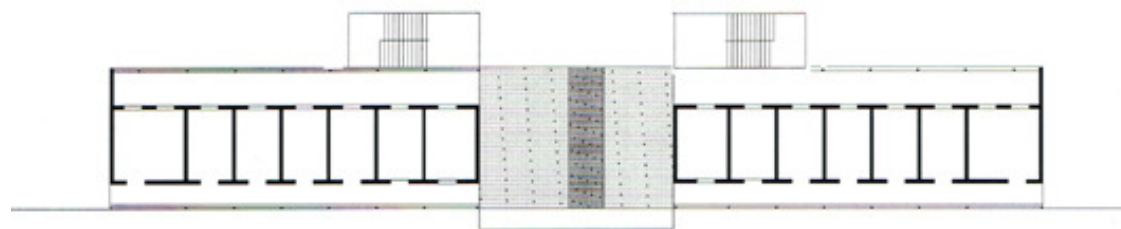
Tenali in the Industrial Colonial City

Another uncle of mine, needless to say a Tenali Rama arrived in Mumbai with a bus-full of people from his village to work in the mills in Mumbai. He was attracted by the new job prospects in the city and the housing that the millowners had built to attract migrant labour. These were called chawls. The chawls in the city became settings for a large number of urban festivals. This became a milieu for political organisations and also places to plot out the freedom struggle. In course of time the millowners could not keep up with the continuous flow of migrants from nearby villages and towns and stopped building new housing stock. The existing units began to be shared by an increasing number of people. This living style and typology he saw, changed the daily lives of people. The typology that was once used by a smaller number of people and hence sufficed having a fewer toilets now had toilets being shared by many more people. Well, they managed to have a major effect on people's physiognomy in their early morning routines. In some cases it extended the idea of extended family across community structures, forming new community patterns, at other times it caused tempers to rise and factions being created on the basis of who used the toilets for the longest times. Tenali found that the neighbouring housing block had the same story. But apart from that he was noticing how in the new urban condition, people were drifting apart. The alienation of the metropolis was overbearing. He decided to flip the problem around its head and see if the problem of the toilets could not only be resolved but would help take away some of the alienating aspects of the city. Rama had been told by Damodar,⁹ who studied the trajectory of compatibilities of various cult groups through a study of the representations of their gods, how on occasions Gods who had been represented as warring, had reconciled through marriage. This is symbolic of the warring groups or the cults themselves uniting.

Tenali had been thinking about what his friend had told him for a while. He wondered what it would be like to have the toilets of the two neighbouring buildings marry. The marriage was planned thereafter and with great pomp and celebration the toilets came together in wedlock and with them their respective buildings and the respective inhabitants. The marriage of the two helped use up side open spaces, brought together the resources of the two buildings and their inhabitants and allowed them to build more stalls with the pooling of resources. A big water tank was shared between the newly weds, who made it a point to capture runoff from rainwater to fill it. Tenali charted out a funding mechanism and figured out who would be the interested actors and agencies in the city, who could fund the project. He found many interested parties. He made a project

Shiva grew out of rather primitive and aniconic cult stones along several parallel tracks, into a sublimated highest god- for some people. At one stage his equivalent came into violent conflict with the various mother goddesses who had previously been the senior deities. We find a naked three faced god on Mohenjodaro seals who might easily be a prototype of the modern Siva; but that deity wears buffalo horns on his head dress. It cannot be a mere accident that the pastoral bufallo-god Mhasoba also identified with the Mahisasura whom goddess Parvati crushes to gain her title Mahisasura-mardini. At times Parvati as Yogeshwari is married to an equivalent of Mhasoba who begins to resemble a diluted form of Siva-Bhairava

⁹ DD Kosambi ,
Myth and Reality.



proposed conservation project: plan showing toilet zone in wedlock



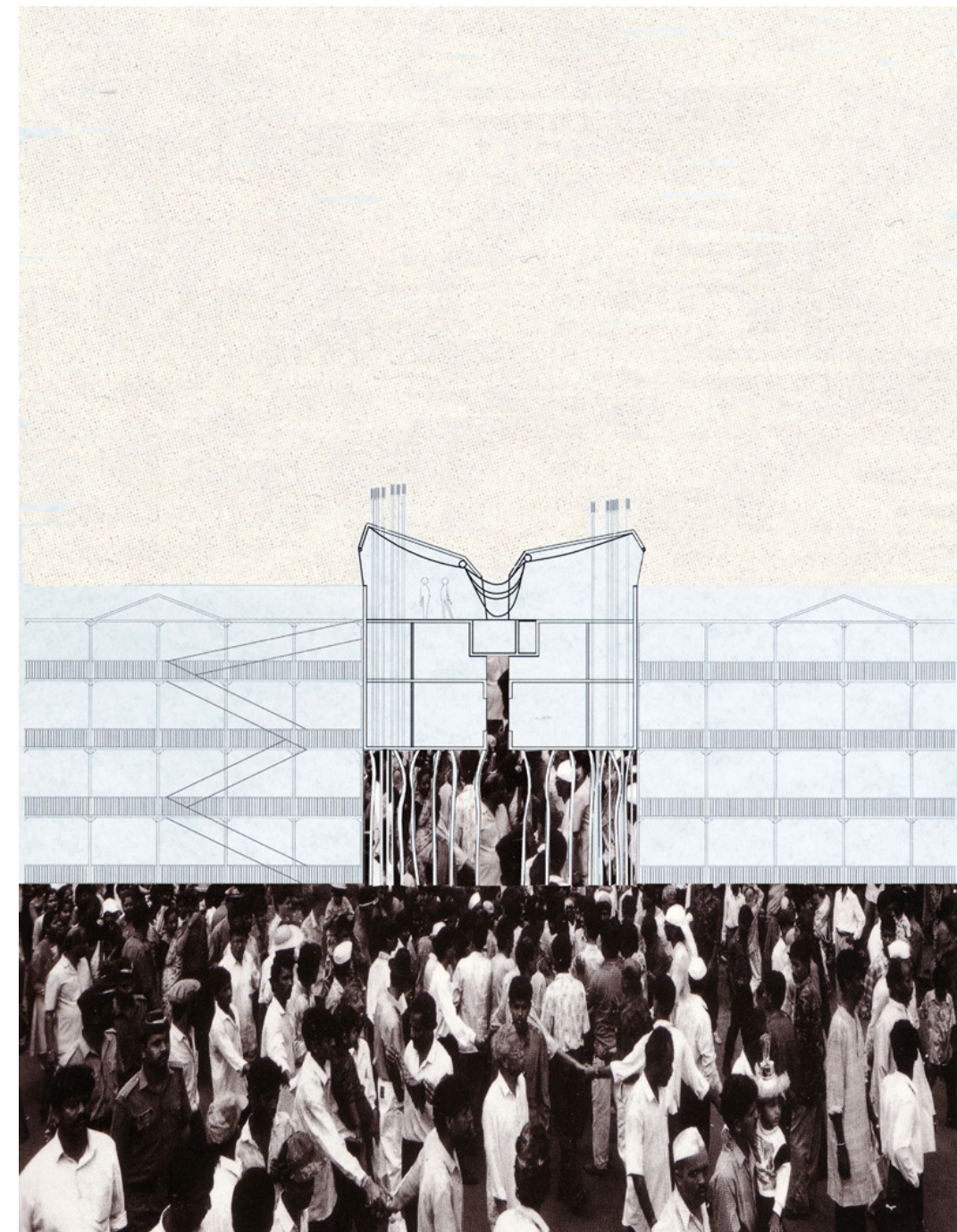
proposed conservation project: refurbishment of existing housing stock. The two neighbouring chawls share the utilities of a toilet block, a water body, a water collection device and a community hall.



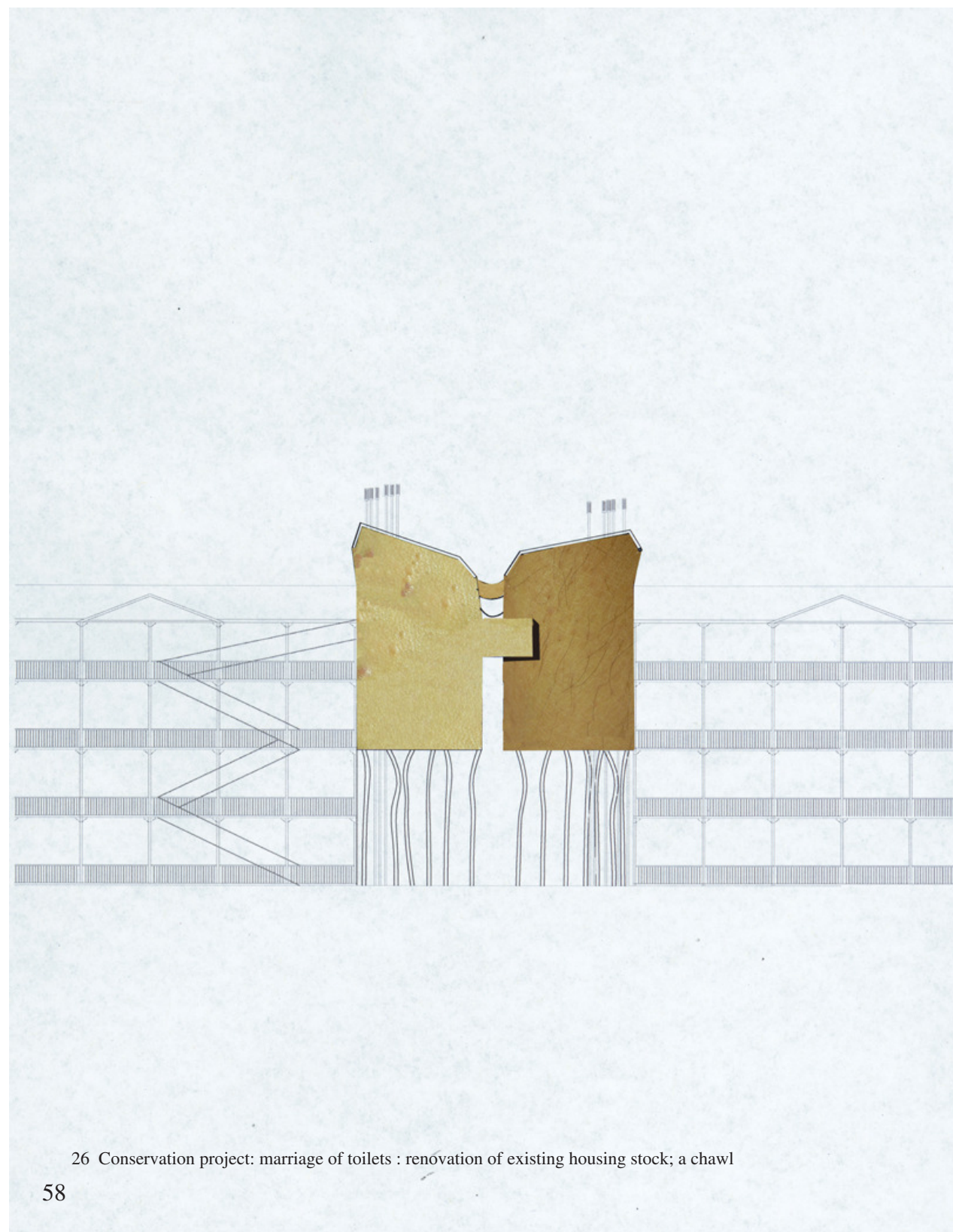
existing chawl typology: plan



existing chawl typology: elevation



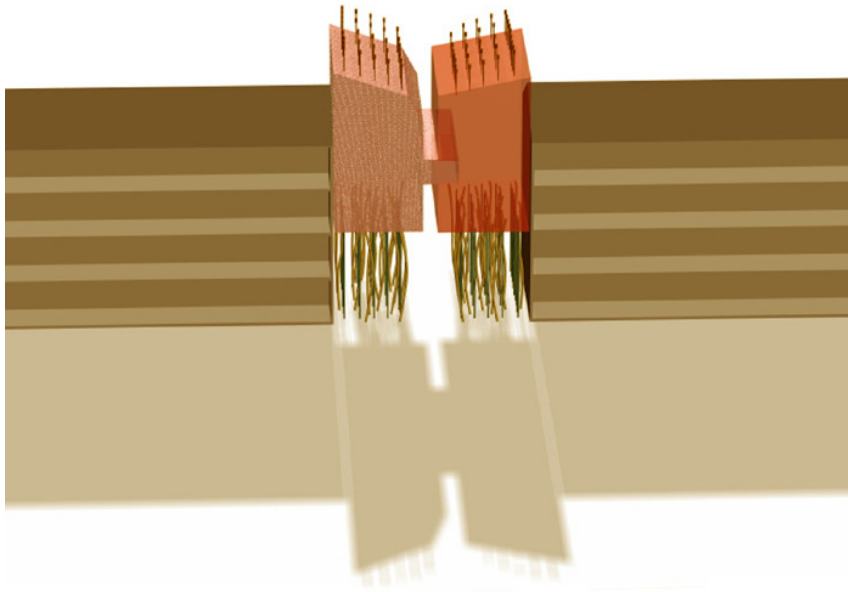
25 Marriage of toilets: the marriage constitutes an organisational condition, an event to bring human capital together to conserve an existing housing typology; creating an architectural programme and a strategy of funding such a project. The architectural aesthetic tactically becomes figurative of the marriage. The buildings in marriage no longer follow a machinic modernism. They become almost totemic, quasi-human signs of a new organisational structure.



26 Conservation project: marriage of toilets : renovation of existing housing stock; a chawl

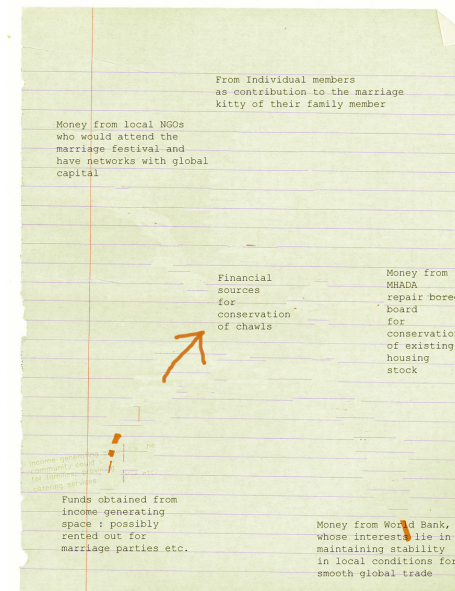


27 Study model of a sagging roof in the community space: the roof is made of lycra and collects rain water. The membrane sags as the water content increases and has a degree of porosity by which, after it gets saturated, it drips and collects in the water pool below. This forms the central feature of the community space and a sign of sustainable architecture.



report based on that. He found a way to involve actors from the World Bank, which was soon to be instituted, the local government and from the residents themselves, who were always ready to spend lavishly on the weddings of their kin. This was a strange Indian mentality at work that liked to spend on marriages but not on the environment. Tenali capitalised on this trait. The toilets had always hated being called 'servant spaces' as the modernist architect Kahn¹⁰, who spent his time asking the brick what it wanted to be, would often call their kin. They liked the fact that Tenali and his neighbours reinstituted them as members of their extended families. The Bombay skies that day were red with the spirit of celebration that marked the day of the marriage. Celebration was in Tenali's scheme of things a means of organisation; an organisation that would challenge the patron depend nature of architecture, one that would allow a community to be the client. Festivals had been used before as in the case of the Ganesh festival to organise for political means. Here was Tenali using this powerful tactical tool to rethink architecture and the problem of conservation

¹⁰ Louis I. Kahn (1903-1974) first posed a question in the early 1970s that has since attained legendary status within architectural circles: "What do you want, brick?" The answer, according to Kahn, is that brick wants to be an arch and not merely an infill or cladding material with no structural role.



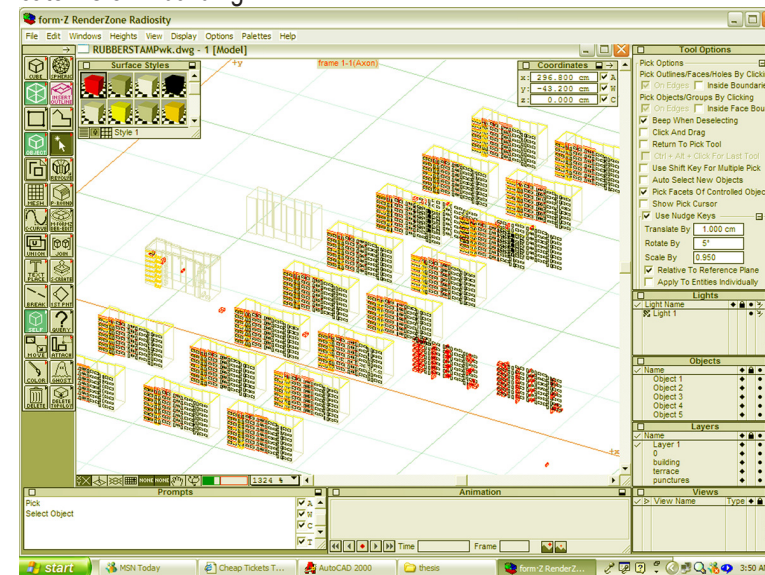
29 Chart showing funding mechanisms for the conservation project



30 Socialist city

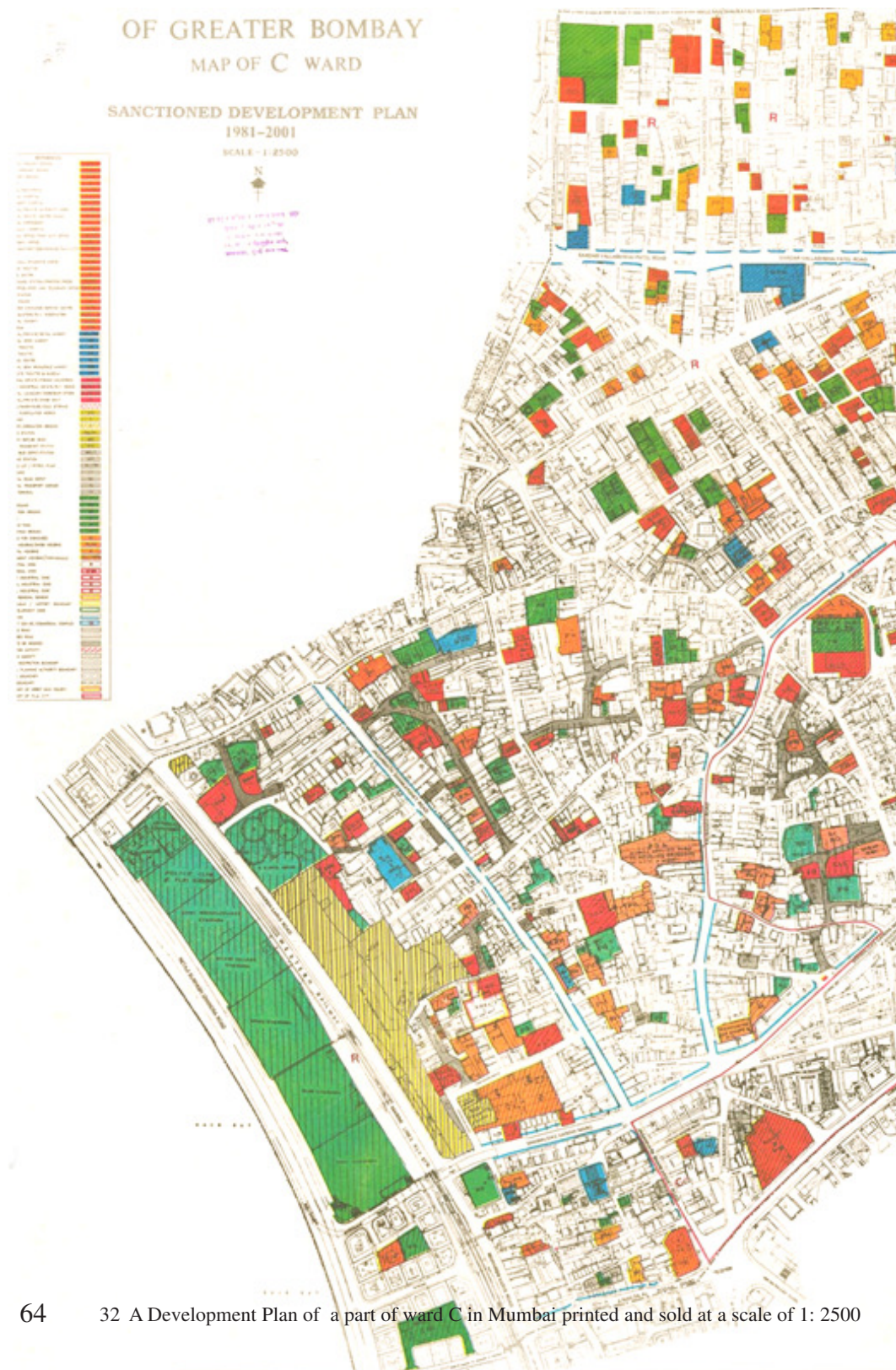
Tenali in the Independent (Socialist) City

It was the 15th of August, the Independence day of India. It was 15 years since the country had received its independence. This progeny of the Tenali family was returning home from his job as a clerk at the Life Insurance building at Nariman point. As he walked through his housing complex, provided to him by the Maharashtra Housing and Development Board, he felt suddenly disoriented. He would generally read the number on his building and enter it because they all looked the same and there were so many of them marching along that there was no telling which one was his. It was as if someone had hit the continuous copy button in the form z programme and had forgotten every other command. Perhaps if they had ventured for the slightly more complex nurb tools or the various mesh commands, there would be some variation in the built landscape around, probably blobs of various sizes and shapes would dot the landscape. But here, either it was a very old version of form z that only had the cube parameters or it was that foggy old architect called Corbusier in Chandigarh who was obsessed with cubes and a movement called Cubism that was responsible for the burgeoning cuboid housing blocks around him. Maybe it was Nehru's ¹¹ love for Corbusier and modernism and cubes. One couldn't tell. Today somebody had covered the numbers on the buildings with some political posters and he couldn't manage to locate his own building



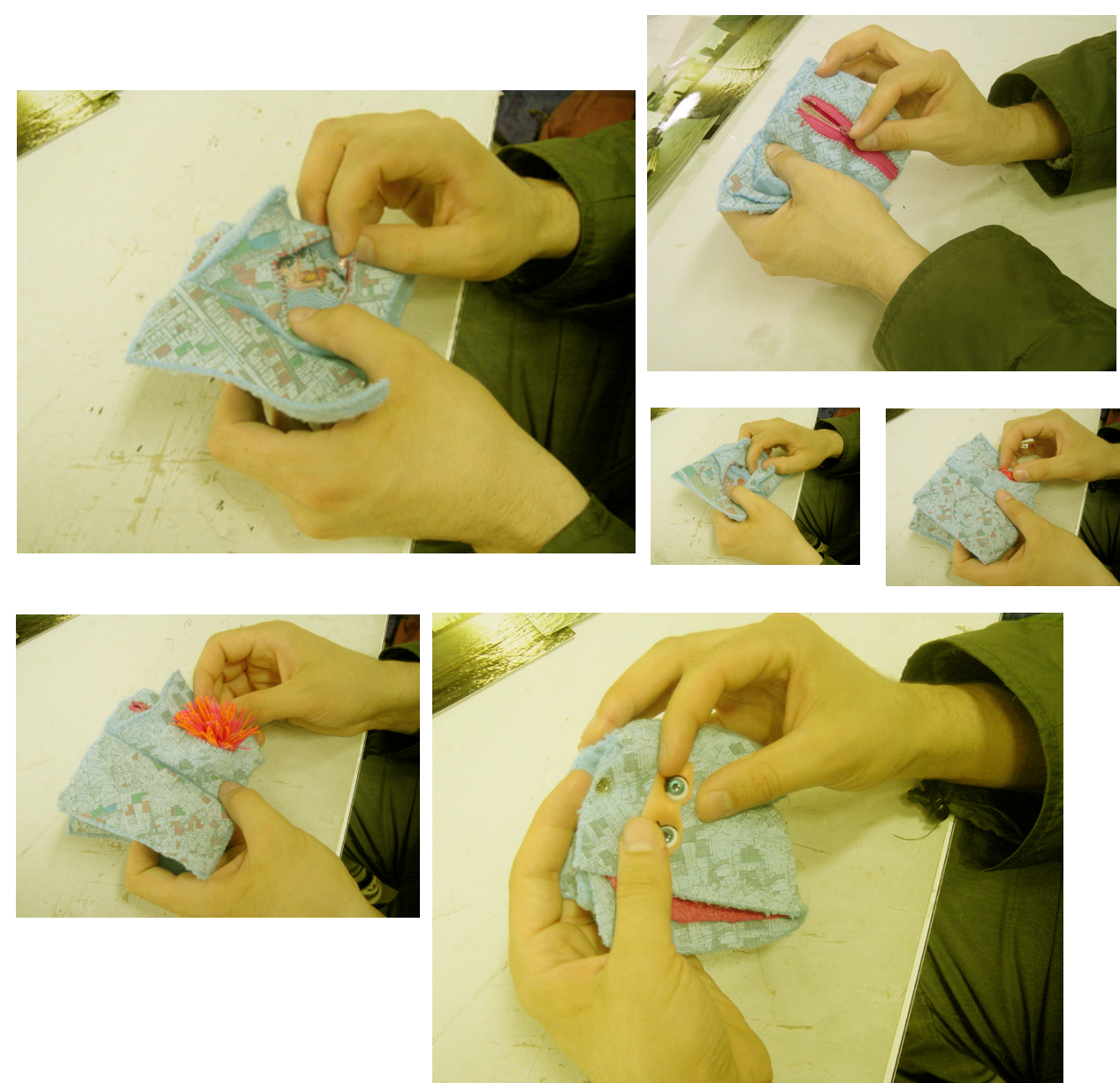
31 Form Z operations of continuous copy that must have created the socialist housing typology: a conjecture

11 “Let this be a new town, symbolic of the freedom of India, unfettered by the traditions of the past, an expression of the nation's faith in the future ...”
Jawaharlal Nehru, when he visited the Chandigarh project on April 2, 1952.



The planners of the era, Tenali noticed, started incorporating these cubes as rectangles in their development plans. After a point there were so many rectangles that they were completely confused with which was what. After all they couldn't just treat these drawings as non-hierarchical post modern drawings where the slippages in the way one would read the drawings would inform another way of thinking. Deleuze and Guattari¹² would love these supposedly confusing set of drawings. But the planners of the socialist city did not want to please Deleuze or Guattari. They thought of them as confused souls who talked about maps as against tracings. Tracings after all were irreplaceable. How else would the young draftsmen trace the old colonial maps to mark new additions on? Were Deleuze and Guattari out of their minds? The planners were sure that tracing was the right medium for them. It conveyed the right message. All they needed to do is colour these in reds, blues, yellows and browns to designate zones of public, residential, commercial, housing and utility places. It was as simple as that. After all, the great Parisian architect, one who our great late Prime Minister was a fan of, had talked about the need to segregate these functions. One was not to mix residential with work areas as the traditional towns used to be. Modernity was against everything that was traditional and retro. Fixed regulations rendered everything and everyone equal. Everyone was so equal that they all became numbers. They didn't have names anymore. They became known by

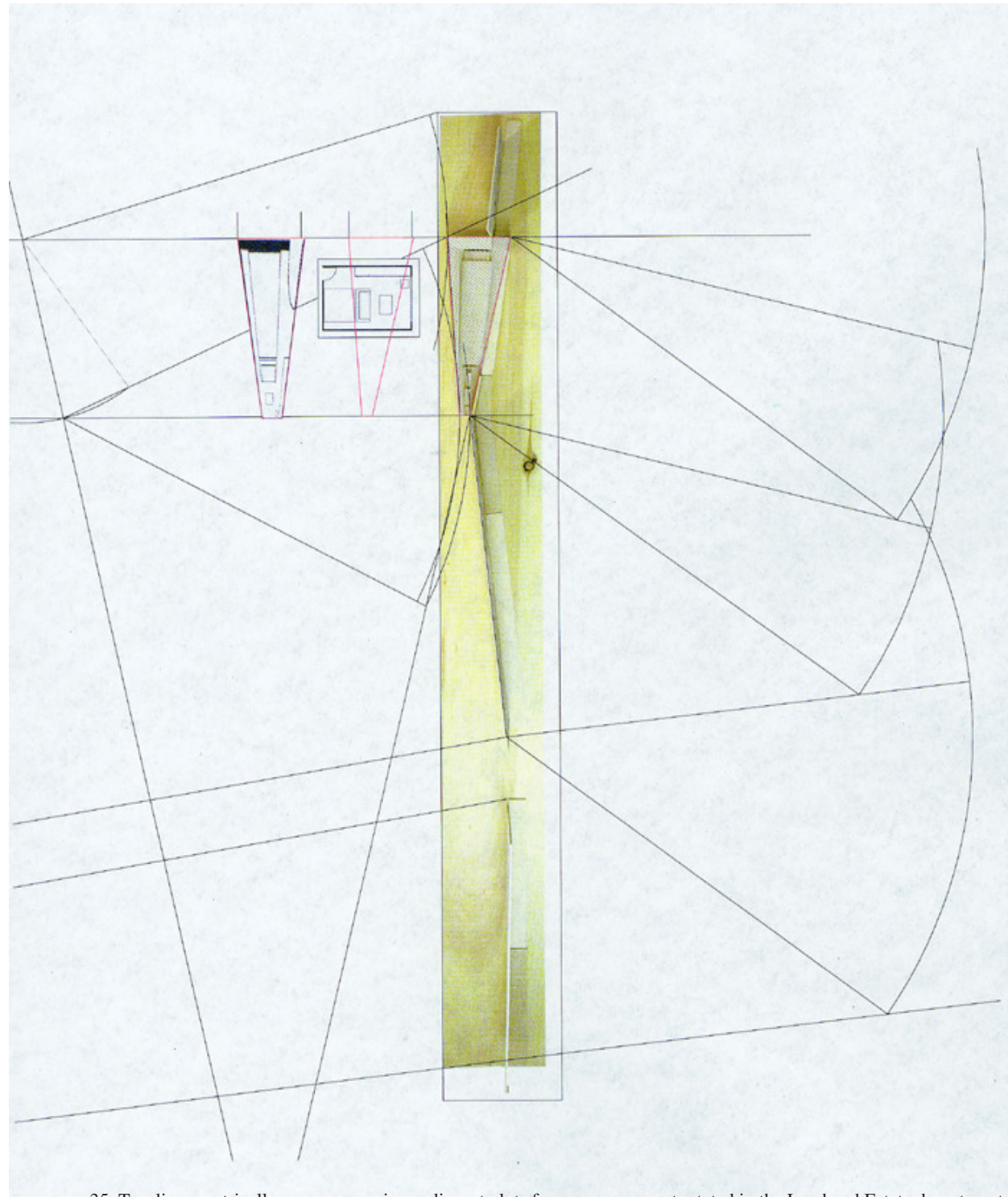
12 "Make a map and not a tracing. The orchid does not reproduce the tracing of the wasp; it forms a map with the wasp, in a rhizome. What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious." Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 'Introduction: Rhizome', from *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*



That night Tenali had a dream; all the people trapped in the maps as numbers now came alive as desires and aspirations, the reams of paper became a soft city, a book of maps from where peered body parts of all those featureless numbers, now coming to life as unalienated beings. The eroticism of the body parts, at the same time reinforcing and defying the alienation of the metropolis. Tenali knew this was the TACTICAL CITY he had to build and understand. This was the soft city hidden behind the featureless maps.



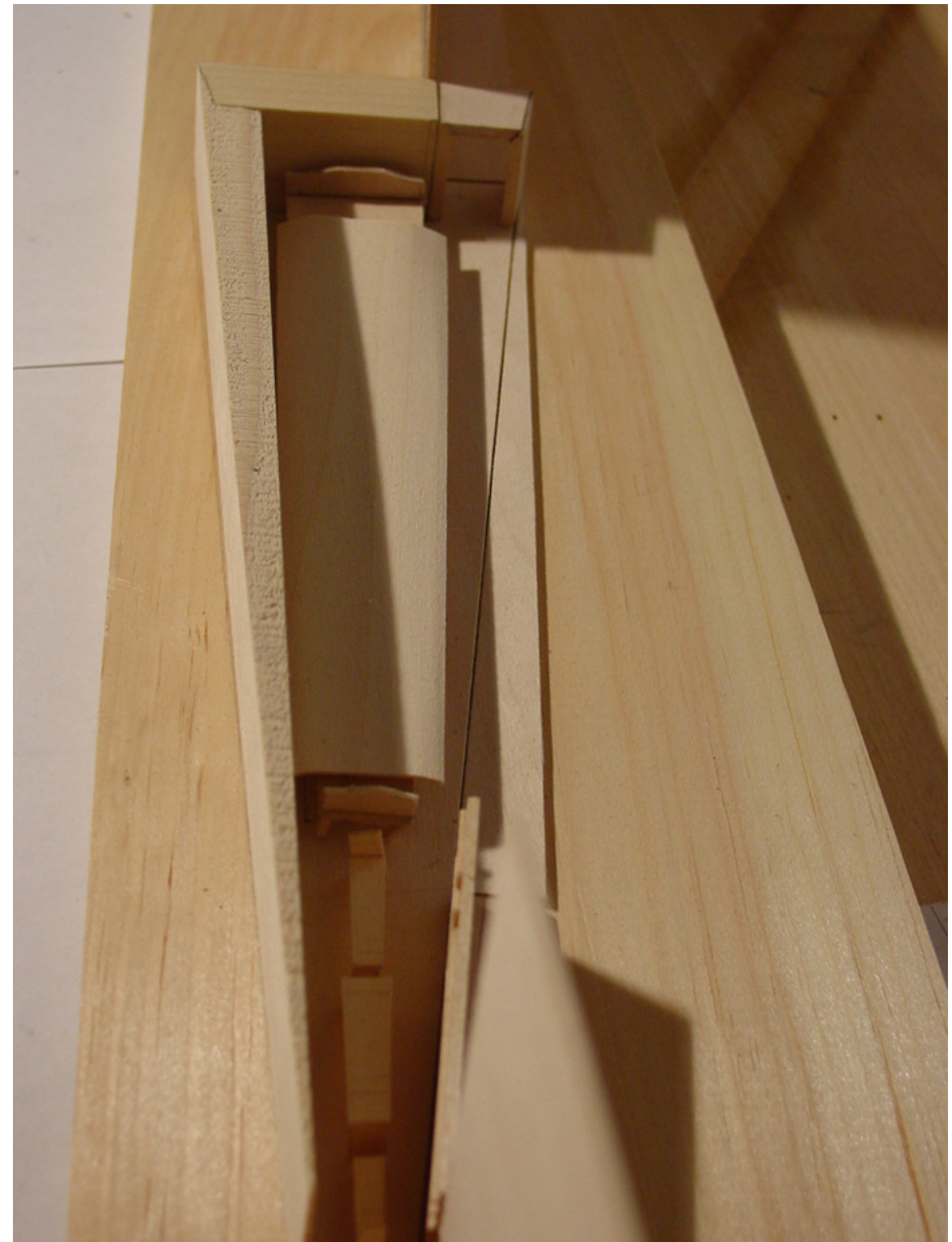
Tenali started scanning through the development plans of the city. He found that they were made in parts; rectangles that would have to be joined to make the whole city. Tenali out of curiosity started looking for his house on the 1:2500 scale plan. His finger ran over the familiar streets until it slipped from the edge of the sheet. He tried to locate it on the adjoining street and found only a part of it there. He found one particular instance that was missing a fractional wedge on the sheet. It seems the socialist architects had forgotten to trace some part of the colonial maps. At 1:2500 scale the fractional wedge was a hairline. Not at 1:100 scale he thought. Tenali further corroborated the mistakes by measuring plans from the Land and Estate Department. He redrafted plans of the area he was scrutinising by transferring the measurements mentioned in the land and property documents of the plots he was examining. He found a wedge of land in the city that was not documented or measured. He appropriated it. He decided to build an urban bedroom on it.



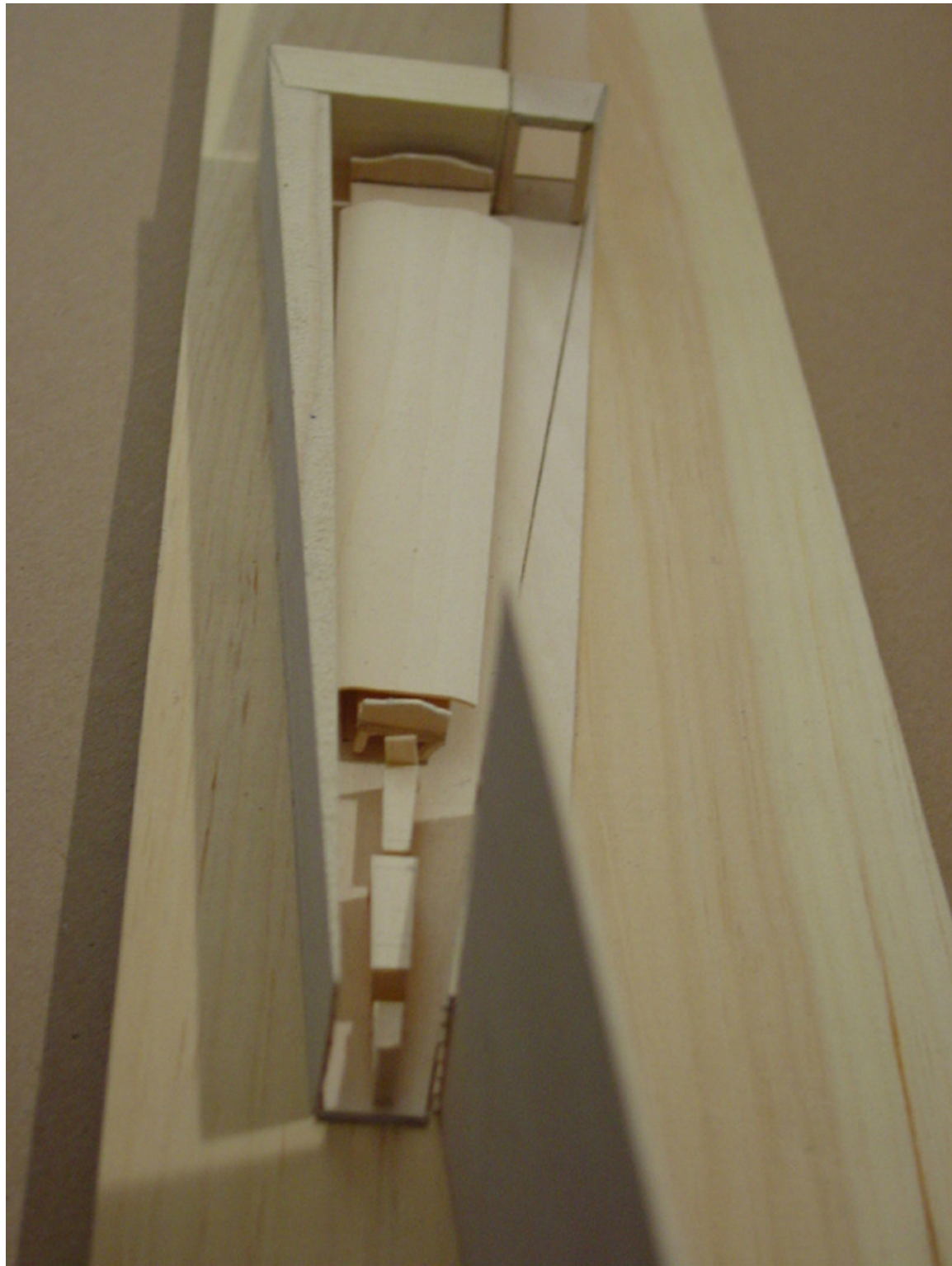
35 Tenali geometrically measures various adjacent plots from measurements stated in the Land and Estate department and finds a swatch of land that is not measured or documented.

Tenali looked up the Time Savers Standards for the layout of a bedroom, something his architecture school had sworn by. Everyone learnt the right proportions and layouts of bedrooms from these graphic standards, no matter if the standards were European or American. Standards were universal after all. But when it came to fitting the bedroom in the swatch of land he had got by default, Tenali had some trouble. So he went to the Adobe photoshop programme and distorted the standard bedroom to fit onto his site. The transform command in photoshop gave him a large urban bed. The stretching in photoshop made one flanking wall and its doorjamb 5 feet wide and the longitudinal wall taper at its other end. The sitting spaces were elongated to uncanny proportions and the bookshelf became a line in the plan, a relief on the wall, a dysfunctional element in the city. Perhaps this was an extreme interpretation of form follows function: it reflected the functionality in a city where pavements became bedroom spaces in the night for the city's multitudinous migrants, for whom bookshelves had no meaning.

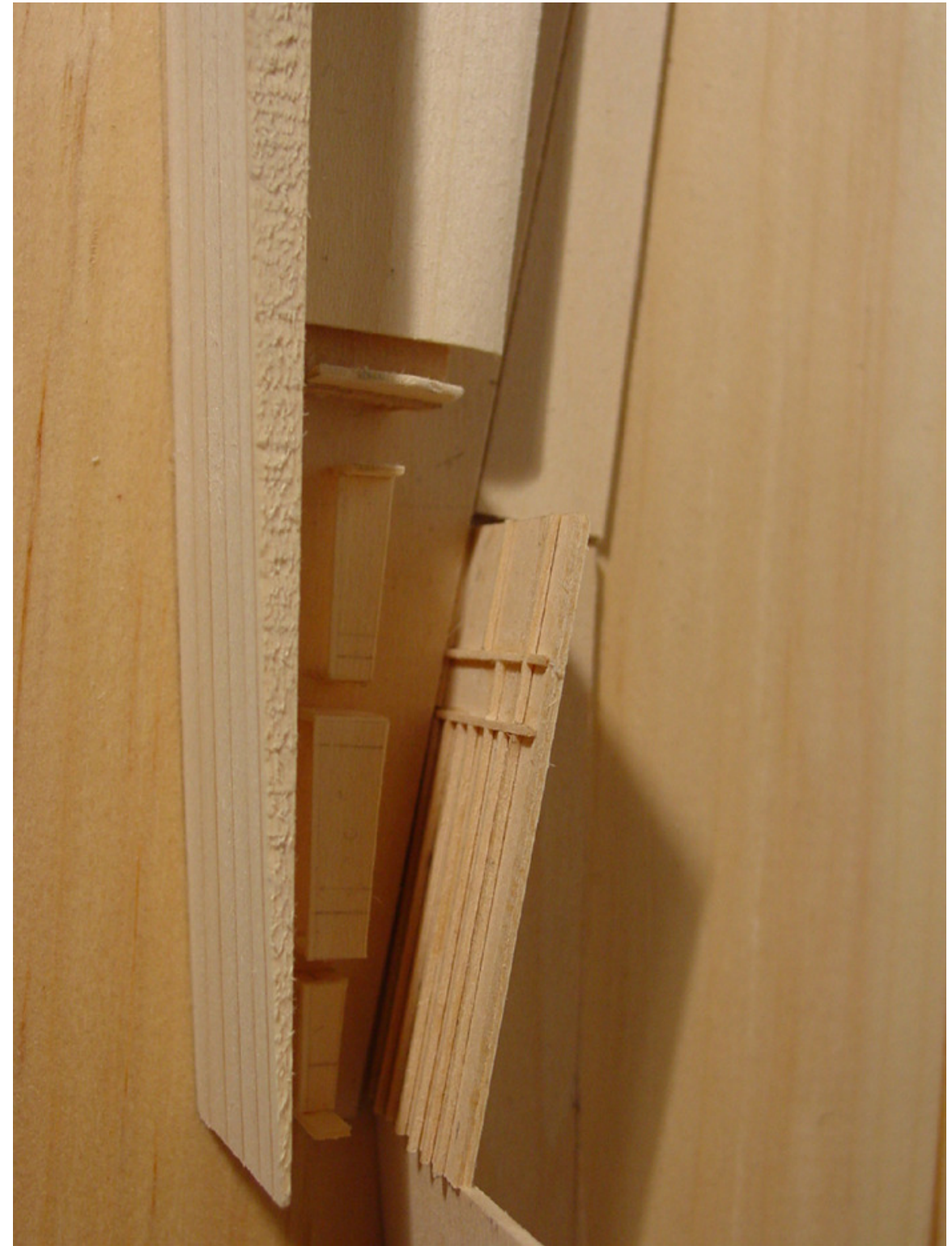
36 Tenali transforms a standard bedroom from the Time Savers Standards to an urban bedroom by using Photoshop's transform tool.



38 Urban bedroom showing an elongated bed, a 5' wide door jamb, a wall tapering from 5' to a line and a transformed seating space.



74 39 Urban bedroom



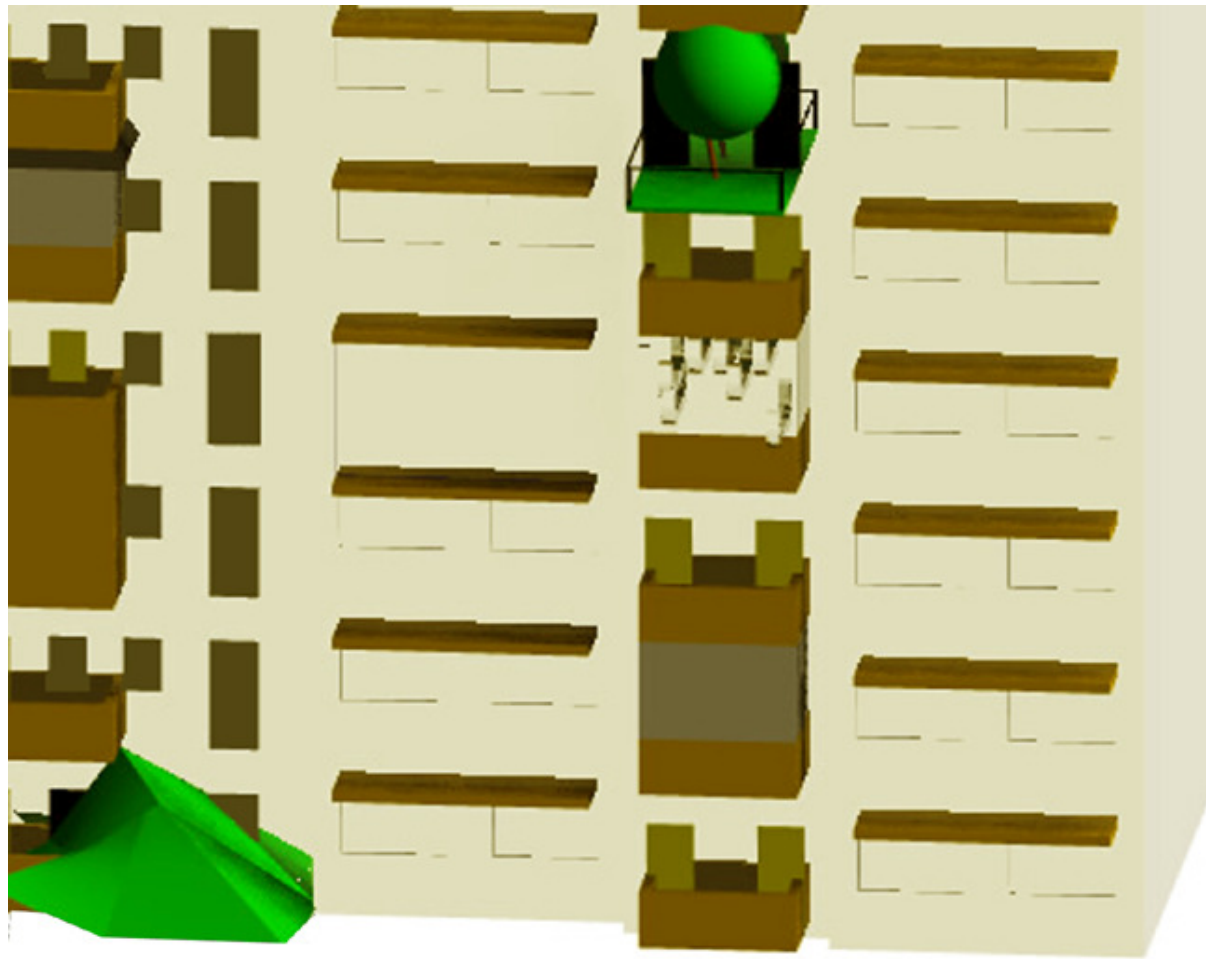
40 Urban bedroom showing detail of the elongated seating spaces and the dysfunctional bookshelf that has become a mere relief in the wall. 75



76 41 Urban bed.



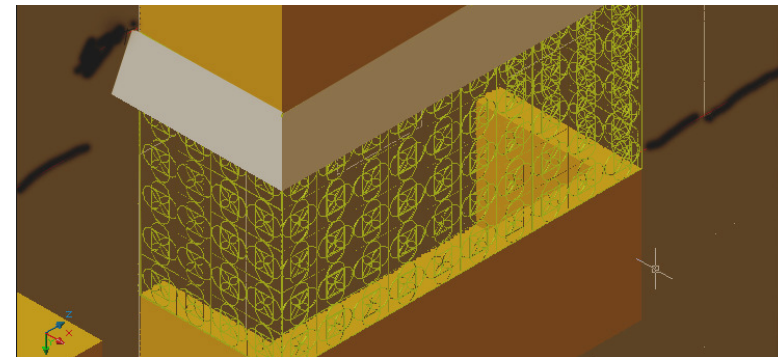
42 Urban bed



43 Balconies with multiples programs

My aunt, Tenali Rama did not manage to get a job in any of the formal offices. She was frustrated. She did not want to depend on a future husband as all her friends did. She wanted to be independent. Well, she did have some of the Tenali family traits in her. She soon realised she could transform the balcony of her house into a workplace. The socialist architects had provided this balcony space free of FSI. She could transform it into an office. She called the local ironsmith to craft a secure decorative grill for her. That was the only investment she had to make. She wasn't breaking too many rules because the grill still ensured light and ventilation to the tenement, an obsession with modern architecture they said. Soon the rest of tactical city was burgeoning with these transformations. Some used their balconies to grow mushrooms, some as an extra bedroom for their newly married son, some simply as a storage space for the growing consumer goods in the house. Another person, a devotee of God Hanuman, built a mountain on it to grow the medicinal herb Sanjivani as he saw these become popular in the global markets. He only hoped this would not be patented by some foreign corporations. Yet another, a meteorologist by profession, made his little meteorological laboratory there and received work outsourced by Star TV for its weather reports. The uses of the balcony were as many as there were people who concocted professions, which were in turn as many as there were people unemployed in the formal job market. This was a lesson in the tactical use of the otherwise blanket FSI.

Tenali made a list of all the possible elements that could be manipulated – stairs, lofts, stilts, columns, beams, window recesses, chajjas (window shades) etc.



44 Tenali Rama transforms the balcony of her apartment building to make it her office space.



45 Asha's family builds self help housing

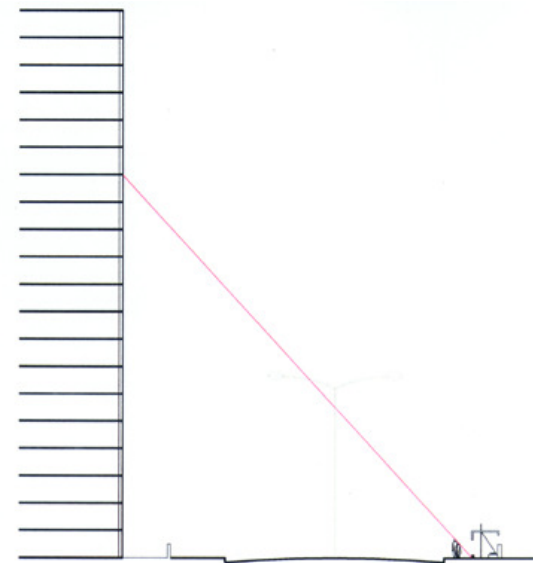
Around Tenali's housing complex was an informal settlement. Asha, who was a maid in Tenali's house lived there. It seems the government in its enthusiasm of equality and being a provider didn't realise that some of the numbers in their books were actually people who were homeless. Well as long as they were numbers and graphs it didn't matter. Numbers and graphs don't need a place to sleep or water to drink. Asha and her family built themselves a house since it turned out that they were not numbers but were real people after all. They put together a house with readymade materials like plastic drums. By now Duchamp had passed away after making his contribution to the art world. But several little children of Duchamp now existed round the globe who cocked their eyebrows at Asha's family's creation.

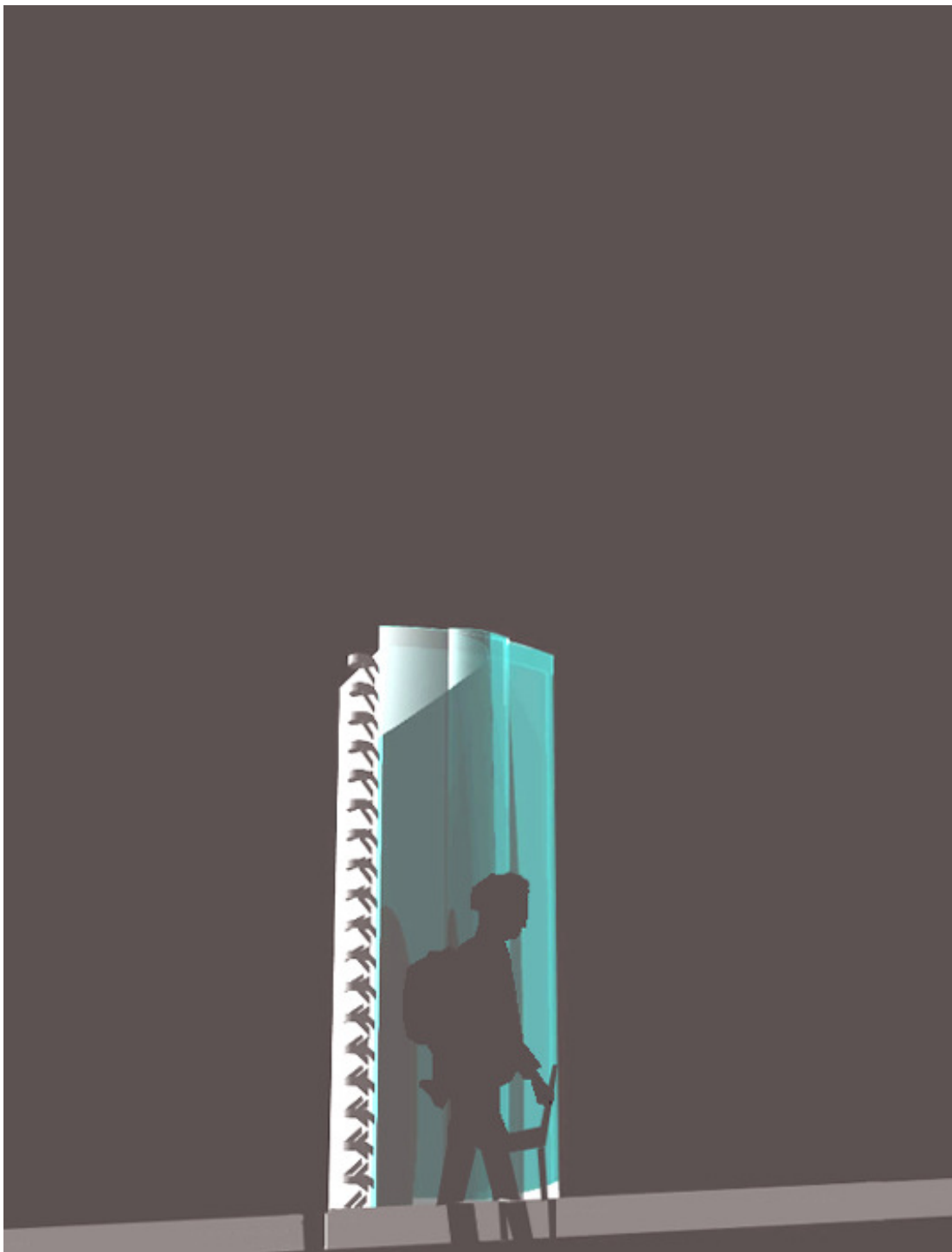


82 46 New Developments growing out of seeds of green money sown in the country after liberalisation

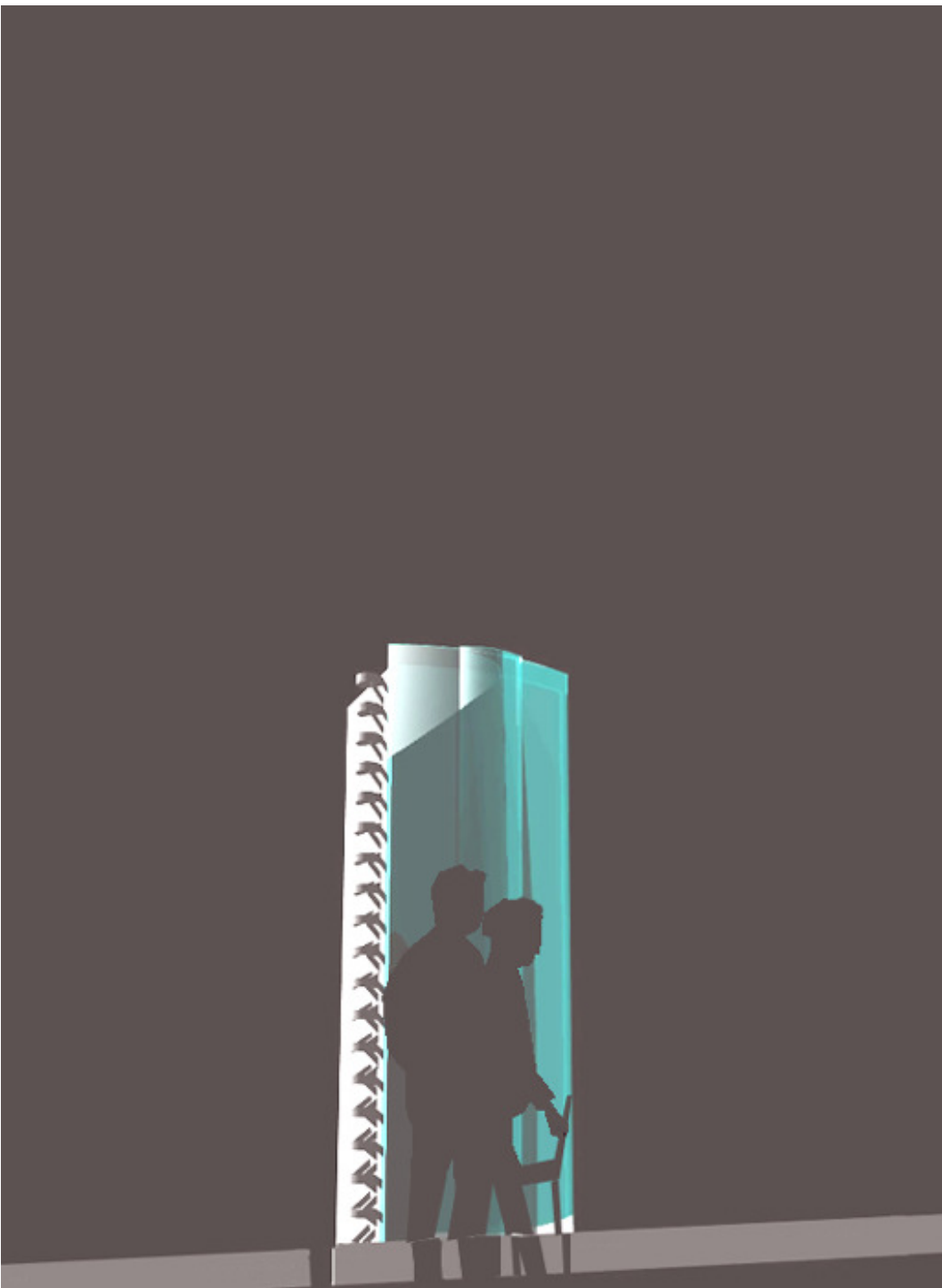
Tenali in the global city

It was the year 1991. This was no ordinary year. It was the year India had liberalised. Liberalisation had an alchemical reaction on the city. Glass and concrete towers started growing everywhere from seeds of green money that were sown in the city. At the base of the towers grew the weeds of the informal economy that serviced these towers. Tenali Raman lived in such a settlement. One day a powerful gust of wind broke the sodium vapour lamp that stood between his shack and the Essar building that stood towering in front of it. Tenali installed a light bulb in his house to compensate for the loss of the street light. The little light bulb that lit Tenali's shack now proudly extended its light to the tower that stood in front of it. Being on a much lower level, the light bulb was blocked by Tenali and his family's moving bodies. As Tenali looked up, the large facade caught the shadows of Tenali and his son with his night school bag-pack. Tenali and his family, otherwise invisible, now gained larger than life proportions in the city. In the morning he saw reflected on the mirrored glass surface of another tower, his house, himself and the sky around. Here he thought the city was his boudoir, with the mirror 10 times larger than his house. Was this the reversal of the inside-outside relationship that the modern architects were so far struggling to achieve? He was convinced it was.





84 Tenali's son with his night school backpack



49 Tenali and his son attain larger than life proportions in the city

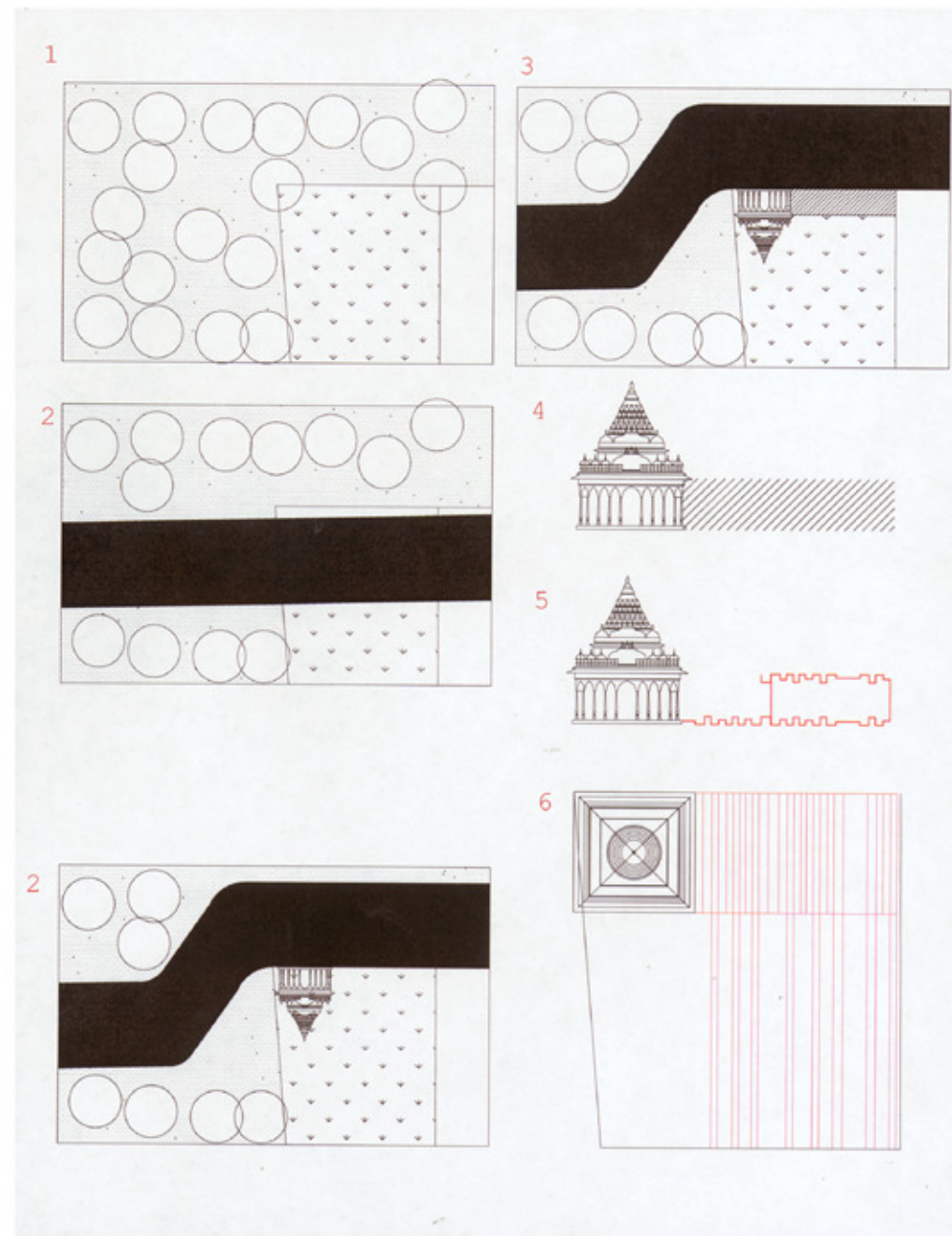


Tenali, Gods and Globalisation

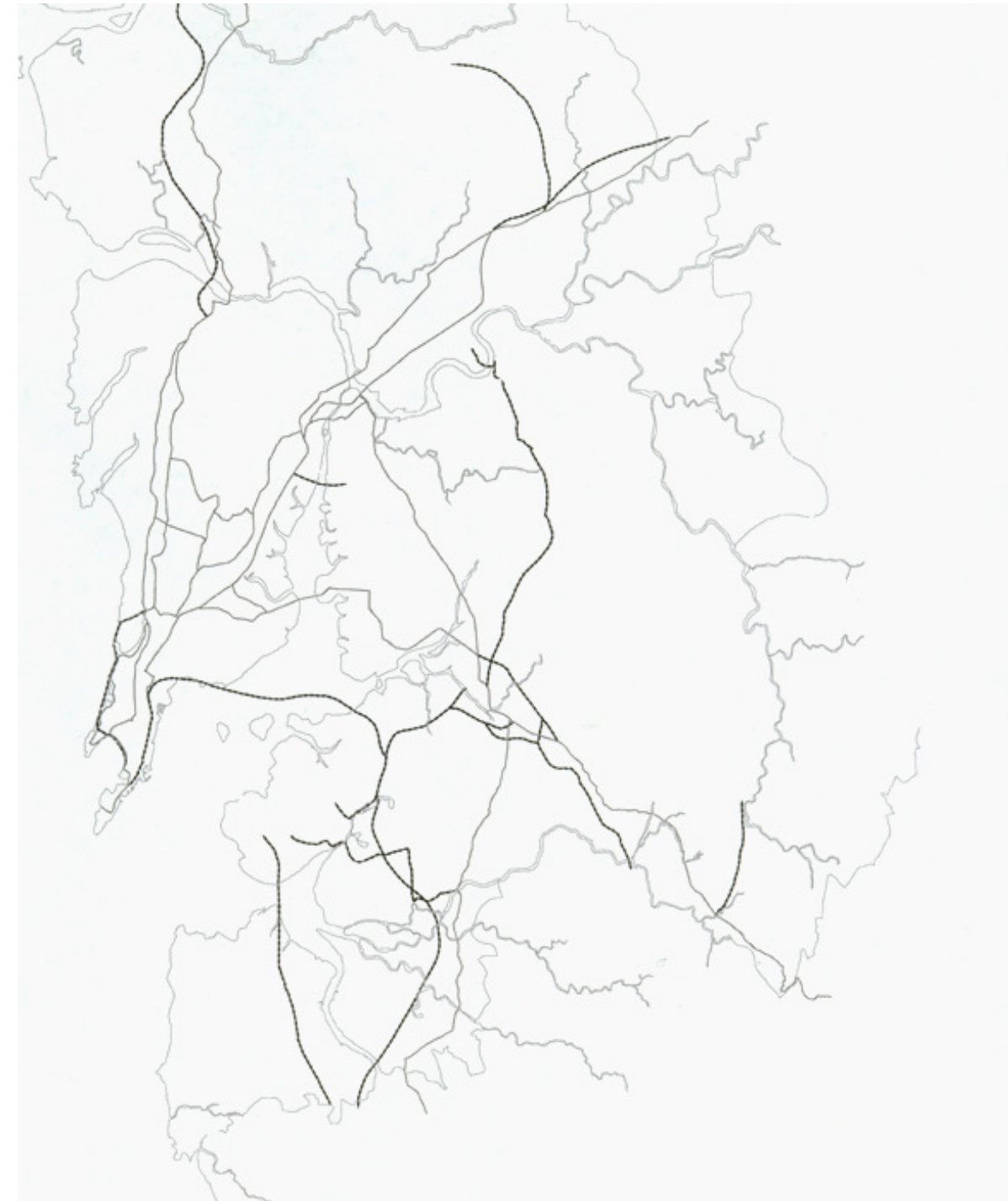
It was the year 1992, one year after the country had opened its economy to the world under great international pressure. They say it was a 'universal path to progress'. Tenali Rama owned a plot of land where a major expressway was to be built. The expressway was a state initiative to attract foreign direct investment. The land acquisition act called for Tenali Rama's land to be acquired for the purpose. A restless Rama couldn't sleep all night the day he received the letter from the government informing him of the same. He shuddered with the thought that part of his property would be taken away by some foreigners. Tenali had a vision that night. Goddess Kali appeared in his dream and asked him to build her a temple at the edge of his land where the road would cut through and to do this before the break of dawn. Tenali, delighted with the goddess, because he saw through her wit, did as she instructed. Ayappa and Sudama were the engineers who lived in the next district and worked for the Swiss company that was building the infrastructure with money from the World Bank. The next day, they came by to inspect the land. Both recent migrants to the city, god fearing Hindus, refused to touch the temple, lest the Goddess curse them.

The new road, a global initiative, was built with a bend in it, which housed the temple for Goddess Kali.

Santa and Banta, the truck drivers who would drive to and fro delivering goods for the new companies along the expressway would never fail to pray to the goddess on their journeys or stop to have a cup of tea and meet other fellow truck drivers. The tea stall and the temple were responsible for many bonds of friendship. The temple attached to the tea stall helped because passersby would make monetary offerings probably imagining that the Goddess would use the money herself. When Tenali realised that the goddess did not really need all that money, he started using the money to invest in better facilities for his tea stall. He liked to call it a public space. He was simply a 'tactical caretaker he thought, not an 'owner' in the strict sense of the word. The temple was a wonderful funding mechanism for the public space. In little baby steps the facilities grew from a temple to a tea stall to a public space. He had further plans for expansion. The temple was a catalyst in an expanding urban process. Tenali closed his eyes as he watched a Mercedes Benz with tinted glasses pass him by on the expressway. He took a deep breath.



51 Incremental urban process that starts with the building of a temple. The temple forms a tactical device that manages to change the design of a global project and becomes a catalyst for further local processes.

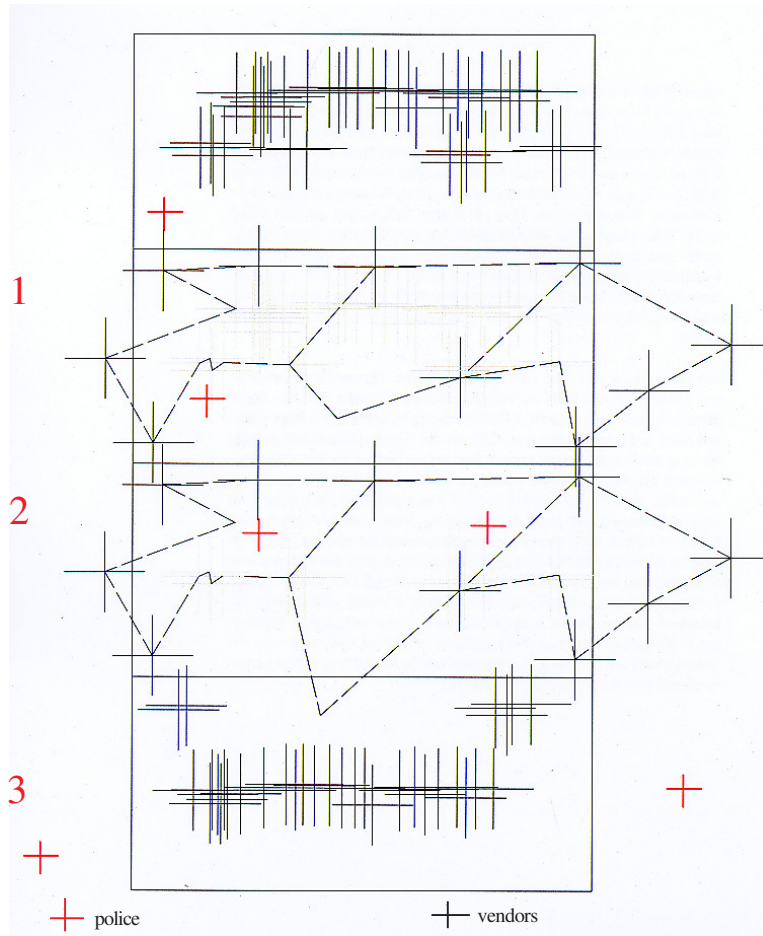




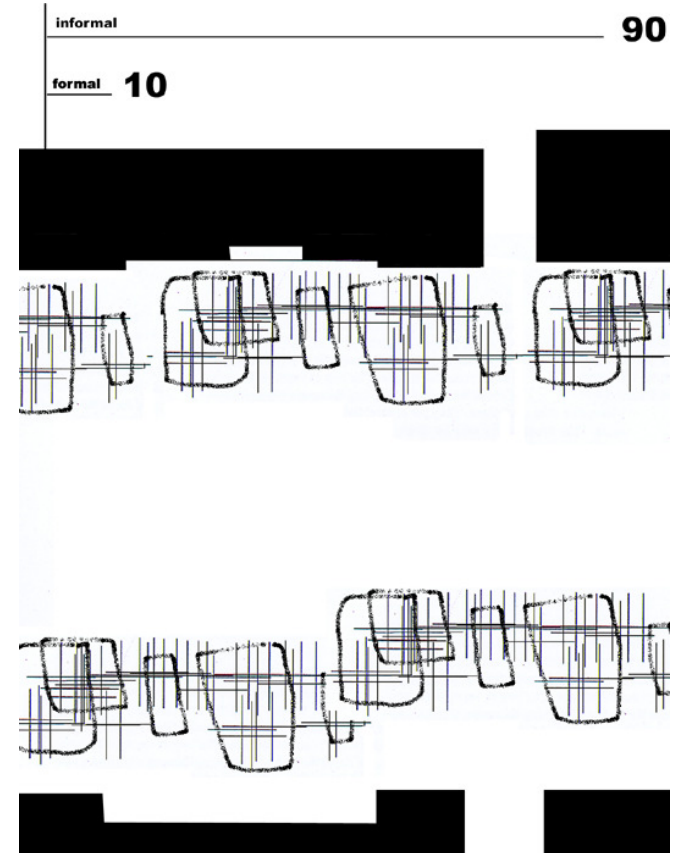
13 MVRDV is an architectural/urban practice based in Rotterdam with Winy Maas (1959), Jacob van Rijs (1964) and Nathalie de Vries (1965) as the principals. In their work process, preconditions are translated into 3-dimensional diagrams. These 'data-scapes' are in turn the basis of a series of organisational forms of buildings, cities and landscapes.

Datascares and the N.D. Road Hawker's network.

It was the year 1995. Some enthusiastic conservation architects had made a handbook to conserve N.D. Road at Fort to its colonial glory. This meant removing the hawkers from the deep recessed arcades that once formed pristine walkways for the 'public'. And then there were all those ugly signages that spread like termite on the beautiful blue basalt facades. So what if Venturi had made a virtue of them? They were still eye sores for the residents of the fort area. So the hawkers were moved but those insistent pests would keep coming back as soon as the police were gone. The vendors soon, with some help from the ubiquitous Tenali Raman, developed a sophisticated network amongst themselves. Any news of police raids would spread like fire. Each channel and space of the network for the spread of the news was predetermined. And so there was here, a very complex mobile spatial structure. Tenali emailed the architects at the MVRDV 13 office in the Netherlands about this. They were very curious and decided they needed to study this; after all their studies on datascares. They soon realised that this spatial structure was worth exploring for a project and was much more interesting than all the redundant data on tourism that they were analysing so far. They thought, maybe this study could inform a conservation project. They wondered why the local conservationists were sold to the antiseptic modernism of cleaning the colonial spaces off the vendors. Well, besides giving people jobs in a context where only 10% of the jobs were in the formal sector, a figure that was diminishing with the new economy, these would be highly exciting spaces teaming with density, something they had been struggling to achieve with all their density studies. Their data studies showed how these units formed loci of multitudinous public spaces. Surely they had to go home and start writing a new book on this complex spatial structure as a sequel to Data-city Meta-town. Tenali suggested that they make a policy report complete with typological studies of a mobile market place based on these studies for the Bombay municipality. Here was Tactical Tenali again. He knew he could use the charisma of the much published architects to get his proposal through, which would otherwise, he knew, catch dust on some old wooden shelves at the Mumbai municipal offices.



92 54 N.D. Road vendor network showing complex organisational structures.



55 Vendors forming loci of multitudinous public spaces



94 Willy's workplace in Parel

Kinship, friendship, and the hybrid spaces of globalisation

Another Tenali Rama sibling was a friend of Wilfred who fabricated computers from the various parts that had flooded the Indian market as soon as the country liberalised. Knowledge of computer software and hardware these days, they say, spread like an epidemic in this country. Every graduate, no matter what his/her field of studies was, would take up a crash course in computers and become an engineer. Some these days they say don't even have to go to those computer classes. Little baby Indians are born with computer skills. Their first cry is in 1s and 0s, till the mother fairly frightened with the mumbo jumbo, teaches them to cry like other humans. Willy was such a computer literate. He had an office in Lamington road. But when his lease expired, he couldn't renew it anymore. The Rent control laws in the city had frozen rents at the 1948 rates and it was not a profitable business for the landlords anymore. Subsequently rentals had entered into the domain of the grey market. Wilfred had trouble paying the grey rent or the *pagdi* that the landlord asked of him and moved to another place. The new place was in Parel. Parel was the former centre of the cotton mill lands in the city set up by the British. The mills had shut down due to several reasons. Some attribute this to a prolonged workers strike, some to a lack of modernisation of the mills because clearly the profits were being siphoned elsewhere. Some say it went into the city's burgeoning real estate market. But the fact remained that the mills had closed down. The large tract of derelict prime land in the heart of the city was a bone of contention and a highly contested space. The result was the lands lying vacant and the workers out of work. Some of them had been in the mills for so long and thanks to Henry's Fordism had been doing the same thing for so many years that they had become rusty with other skills. They were turned down by the rest of the job market because over the years they had started resembling cogs of the machinery they operated and cogs could not so much as calculate in the city's insurance offices or bring tea for a boss with an Anglophone education, in an export company.

So Shambhu, 48 years of age and still out of work, set up an informal shack in his mill compound. He built this shack out of readymade materials. By now the readymades had multiplied all over the city and Duchamp was beginning to lose his novelty. He wanted to rent out the office he built. Tenali had met Shambhu in the railway train, a common meeting place for most city dwellers. Even if the British had divided the country on lines of religion and caste before they left, they had done a wonderful task of building the railway lines that became the artery of the city.



96

57 Willy's work place upstairs with a family living below.



58

Coaching class below Willy's workplace

97



98 59 Willy's front office located in the upmarket Kemp's Corner.



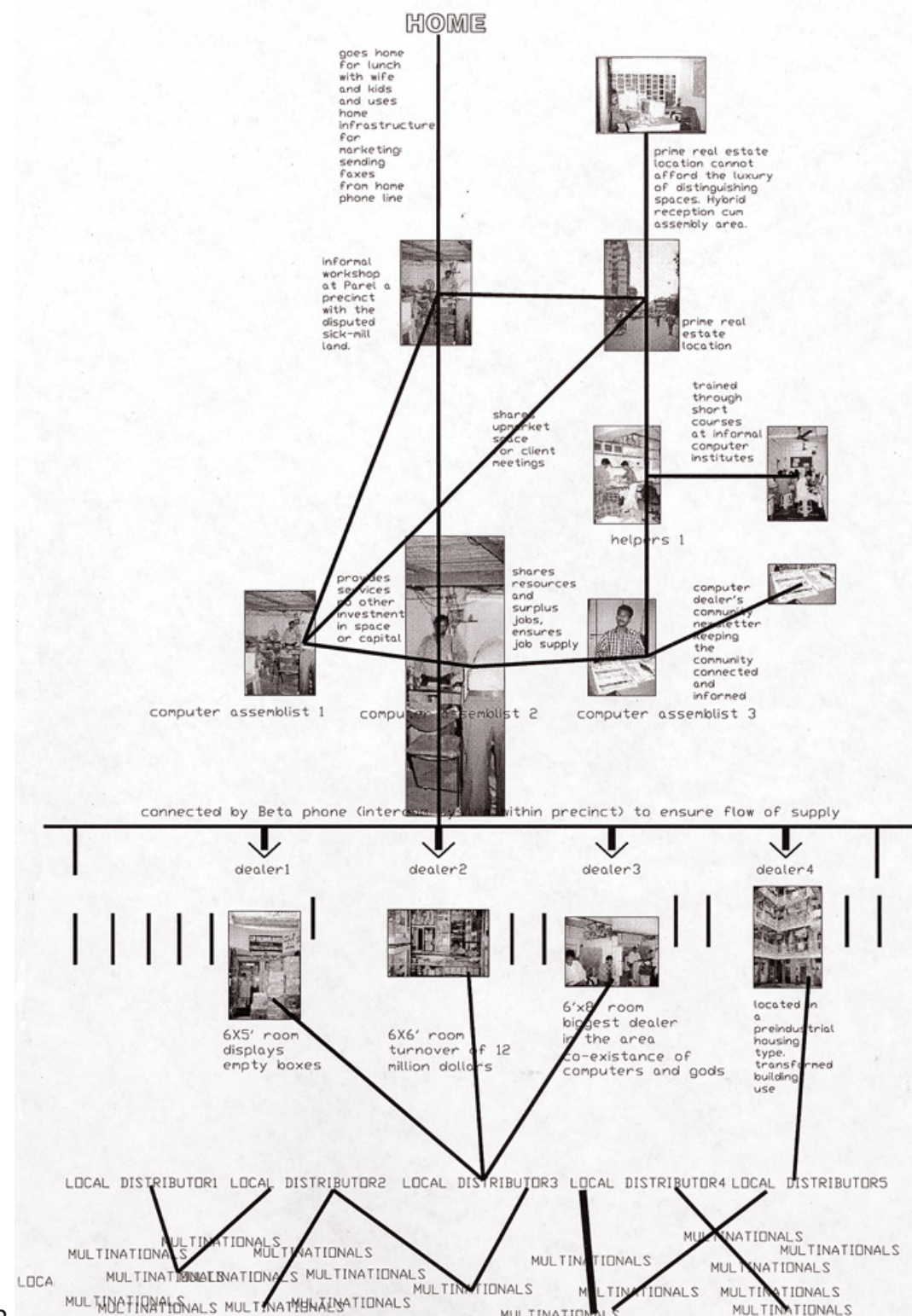
60 Willy's front office : A wall unit in Kemp's corner doubles as work space



100 61 Willy's dealer's place: The ground story in a housing unit in the native town adapted for computer peripheral sale.



62 Dealer displays empty boxes to show that he has the required equipment.



Tenali, often thanked them for that. "We shouldn't always condemn them as the bad guys", he thought, "but should look at the nuances of the Raj." After all how different would we be if we did what the Americans are doing, blaming the rest of the world as one big terrorist outfit for what happened at the world trade centre?".

Tenali Rama heard from Shambhu of his self promotion to the office of landlord and that he was looking for someone to move into the freshly made office. Rama and Wilfred were old school pals at the St. Joseph's Convent High School in Kalbadevi. They had maintained their friendship ever since, making it a point to meet every Sunday at the local Irani restaurant to catch up on each other's lives. They were both upset that Berges uncle was thinking of selling the place to the chain restaurant called McDonalds, a branch of which was opening up at every bend in every street in the city. Tenali, at one of their Sunday get-togethers told Willy of Shambhu's offer. Willy was delighted because the place was so close to the railway station. He would save a lot of money on travel and would be assured of a timely arrival at work though only after pushing his way in and out of masses of immobile people that made the railway compartment seem like it was solid from inside. But he did not mind that so much. Travelling in the Mumbai railway trains was an art and Wilfred had mastered it by now. He even managed to make friends with some parts of the immobile crowds. Wilfred moved into his new workplace. With all the convenience of the location this place was not Wilfred's ideal office space. Unlike the MOMA in New York, Readymades were not the most chic things in the city. He talked to Rama once about his problem of meeting clients. He said he couldn't possibly meet clients in his ramshackle office. It was not good for his reputation, especially when his clients were corporate. They were chatting in Tenali's Charkop housing complex, when there was a knock on the door. Mandira, their neighbour walked in with a bowl and asked Tenali if she could borrow some sugar as she had run out of her regular supply this morning. Tenali asked her to go ahead and help herself in his kitchen. Mandira disappeared behind the patchwork curtain Tenali's wife had so proudly put together from scraps left after stitching her saree blouses and her children's clothes "Who would know it was made from scraps she thought", "it was beautiful". As Tenali saw her disappear he thought about how he loved the idea of sharing.... but his thought was interrupted when another idea occurred to him. He asked Wilfred about his friend Rahim at Kemps Corner. "Why don't you ask Rahim if you can share his space for office meetings?" He has a good address but I don't think he has many jobs these days. You can both share jobs and office space, since you have a steady flow of work. Wilfred liked the idea and talked to Rahim. Rahim was happy that he would get a steady flow of jobs and that Wilfred would also share some of his rent. The two of them, with some help from Tenali, set about the task of converting the upmarket space into a reception cum workplace. They put a large wall unit on one end of the room. That would be the only furniture that would occupy the room and would be a display



104 Lamington road street view

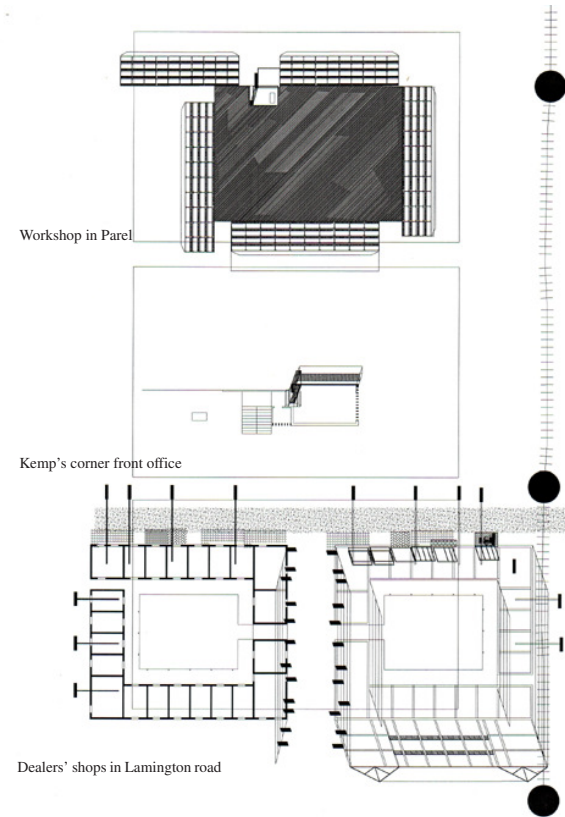
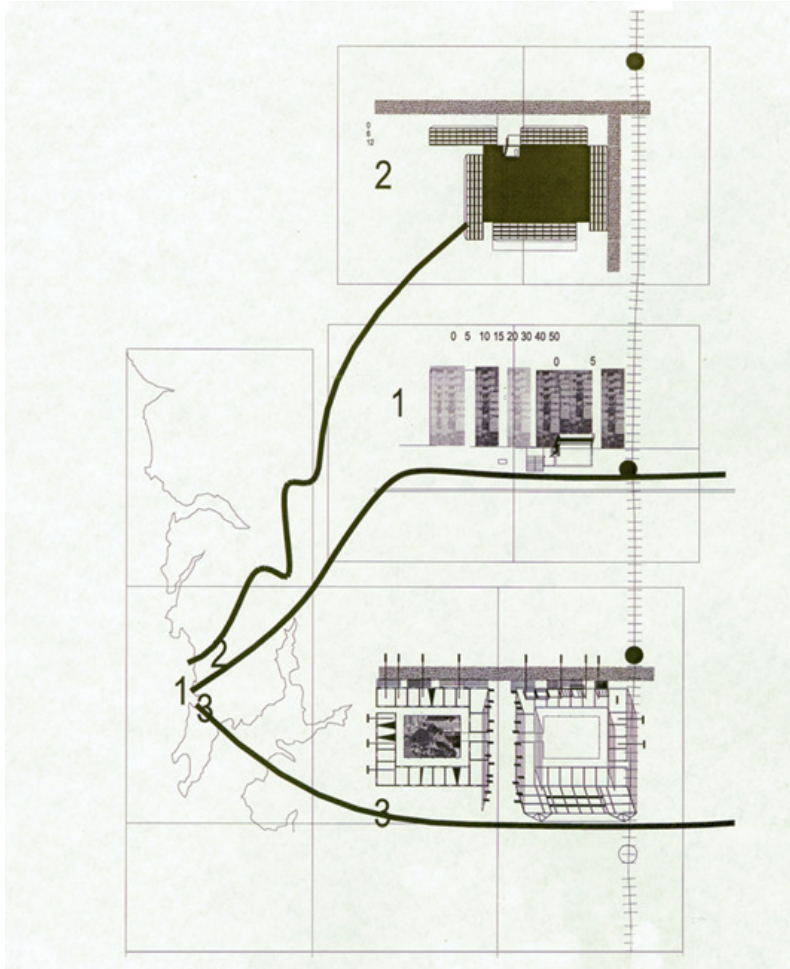
case cum a work space to assemble computers. They worked hard to figure out how the room could be one big empty reception-space and a workplace at the same time.

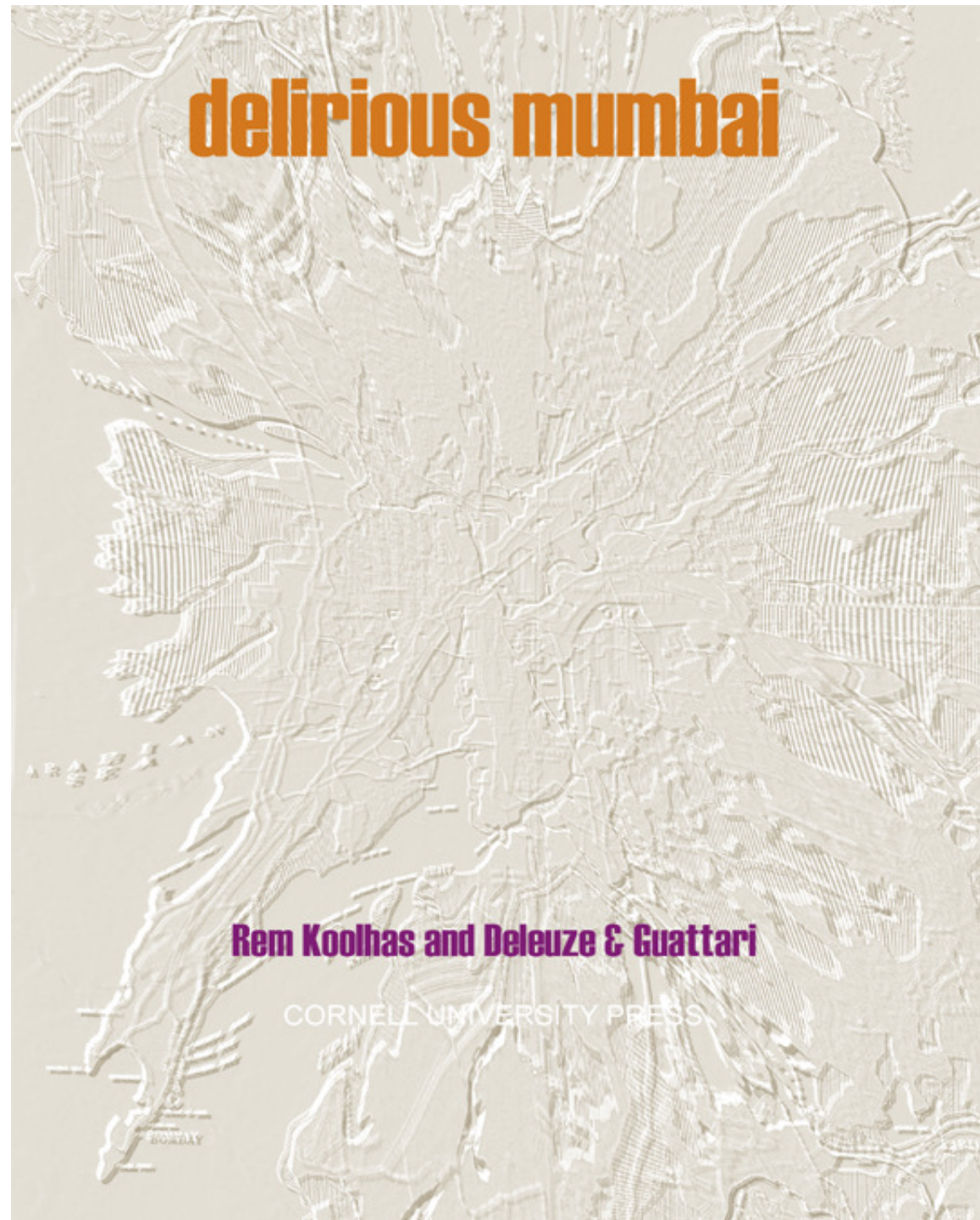
Soon Wilfred networked with Rahim. They became informal partners. Balram, who had fewer resources than Wilfred and Rahim became another partner. He had his skills to share and did not have any material investments. They had 2 helpers who acquired their skills from an informal computer institute in a low income housing scheme that could run only because of updated pirated software. The web (fig 64) grew. Wilfred in turn was connected to a battery of dealers who operated from Lamington road in the old native city. Without the help of Tenali they had devised a series of tactics to operate in the lopsided global economy. They were all connected with an internal intercom system called the Beta phone and did not rely on the state telephone system for their internal operations. The native city was like one big house for them. One dealer had no supplies of his own but kept loads of empty cartons outside his shop to appear as if he had all the required goods. Whenever, a customer came in asking for something, he would use his beta phone to get the supplies from another dealer. In this way it was possible to operate from a 10' X 9' shop, a very expensive piece of real estate. Another dealer, supposedly the biggest dealer in the market operated from a still smaller place, a 8'X 7' office, half of it filled with photo frames of Gods from the large pantheon of Hindu Gods. This network was facilitated with a network of hand-carts in the precinct that took the goods to and fro.

Such is the "plan" (fig 63, 64) of the computer trade network in the city. Mumbai's version of functionalism and planning is distorted here by the opportunistic tactics of its inhabitants in a setting of limited resources. This "plan" of the spatial distribution of the computer trade in the city is an abstract composition of a set of fragmented activities that is itself a fragment of the larger spectacle of the metropolis - a composition much more fragmented than its counterpart in New York - the section of the skyscraper. (afterKoolhaas, Delirious New York, 1978)

This plan is not only a proof of the instability of life in the metropolis, like the section of the skyscraper my friend Rem analysed but a testimony of the tactical dispositions that allow the metropolis to function.

The "plan" is also distinct from the city's "development plan" and a further substantiation of its limitations in understanding the intricacies of the functioning of this metropolis.

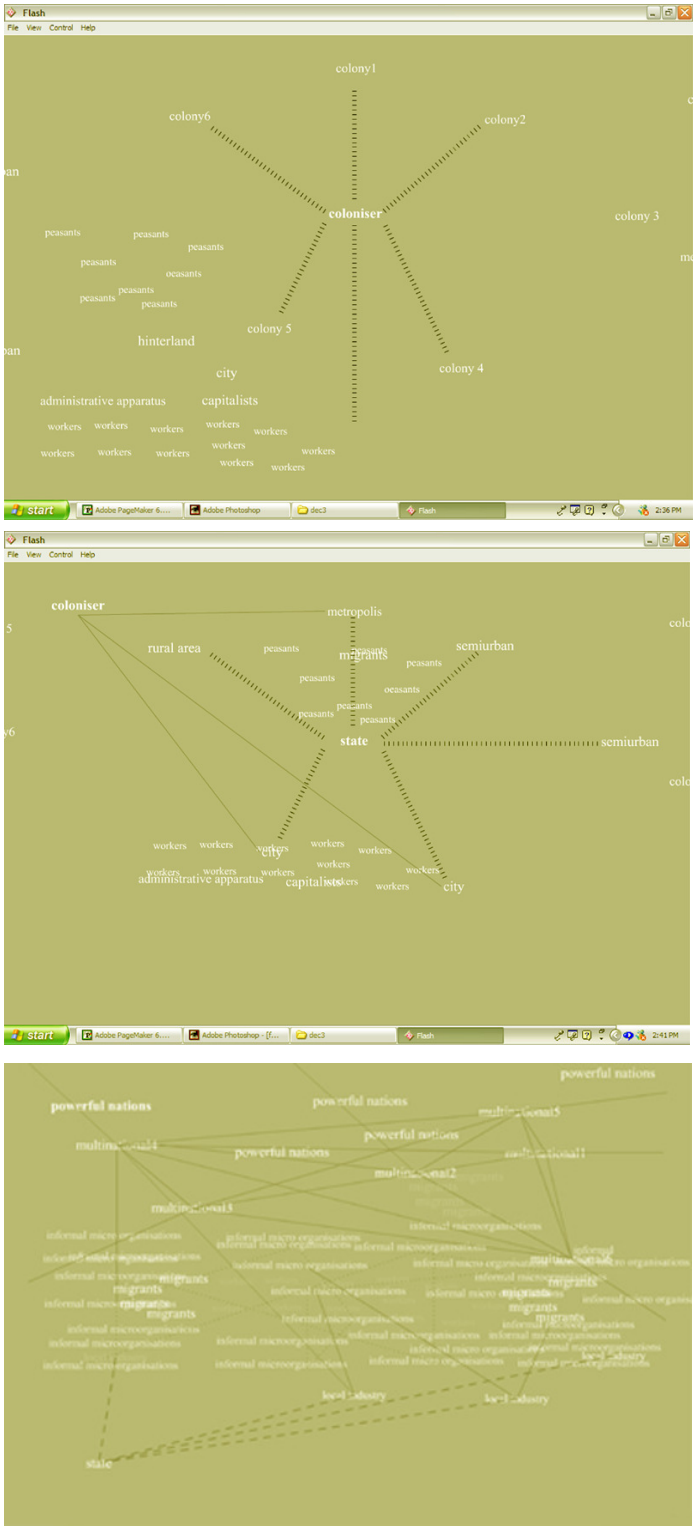




Rem Koolhaas¹⁴ at that time was visiting Mumbai. He needed a computer and had forgotten to carry his laptop with him. Someone told him about the speedy delivery available at Rahim's Kemps Corner Place. Rem visited this place but out of an urbanist's curiosity saw the lobotomy of the spaces connected with this computer trade. He was amazed and thought this was much more hybrid a space than his analysis of the New York sky scrapers. He thought he was a little backdated, his retroactive manifesto was really retro and he needed to draft a new proposal for a new book soon; something about hyper hybrid spaces. Here it wasn't only spaces that were hybrid; there were hybrid organisational setups too. Maybe he could collaborate with Deleuze and Guattari. Those guys knew more about organisational structures than he did. Koolhaas thought he would call this theory a paranoid cultural method, his book, 'Delirious Mumbai'

As Rem was thinking about this he bumped into me, Rama. Yes my name is Tenali Rama. The daughter of the Tenali I mentioned before. Rem saw the network diagrams of the computer trade that I was making. Koolhaas, being the sharpest architect alive, immediately understood that these studies were extremely relevant to understanding contemporary urbanism. He was beginning to realise that his retroactive manifesto was celebrating the status quo. He had to take a stance. Things needed to change. He needed to be far more political. He was thankful to my father and me. We it seems had saved Rem from falling into the trap of global capitalism.

14 Rem Koolhaas is principal of OMA. He conducts design research into current urban architectural conditions in various parts of the world.



² George Simmel in 'Metropolis and Mental Life' The metropolitan type, which naturally takes on a thousand individual modifications - creates a protective organ for itself against the profound disruption with which the fluctuations and discontinuities of the external milieu threaten it. Instead of reacting emotionally the metropolitan type reacts primarily in a rational manner, thus creating a mental predominance through the intensification of consciousness, which in turn is caused by it.

Naom¹⁵ time and again had pointed out the discrepancies in the so called 'free market' and how the powerful nations flexed their muscles and engaged in the greatest protectionism of all while coaxing the weaker nations to complete 'freely'. The people in the computer trade did not understand much of what Naom told them. They had somehow developed a protective organ as prosthesis to their cerebrums that made them think in the most crooked of ways to survive in these turbulent markets. This was an evolution of the organ that Simmel² had discovered in the new industrial metropolitan conditions in the developed world, when it was developing. The dealers were in turn networked to a set of distributors; only 5 in number in the city – the bottleneck through which the economy passed from the core to the periphery. I, Tenali started furiously making links and drawing diagrams to understand the connections, the change from the colonial to the social, to the global city. The more links I drew, the more my diagram got entangled. There was a maze of lines on my paper. The lines moved furiously. After a point they attained a life of their own, jumping between cities in time. They started playing games with me. I suddenly discovered that I could not distinguish between the many Tenalis I was beginning to write about. All the stories had been orally passed on to me or through random notes. Suddenly I wasn't sure if the 3 cities were linear any more. The global city seemed like it could have existed in 1857 when the mills came to India, and the colonial city could be a contemporary phenomenon. I didn't know if all those stories happened the day before or the century before. Perhaps all the Tenalis I was writing about existed at the same time. Perhaps I had lost track of all my siblings over time. Maybe I would meet one of them in a chance encounter in the railway train. I was not sure any more.

15 Naom Chomsky, linguist, political dissident and social critic, reveals that free trade is not free at all - rich powers ignore its rules in order to subsidise their big companies and only indebted third world countries are obliged to obey. Many plunge into further debt and are forced to watch schools and hospitals close while their economies are restructured to suit Western investment. - Jeremy Fox, Chomsky and Globalisation

A TACTICAL architect

story teller

negotiator

urban curator

designer

interlocutor

detective

policy expert

teacher

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The Tactical Archive

I, Tenali Rama had by now been thoroughly confused by the maze of lines in my network diagram. I realised that things were more complex than they seemed. I was appointed as the new director of the KRVIA, an architectural institution in Mumbai, and started to write a curriculum for the school. Was I writing a manifesto? They say this is an age disgusted with manifestos. Should I be too? I could perhaps not write a manifesto. But I could make an archive. An archive of tactical city from the experiences of my Tenali kin.

Whereas the Global city model, formulated by a battery of people who had jumped into the bandwagon of global capitalism, offered very few options to the architect, such as making houses and kitchens for the nouveau rich or building some housing complexes for some builders at Half-the-fees¹⁶, TACTICAL city opened many more avenues.

Here the options were many :

- A TACTICAL architect could become a *story teller*
- could become a *negotiator*, like Tenali had been in the case of the N.D. road analysis.
- an *urban curator* in the case of the Wilfred-Rahim-Guattari-Koolhas network analysis
- a *designer* in the case of the innovative vendor shops
- a *tactical Caretaker* in the case of the temple and the tea-stall.
- an *interlocutor* in the case of the marriage-of-chawls conservation project
- a *detective-designer* in the case of the urban bedroom made on the no man's land
- a *policy expert* in the case of the balcony use and manipulation
- or
- a *teacher* who would enthuse students to come up with their own tactical models of operation in TACTICAL CITY. The list would go on.

TACTICAL CITY needed to grow.

Epilogue

To be more explicit and self conscious about the stories, it might be necessary to revisit some parts of the book to lay bare some of the intentions, the contentions and the arguments behind them.

The structure of the book maps out 3 thing: 1. contention of the thesis
2. methodology
3. stories: (Discoveries and Arguments)

Contention

The contention of the thesis is that conditions in most third world cities have gone beyond the means of any rational positivist planning. One needs new EYES to see the present conditions and new TOOLS to operate and perhaps a new IMAGINATION to intervene in these contexts.

TACTICAL CITY claims to be such an IMAGINATION

The context here stresses on Mumbai.

Tactical City derives its name from Michel de Certeau’s thesis of tactics vs. strategies: where he says that strategies are the tools of the dominant elite while tactics work in the shadow of strategies and are ‘an art of the weak’, which form mute processes that organize socioeconomic order.

TACTICAL CITY is a means of bringing these mute processes to mainstream discourse and exploiting their creative potentials and their constant attempts to bridge the gaps between the dominant imagination and the aspirations of the city.

Methodology

The methodology uses several devices:

Tactical City is a fictitious history of Mumbai’s urbanism, told here through the character of Tenali Rama – a character from a popular Indian folklore. The choice of this character is because he is known as a person who transforms the status quo with his tactics.

The stories that follow do two things – One: they help establish the nuances of the cultural context and two they make way for a tactical intervention, which could be a design intervention or an analytical one.

Mumbai here is analyzed as 3 cities on the basis of the shifts through its political and economic structure (Mira Kosambi): the colonial city, the socialist city, the global city, Tactical city weaves through this larger structure.

Throughout the narrative, cultural and urban theorists emmerge as characters in the city – this is specifically to drive home the fact that Tactical city claims to be a theoretical position, a stance for operating in the contemporary context – and a way of thinking about cities. This is yet another device.

Ffinally, if nothing else the book claims to be a bed time story for architects and urbanists.

Stories (Discoveries and Arguments)

The first story shows how the character is created – a contemporary twist on an existing parable. Goddess Kali gives Tenali a boon and tells him that he will be the wittiest person in the world but he should help build Tactical city and that he should name all his sons and daughters Tenali Ramas and make sure they name their sons and daughters Tenali Ramas too and so and so forth. And so there are these multiple Tenali Ramas all through space and time through whom the story of Tactical City is told.

Moreover I, as the narrator, enter the story with the statement that, the Tenali who is granted the boon is my great great great grandfather. The position of the narrator is important for the thesis, where it becomes the author’s personal search for a position in the contemporary context.

The first story is of a Tenali Rama who migrated to the colonial mercantile city of Mumbai. The story helps build the context of the colonial town that Tenali migrated to. The images in the narrative are of the colonial documentation of the native migrants to the city, “the colonial other” - Tenali could potentially be one of them. One such image has a footnote; “a man like this brings our water everyday”. Some others read, “shop selling false teeth: teeth are useful to all religions” and “ombrella hospital at dhobi talao”.

Tenali in the colonial city wonders how he can make a living in this new city. Tenali decides to open a false teeth shop in the native town. The shop he designs has a billboard of a big red mouth. In a milieu of so many languages he thought the billboard was appropriate to convey what the shop sold. Once he had the billboard he attached to it long strands of flowing facial hair. He was inspired here by his mendicant friend Valmiki. The strands were made from aluminum conduits obtained from the ship-breaking yard in the Bombay harbour.

Manual bending gave the structure a fuzzy hair-like appearance. It served as a refuge from the hot tropical sun.

Tenali devised a rain protection coat that could be swung around a rail as an inner lining.

The argument here is that, in the project the colonial documentation of the “other” gains a whimsical presence in the city. It hijacks the form of colonial representation and becomes an assertion of native identity. Its object-like nature is also important to the tactic because of the insidious nature of objects in becoming ‘signs’ of identity. The fact that a tactic does not have, as De Certeau says, “a proper site, discourse or language of its own and insinuates itself into the other’s place, adorns itself in the other’s garb and speaks through the other’s language” becomes the basis of this project.

The second project -the umbrella hospital-in a similar vein becomes an assertion of identity.

Vicchu is another migrant documented by the British as a ‘Christian migrant’. In the story Vicchu opens a shop for repairing umbrellas and calls it “Ômbrellas hospital”. He considers himself a Florence nightingale to the battered umbrellas. He was impressed by the Red Cross that came with the missionaries and the ideals they stood for. But his own experience at the hospital was a hairy one and he got goose bumps whenever he remembered it. Vicchu, himself was a lower caste Hindu, who was tired of being looked down on, by the upper caste. He found redemption in the missionaries that came with the colonialists and converted himself to Christianity.

Finally the shop that he designed expressed his strongest emotions. The shop was a HAIRY CROSS. The design reflected simultaneously– his Belief in the new found religion and his experience in the hospital, that gave him goose bumps– both extremely PRIVATE emotions. In this case an extremely personal identity finds a voice in the public realm.

The argument here is that the project becomes an extreme reflection of an otherwise suppressed subjectivity.

The third project is a collage of a shop selling betel-nut leaf that is made from modifying the migrant’s suitcase. Duchamp in the narrative is influenced by Anwar’s design and not the other way round.

This relocates the avant garde from a highly accepted Western context to the developing context where it originated.

The fourth narrative is located in the colonial industrial city. This particular Tenali arrives in the city to work in the mills. To quote from the book, “Another uncle of mine, needless to say a Tenali Rama arrived in Mumbai with a bus-full of people from his village to work in the mills in Mumbai. He was attracted by the new job prospects in the city and the housing that the mill owners had built to attract migrant labour. These were called chawls. The chawls in the city became settings for a large number of urban festivals. They became a milieu for political organizations and also places to plot out the freedom struggle. Festivals like the Ganesh that were celebrated here became means of organisation of the freedom movement. In course of time the mill owners stopped building new housing stock. With the continuous flow of migrants, the existing units began to be shared by many people. The typology that was once used by a smaller number of people and so sufficed having fewer toilets now had toilets being shared by many more people. This managed to have a major effect on people’s physiognomy in their early morning routines. In some cases it extended the idea of extended family across community structures, forming new community patterns, at other times it caused tempers to rise and factions being created on the basis of who used the toilets for the longest times. Tenali found that the neighbouring housing block had the same problem. Besides this he was seeing that the alienation in the metropolis was getting overwhelming. He decided to flip the two problems around their heads. He had been told by DD Kosambi, a cultural theorist, who studied the trajectories of compatibilities of certain cult groups through a study of the representation of their gods, how on occasion Gods who had been represented as warring would come together through marriage. Tenali wondered what it would be like to have the toilets of the two buildings marry. The intervention here, ‘marriage of toilets’ is a conservation project for the refurbishment of an chawl.

The two buildings share a water tank, community space and a sustainable water collection device. The roof of this space is made of a material that collects rainwater that slowly drips into the pool below. The roof sags as the content of water increases. The cultural concept of marriage overlapped with the local conditions provides a possibility of sharing. All resources are shared: a water tank, a sustainable water collection device, and a community space. Tenali further started making a chart to study the funding possibilities of the project. He found that he could rope in many actors. The residents themselves, who were always ready to spend lavishly on the weddings on their kin, became the major players. This was a strange Indian mentality that liked to spend lavishly on marriages and not on the environment. Tenali capitalized on this trait. The event of the marriage becomes an

organisational structure. Just as the Ganesh festival was used as a tactic to organise the freedomstruggle, the marriage of toilets becomes a tactic to challenge the patron- dependent nature of architecture, one that allows the community to become a client. The toilets themselves were tired of being called 'servant spaces' by the modernist architect Kahn who spent his time asking the brick what it wanted to be. They were delighted when Tenali and his neighbours reinstituted them as members of their extended families. The aesthetic of the project reflects this. The project is not a standardized modern project but one that is figurative of the marriage: one

that becomes an expression of a highly local identity. It is important to note that there is no attempt to search for any "authentic" local identity here.

The fifth project is based in the independent (quasi-socialist) city. The context of the independent city is established by the story of Tenali Rama who is lost in his own housing complex of standardized modern housing blocks. Socialist City is characterized by its number crunching methods, standardisation and extreme loss of subjectivity.

In the context of this TACTICAL CITY is reflected in Tenali's dream.

"That night Tenali had a dream. All the people trapped in the maps as featureless numbers, now came alive as desires and aspirations, the reams of paper became a soft city, a book of maps from where peered body parts of all those featureless numbers, now coming to life as unalienated beings. The eroticism of the body parts at the same time reinforcing and defying the alienation of the metropolis".

After establishing the context of Socialist City, we go into the tactic that Tenali then uses in Socialist City. Tenali finds that the city is documented in sheets of rectangular shapes at a scale of 1:2500. He finds some errors in which the planners of the socialist city traced the colonial maps and forgot to document a part of the city, which was thus not controlled. Tenali took possession of it and decided to make an urban bedroom on it. He took a standard bourgeois bedroom from the Time Savers standards, which all architects in Mumbai had sworn by and tried to fit it into the wedge of land he had obtained by default. He used the PhotoShop programme's transform command to do that. The result was a wall and a doorjamb that was 5' wide, a wall that tapered from 5' to a line and a rather long urban bed. The chairs had long elongated proportions and the bookshelf that was stretched in photoshop, became a mere relief and dysfunctional as a bookshelf.

This was an extreme expression of form follows function in a city where the pavements were used to sleep on in the night and bookshelves were meaningless.

The seventh project is where Tenali Rama, the unemployed daughter of the Tenali family, builds herself an office after enclosing a standard balcony with a decorative secure grill. Others in tactical city followed with multiple programmes

for their balconies and transformed the otherwise sterile facades. Some used their balconies to grow mushrooms on, some as an extra bedroom for their newly married son, some simply as storage. Another person a devotee of God Hanuman, built a mountain on it to grow the medicinal herb Sanjeevani as he saw it becoming popular in the global markets. Yet another, a meteorologist, made his little meteorological laboratory there and received work outsourced by Star TV for its weather reports. The uses of the balcony were as many as there were people unemployed in the formal job market.

This was a lesson in the tactical use of the otherwise blanket rules.

The eighth story is of Tenali in the global city.

To quote from the book, "It was the year 1991. This was no ordinary year. It was the year India had liberalised. Liberalisation had an alchemical reaction on the city. Glass and concrete towers started growing everywhere from the seeds of green money sown in the city. At the base of the city grew the weeds of the informal economy that serviced these towers: the slums. Tenali Rama lived in one such settlement".

One day a powerful gust of wind blew off the street light between Tenali's dwelling and the tall corporate tower that stood in front of it. Tenali's intervention was a light bulb that would substitute the street light. The light bulb from the low level of his dwelling shone brightly on the tower. The bodies of Tenali and his son blocked the light and created shadows on the large corporate façade. Tenali and his son, otherwise invisible in the city now gained larger than life proportions in the city and on a corporate façade.

Here we see a realignment of expression and identity taking place. The project could be read as an urban light installation.

The frenzy of liberalisation brought in a number of global infrastructural projects. A global road was supposed to be built on Tenali's land. Tenali couldn't sleep all night. Goddess Kali appeared in his dream and asked him to build her a temple at the corner of his plot. Tenali immediately understood the goddess's tactic. The engineers, who came the next day, staunch Hindus, refused to remove the temple, afraid that they would displease the goddess. The global road was built with a bend in it. Further, people continued to put money on the roadside shrine, as the common practice is. When Tenali realised that the goddess didn't need the money he invested in a tea stall next to the temple which slowly grew into a public space.

This project shows an incremental urban process.

Here the building of a temple became a tactical catalyst in the urban process, one that manages to change the design of a global project for local needs.

The tenth and eleventh projects become less of interventions and more of mapping processes to assert the tactical position. In the datascares project Tenali maps the highly mobile spatial structure of the vendors in Fort. Here conservation projects had planned to get rid of the vendors and to ‘clean’ the heritage spaces in order to restore them to their former colonial glory. He finds that these spaces become loci of multitudinous public spaces and need to be studied for their complexities.

In the mapping of the Lamington road computer network, Tenali finds that the spatial structure is much more hybrid than Koolhaas’s analysis of the New York skyscrapers in Delirious New York. Here there is not only a spatial complexity but also a complex organisational structure, something that Deleuze and Guattari wrote about and Koolhaas himself had little knowledge of. Koolhaas decided to collaborate with them to write his new book, ‘Delirious Mumbai’.

At this point in the text there is an indication that perhaps the 3 cities cannot be distinguished as such, perhaps they are all part of the contemporary city. “I Tenali started furiously making links and drawing diagrams to understand the connections, the change from the colonial to the social, to the global city. The more links I drew, the more my diagram got entangled. There was a maze of lines on my paper. The lines moved furiously. After a point they attained a life of their own, jumping between cities in time. They started playing games with me. I suddenly discovered that I could not distinguish between the many Tenalis I was beginning to write about. All the stories had been orally passed on to me or through random notes. Suddenly I wasn’t sure if the 3 cities were linear any more. The global city seemed like it could have existed in 1857 when the mills came to India, and the colonial city could be a contemporary phenomenon. I didn’t know if all those stories took place the day before or the century before. Perhaps all the Tenalis I was writing about existed at the same time. Perhaps I had lost track of all my siblings over time. Maybe I would meet one of them in a chance encounter in the railway train. I was not sure any more”. (See animation)

Further, I, Tenali Rama, become the new Director of an architectural school in Mumbai and start writing the curriculum. I am wondering if I should be writing a manifesto – especially to quote Koolhaas, when this is an age disgusted with manifestos. Well, I decided I would make an archive of TACTICAL CITY from the experiences of my Tenali kin – which in fact is the book. All I knew was that TACTICAL CITY needed to grow.

Tactical City is an attempt to formulate a stance against the dominant imagination that shapes most cities, especially in the developing economies. The post 90s urban landscapes of developing economies experienced an immense pressure to dismantle and reorganise the conventional control mechanisms in order to make way for “economic growth”, thereby causing tremendous reconfigurations in resource managing institutions¹. Consequently theoretical positions in architecture and urbanism realigned themselves with these changes. Positions taken by ‘Delirious New York’ or ‘generic city’ were forerunners of such a position. Tactical City does not go back to the nostalgic urbanism that generic city or Delirious New York critique. Instead it adopts a distinct position of opportunistic re-alignment with those left behind by the dominant imagination.

Tactical city, is an imagined city made of a set of tactics of innumerable interests that manifest themselves in different forms in the city.

- Tactical city is not a manifesto
- Tactical city is opportunistic
- Tactical city is deceitful
- Tactical City is a constant becoming

¹ Prasad Shetty, IFHP, Vienna Congress, 2003, Young Planner’s Platform

- 1. Urban timeline: A visual history of Mumbai - Selected issues Preolonial to 2003.
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