CHAPTER 10 – SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

This chapter offers a comprehensive overview of the entire research. As explained earlier the research has been organised into a number of chapters based on the objectives. Each of these chapters has a concluding part that summarises the important observations related to the particular objective. The present chapter brings all these individual conclusions together and tries to highlights the broader structure that binds all these individual themes. Conceptually all these themes are tied together by the practice theory. The chapter also provides a diagrammatic summary (Figure 10.1) of the ‘field’ of architectural production in the eighteenth-century Peśvā region.

10.1 The research questions

The aim of the research was to inquire into the ‘practice’ or ‘ways of operating’ of architecture in the eighteenth-century Peśvā region. I use the word in inverted commas since the term used in this research relates to Bourdieu’s Theory of practice. The theory gives the epistemological framework for the entire research. Central to practice theory is the concept of ‘field’ and the relational positions of agents operating in this ‘field’. The core of the research has been to set up the field and to understand the relationality of agents in the field. Behind the research question of ‘what constitutes the practice of architecture in this field?’ would be the implied question of defining the ‘field’ of architectural production in the eighteenth-century Peśvā region. In a way, the answer to the first question presupposes answer of the second. The understanding of the practice of architecture is what constitutes our understanding of the ‘field’ of architectural production.

I have defined the practice of architecture as being shaped by the processes of patronage that are the initiators of architecture, the processes of design where the architecture is mentally visualised and its communication which results in the built environment coming into existence. The final set of processes that I inquired into is the processes of managing the built environment that exists as the result of the three activities of patronage, design and communication. These processes have been understood as physical, economic and symbolic.

10.2 Definition of the study region

The study region as defined on the basis of settlement inventories corresponds to the cultural divisions of Kokaṇ, Mavaḷ and Deś. On the North, it is bound by the Godāvari river valley. The South boundary is defined by the Kṛiśṇā-Koynā river valley. The Eastern
boundary is more transitional and is roughly defined by the trade route which links Bijapur, Ahmednagar, Aurangabad and Burhanpur.

With this definition of the region as a background, I studied the various processes in the built environment. These processes constitute the ‘practice’ of architecture in eighteenth-century Peśvā territories.

10.3 Practice of architecture in eighteenth-century Peśvā region

10.3.1 Patronage. The rulers and the elite class used the power of architecture to negotiate their relation with the Peśvā as well as to assert their authority in their vatan lands. On one hand, we have a tendency to break away from the centre as seen in the careers of Śinde, Holkar, Gāyakvāḍ and Pavār families while on the other, we see a constant negotiation of identities by various families who stayed within the Peśvā fold but made constant attempts to assert their limited sense of autonomy.

Women built mainly as a punyakarma, a holy deed. Together with this we also see a tendency to assert their authority through buildings. Also observed are a number of cases where Men, mostly sons, were building for women (mostly mothers). A famous example of this would be the construction of a vāḍa for Jijābāḷī at the foothills of Raigad by her son Śivājī. The fact that in a rigidly structured paternal society, these many numbers of women from different social and economic classes managed to be ‘yajmān’ of construction projects is important but not surprising considering the religious texts sanctioned construction work as part of the pūrta dharma even for a widow. Such religious sanction made matronage socially acceptable in the eighteenth-century society.

The examples of community patronage show the importance of religious construction as perceived by the society as a whole. It was an act of piety for them which assured a credit to be utilised in the afterlife.

On the whole, although there is a dominant theme of constructing buildings as a punya karma (holy deed) which runs through the practice of patronage, there were also the concerns of identity, authority and relative social positions that influenced the behaviour of patrons and matrons in the eighteenth-century Peśvā region.

10.3.2 Design Process. It is evident that the patron played a strong role in the design process of some buildings, if not all. The habitus of the patron then is as important as the designer-builder in the design process. The design ideas were a result of exposure that the Marāṭhī patron had in the eighteenth century and the affordability to indulge in such personal
choices. The model of the design process proposed in the study (Figure 6.28) can be of help not only in understanding traditional design but can also potentially inform contemporary design practice.

10.3.3 Design communication. The various construction documents analysed are related to the large houses built by the elite. While there are a lot of documents related to the sale and purchase of houses by the middle class, we do not come across any contract documents of such houses. The lack of such documents of middle-class houses indicates a possible reliance on verbal contracts which sufficed for most of the construction. Indirect evidence for graphical communication is very much there, however, no example of such a plan has come to light. In spite of this, the existing evidence proves that the seemingly ‘copybook’ architecture is actually full of contextual variation and design innovation. The apparently simple and incomplete documents, therefore, used a complex set of codes both restricted (unstated) and to a lesser extent elaborated (stated) to communicate the design intent.

10.3.4 Management of the Built environment. I examined the management process as a set of agents performing physical, economic, and symbolic processes in the urban environment. The entire town was seen as an administrative unit, however, the day to day management seems to operate at the level of a neighbourhood or a peth. This meant that regardless of the size of the town the administrative system remained essentially same. The hierarchy of castes influenced the administrative hierarchy. The appointments to the important posts were based on records of earlier service to the government or could be bought on contract for a price. An individual could convert his economic capital into social capital, however, his right to do so was conditioned by his membership of a privileged caste group.

10.3.4.1 Physical and Economic Management. Many of the rules that governed the physical management appear to have existed as ‘restricted codes’ shared by the community implicitly. The documents analysed indicate that the rules existed as a combination of proscriptive (you shall not) and prescriptive (you shall). The principles that seem to have governed this decision making are as stated below.

1. Individual freedom – In all the cases mentioned above the owner had a significant freedom of action not only within his plot but to a certain extent in the public space fronting the house as well. However, the rights of neighbours had to be recognised.
2. Interdependence between neighbours - The agreements of buying and selling made sure that the shared ownership (of common walls) and the rights of rainwater disposal in each other’s plots were spelt out in unambiguous terms.

3. Public responsibility – The property owner was responsible for nuisance activities in the public areas immediate surrounding his plot. The rules prohibiting nuisance make the owner responsible rather than the perpetrator. Such interpretation of the nuisance law is contrary to contemporary legislations which focus on the perpetrator.

The owners contributed towards maintenance by way of taxes. Encroachments onto public roads of temporary or permanent nature could be regularised by payment of a fine. Demolition was ordered in cases where the encroachment was significant, in the sense that it affected the conduct of public affairs. Illegal construction seems to have been treated on a case by case basis. Caste and social position were the influencing factors in taking decisions regarding encroachments, access to drinking water from the water supply system and in defining norms of behaviour in religious places.

The principles enumerated above are similar to the conclusions of Hakim (Hakim, 2014) from his study of Arabic-Islamic Cities. The similarity is not surprising considering the fact that most of the major towns of Maharashtra had developed on the lines of Islamic cities by the time of the eighteenth century.

The processes of economic management were similar or same within the Maratha lands. The taxation structure and the associated administrative hierarchy were well defined. The city provided security, controlled crime and, importantly, controlled the market rates among the neighbourhoods.

10.3.4.2 Symbolic Management. Along with the physical and economic management of built environment, the ritualistic and symbolic management was equally important. There is a similarity between such rituals performed at the level of a settlement and the house. For example, the calming ritual is observed as grāmasānta as well as vāstuśānta. In a settlement, grāmadaivata was central while in household rituals, the iṣṭadaivata was important. Even in urban festivals such as dasarā or the Peśvā’s homecoming, decorating the individual house as well as the city was considered important.

The picture of the city that emerges from this analysis is that of a loosely organised group of semi-autonomous neighbourhoods each with its own officials, patrons, infrastructure, and markets. The composition of population varied and so did the trades practised.
The management of the built environment was simultaneously symbolic, physical, and economic. There was an overlap of ritualistic duties and those related to secular functions. Religion, caste and social status all seem to define the position of an agent in the field. The interconnectedness of the physical and the symbolic sets such practices apart from contemporary practices of urban management which focus solely on the physical and the economic.

The various agents occupied various positions in the field depending on their capital. The positions varied from the dominant (the state officials) to the dominated (common citizens especially the lower castes) Together these agent set up processes such as those of various rights, duties and financial remunerations and also the unwritten norms for social mobility. These ‘structuring structures’ guided the behaviour of agents and also prompted them to take dominant positions in the field.

10.4 The field of architectural production in eighteenth-century Peśvā region

There are three stages in the process of defining a social field (Mathieu Hilgers, 2015). The first involves establishing the relative autonomy of the field; in this case, that of the eighteenth century built environment. Second, to analyse the activity specific to ‘built - environment’ (processes of designing, construction and communication) and to understand specific capital associated with it. The third stage involves understanding the trajectories and positions of the Agents (processes of patronage) of the field. The above-mentioned conclusions when synthesised help to form a picture of the field of eighteenth-century Peśvā Architecture.

10.4.1 The field of architectural production in relation to the field of power, economy and politics. The field of built environment of the eighteenth century produced its specific capital in the form of the various structures such as residences, temples, water bodies and gardens. The economic and cultural capital that the patrons held and utilised to realise the construction projects helped them in asserting their social position. Buildings such as temples, rest houses and water reservoirs contributed to the social and symbolic capital of the patron. The symbolic capital was seen as an addition to the stock of ‘puṇya’ (holy deed) that could be capitalised in the afterlife. For example, Ahilyābāi’s construction projects all across the country are an example of the use of buildings to increase the volume of social capital and earn symbolic capital. The idea of past karma (actions) as responsible for the present life and care to be exercised in the present to ensure release from the cycles of life and death or at least to ensure a better next life was at the base of such actions. On the whole, it is seen that religion played an important role in defining the patterns of patronage.
The construction activity was dominated by the patron. However, we also see a tentative emergence of what I have termed as the ‘designer-builder’ class (eg Limaye, Chitrv). These people were not ‘architects’ in the current meaning of the word but rather performed more varied tasks. They conceptualised the structure with the patron, got together a team of carpenters and stone masons, ensured material supply and also oversaw the construction. This class was not conditioned by just the caste of the person. We have names from Brahmin as well as Maratha and Sutar caste that seem to have taken on the responsibilities of designer-builder. It is likely that taking on the responsibilities of construction was a way of ensuring social mobility. For example Limaye (later known by the surname of Khāsgīvāle), the designer-builder of Śanivārvādā went on to occupy an important position in the Peśvā administration.

The rise of the designer-builder class, though tentative, resulted into formation of knowledge specific to the field. As far as the published documents go, this knowledge was never put down in the form of text as evident with the earlier vāstu traditions. A closer example in terms of the time would be that of the Mughals who managed to put down the knowledge related to gardens and buildings in the famous ‘sweet smelling’ notebook ‘bayaz i khusbhu’ (Bailey, 1997) which was compiled in the reign of Shahjahan (seventeenth century). Perhaps the kind of political and social stability that would be the pre-requisites for such an endeavour was never achieved in eighteenth century Peshwa rule. In spite of the lack of such a consolidated document, the study of available contracts and receipts tells us that there was a specific lexicon which was used by the agents in the field. However, beyond that which is stated in so many words, there is a lot that remains unsaid. This knowledge was constructed by the patron, the designer/builder as well as the traditional craftsman.

Unlike other social fields of the eighteenth century such as religion, education or medicine the designer/builder did not organise themselves into a guild (group based on profession) or jāṭī (grouped based on a caste which engages in performing similar activities). Entry into the field remained fairly porous all through the century irrespective of the caste. The dominance of the field by political and economic capital shows a deficit in the relative autonomy of the field.

10.4.2 Activities specific to the architectural production and the nature of capital in the built environment. The activities and trends of the built environment of eighteenth-century Peśvā region are as follows

1. Instead of stylistic ruptures, the agents preferred to conform to existing stylistic models of various buildings.
2. External cultural influences tended to dominate architecture. A desire to be like Rajput and Mughal nobles in terms of the material culture was felt by the Peśvā and his nobles.

3. Religious scriptures allowed women to be patrons of construction projects of a religious nature. The private income available to women of the noble families from their sons, husbands or fathers facilitated these activities.

4. Larger religious projects were endowed with lands to pay for their upkeep.

5. Religious building complexes that grew over time with multiple patrons adding onto the temple.

6. Water-related structures seem to be the most frequent type of construction.

7. Special neighbourhoods were planned to focus on various trades. The trading community, which was many times from outside the state, was specially invited to increase commercial activity.

8. Vādā, literally meaning an ‘enclosure’, developed as a separate typology.

Some of these structures especially the religious buildings held a lot of power for the patron. They were perceived as powerful ways of symbolically amassing social capital. Anandibai’s lament of not being able to build temples (SPD, V4, G. S. Sardesai, 1930, p. 16), Gopikabai prohibiting Ahilyābāī from constructing ghats in Nasik (Sathe, 2013) or Bajirao II’s attempt to take over a ghāṭ in Mahuli (Kule, 2007) point to such symbolic power and also indicate the ‘symbolic violence’ that the actors indulged in to protect their cultural capital.

The inclination of patrons towards particular architectural language such as that of Puranādare towards Yadav traditions of temple building or that of Rāste towards Karnataka or of Peśvā towards Mughal architecture shows attempts to have their identity among the various agents producing the built environment. The various dependent families made use of such symbolic ordering of the field as they rose in social status. Sardar Patwardhan following Rāste’s language for temple construction or the general tendency of the noble families to use Rajput and Mughal architectural features shows that such decisions were not arbitrary but followed a definite pattern.

10.4.3 Understanding the trajectories and positions of the Agents of the field. The field of eighteenth-century architectural production was populated by a number of agents the chief amongst them were the patrons of architecture. The projects were many times managed through a (kārbhārī) manager who supervised day to day activities and kept the patron informed. Next were the designer/builders who have already been mentioned above. At the bottom of the hierarchy were the various craftsmen who executed the projects. At the scale of neighbourhood level, various officials were in charge of managing the built environment.
Patronage for construction was dominated by Čitpāvan and Marāṭhā families. In the early years of the eighteenth century, all of them were small title holders in various villages or came from very average backgrounds. Their rise in social strata was the fallout of the rise of Bhat family in Shahu’s service to the post of Peśvā. The second Peśvā patronised his caste and attracted a number of families from his native Kokān who migrated to towns on Deś (Gordon, 1998). By way of intermarriage, these families rapidly climbed the social ladder and formed the elite of the society. The changing nature of war and army gave rise to a banking class in the society. This was a totally new class in Maharashtra society (Divekar, 1982). To protect their investments some of these bankers started keeping armies and even went to the extent of becoming military commanders. The Maratha houses, on the other hand, became important based on military prowess. People like Śiṅde and Holkar started as young soldiers with Bājirāv and very soon became key military commanders in his army. These houses replaced the families which were important in Śivāji’s era. The eighteenth century also witnessed the wives and daughters of the elite houses becoming patrons of the built environment. In some cases, communities from lower strata also commissioned religious projects which though of a humble character indicate an important trend in patronage. The role played by the kārbhārī (manager) seems to be that of a ‘project manager’. They reported on the progress of work including conflicts if any, informed regarding the selection of sites and also had certain autonomy in terms of commissioning projects and spending money on behalf of their employers.

The class of designer-builder was a new class that developed in the eighteenth century. Their identity as a class remained tentative, however, many of them like Limaye, Chitrav and Nagarkar managed to climb the social ladder by building for clients like the Peśvā. As has been noted earlier, the eighteenth century was a time of change in the subcontinent. The shift in the centre of power from Delhi to Pune meant a loss of patronage for artisan guilds who were surviving on Mughal patronage. Many of these families shifted to Rajput courts and some also migrated to Maharashtra. These craftsmen came to Maharashtra from Rajasthan and Gujarat. There also seem to have been some craftsmen coming from Karnataka. These craftsmen brought local architectural forms with them and influenced the overall built environment. These influences were discussed in Chapter six and seven that deal with traditional design process and communication. At the bottom of the construction process, dominated by the patrons and the designer/builder were various categories of labour who worked on tasks like excavation, carrying stones, preparing bricks, preparing lime and other such tasks. Their occupation, social status and norms of behaviour to be followed were bound by the rules and regulations of the Jāṭī system.
The last set of agents in the field is the various officials who were in charge of day to day management of the built environment. These posts were allotted as heredity or were sold at a price by the government. These officials known as Šetē, Mahājan, Kamāvisdār etc. had specific rights and duties. They collected taxes, certified constructions and sale deeds, solved disputes related to construction and decided on boundaries of plots. For these services, they retained a part of the collected taxes and also had rights to goods from various shopkeepers. These posts were economically as well as socially lucrative. They occupied a position between the dominating and the dominated agents of the field. Chapter eight examined these rights and duties in the context of urban management.

The dominated class was the average city dweller who bought and sold his property, paid taxes, participated in the state festivals and in general obeyed the rules of behaviour in the city. On the other hand, his counterpart in the countryside remained more within the tradition of vernacular architecture where the owner and the craftsman played equal roles in producing the built environment. His presence in the field of built environment described above was, at the best, marginal (Figure10.1).

10.5 Limitations of the study and Relationship to existing scholarship

In spite of having a massive amount of primary documents that have been transliterated and published, I came across situations where the documents seemed to suggest the presence of more details. For example, the references to the existence of plans suggest that the unexplored archives could hold valuable graphic evidence regarding the preparation of drawings. This could add an entirely new dimension to the understanding of design communication. Such a task needs to be a combined effort of an architectural historian and scholars of Maratha history. Another lacuna is the non-availability of reliable architectural documentation or inventories of the buildings of the eighteenth century Maharashtra. The task of compiling inventories and preparing drawings is a huge task and can only be undertaken as an institutionalised endeavour.

I started the research on the premise that it would focus on the processes rather than a product. Such a study could, I felt, be read together with the form based studies in order to have a better understanding of eighteenth-century architecture. However, what I find is that the study of the product that is the formal character of the built environment also needs to be reformulated in the light of the understanding of the processes. Till such revision occurs in the field, the present study can hopefully complement the existing work on the eighteenth-century architecture of the Peśvā region.
Figure 10.1. A graphical interpretation of the field of architectural production in eighteenth-century Peśvā region
10.6 Implications of the research

I hope that the findings of this research will be of help to researchers on the architecture of the eighteenth century in the Indian subcontinent. At a larger level, the research demonstrates the potential use of Bourdieu’s analytical framework for the study of eighteenth-century Maharashtra. Application of practice theory can enrich our understanding of the cultural milieu of Peśvā society.

A study of traditional environments such as this is always of help to the conservation professional in managing the historic architecture of towns and cities. This help could be in terms of routine tasks such as writing the statements of significance that are part of the official listing process. For example, the ghāṭs built by Chima naikin in Nashik are now under a thick layer of concrete poured by the municipal corporation. Had they understood its significance perhaps they would have given a second thought to their decision. At a broader level, it can help the professionals in understanding the architectural context of the building or townscape that he is researching on.

The academic teaching of the history of architecture of the subcontinent has tended to skip the eighteenth century from its area of concern. This research contributes to the growing body of work on the eighteenth architecture of the subcontinent. In academics, this research can feed into the teaching of local architectural traditions which at present receive a very marginal treatment mainly due to the lack of research on this area.

10.7 Directions for further research

The present research could give directions for further research on the eighteenth-century architecture of Maharashtra. I list below some of the research avenues that can be explored.

Patronage is central in understanding cultural influences on architecture. A study of the formal character of the architecture of eighteenth century Peśvā region could take patronage and chronology as basic organising themes for analysis and interpretation.

Within the span of these hundred odd years that the study focused on, there have been a lot of variations and changes within the socio-political milieu. For example, the defeat at Panipat in 1761 CE was not only a political setback to the Peśvā rule but also changed the geopolitical equations amongst the Maratha nobles. As a result, the architecture of the various capitals patronised by the Maratha nobles grew more connected with the local ways of construction. On architecture of the heartland, we see an increased influence of southern
traditions especially that of Karnataka. So eighteenth-century architecture of Maharashtra defies its interpretation as a monolithic whole. The variations mean that relying on simplistic categories of the form will not be adequate. What is required is to have a much larger corpus of structures which can aid in identifying the smaller trends in a better fashion.

As I have mentioned in the literature review, and as seen from the analysis of patronage; the architecture of Kokaṇ needs to feature more prominently in the scholarship on eighteenth-century built environment.

The study of eighteenth-century urbanism in Maharashtra is at present very scant and exists as a set of isolated case studies. The present research has looked at it from the perspective of patronage and management. The topic, however, needs to be studied in more detail to come to any conclusions regarding the form of eighteenth-century Peśvā cities and settlements.

As a researcher, the entire process has forced me to relook at my presuppositions and reinterpret them in the light of evidence. In some cases, interpretations of researchers working in contexts as diverse as Virginia turned out to have a surprising congruence with the area I was studying. More work on neighbouring regions on similar themes will make these similarities more evident and fruitful. The research has given me a framework for situating micro studies on the eighteenth-century architecture of Maharashtra. Further fleshing out this framework and extending or modifying it as necessary could be the task of a lifetime.