Moral Ecology and the (Re) Making of Cities: Forging an Urban Future in Mumbai

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While at the Rachel Carson Center, I will continue working with ethnographic data from my most recent project, *Building Green: Architects and the Struggle for Sustainability in Mumbai*. The recently published book works between sites of pedagogy and arenas of professional practice to explore the social life of "sustainable" city transformation: I address new and enduring tensions between ideologies of the green city as they are forged and codified in training, and the active social-structural constraints that animate the everyday professional practice of architecture and "green design" in Mumbai.

For the architects at the center of the work, green architecture was in part about bringing historical and vernacular forms forward into an uncertain present and future, and the ecological benefits they were expected to confer. But it was also centrally reliant on the new materials and technologies that are expected to literally catalyze and *create* different kinds of relations between humans and the "natural" world. The environmental architecture with which I became acquainted in this study drew strength from its capacity to imagine wholly new materialities in cities, generative of wholly new urban social natures.

Writing the book raised as many questions as it answered, and all are relevant as we consider the contemporary stresses that climate change introduces in cities worldwide. And so I have three article projects in progress over my period in residence. I will therefore spend my time at the Rachel Carson Center composing a series of articles that will further develop insights that emerged in *Building Green*, but that I was unable to fully develop. These include 1. The ways that urban ecological scales reconfigure the calculus of environmental justice in cities; 2. The collective idea that social equity and the social good can be derived from a thing as, in this case, a building, a park, or an area design; 3. The uses of cultural and religious symbolism to confer social meaning upon a material structure, and the particular complexity of this maneuver in the context of contemporary South Asian politics; 4. Conceptualizations of the kinds of catalysts that are necessary to transform a given city (such as, in this case, Mumbai) to a "resilient" and "sustainable" city in the face of climate change. While I will focus on academic writing and analyses, I will also work to write for, and convey my findings among, nonacademic audiences with interests in cities, the environment, and environmental justice.