



Background

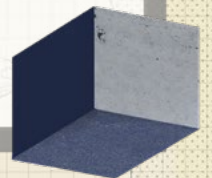
Sabli is a site of historic significance that now lays desolate and abandoned, under the layers of time. Located in the northern part of the state of Gujarat in India, the site that comprises of temples and water structures, lies close to the edge of a village that was once sacred, lying on the historic trade routes of the region. With its temples and tanks that were commissioned by wealthy merchants as acts of piety, the precinct provided relief and shelter to passing merchants who travelled from one city to another.

The historic structures of Sabli today seem to encapsulate not only those memories and imprints of the ancient but also those of the recent eras. As water levels rose due to the construction of the Guhai dam in 1980, part of the site is now submerged under water. What remains are a few structures on the higher ground; temples and a beautiful five storey deep Kund just besides the large water body formed due to the construction of the dam.

The historic site of Sabli now lies in a state of Suspended Animation. Ravaged by the rhythms of time, the precinct needs perhaps a fresh lease of life, a new sense of purpose, lest it withers away from public consciousness and memory.

**Discover.
Deconstruct.
Reclaim.**

the historical cultural landscape of Sabli





Geography and Demography

Sabli lies near the southern boundary of *Idar taluka*, which falls under the *Sabarkantha district* in the north of Gujarat. The Guhai River, which is a tributary of the Hathmati river, flows along the site. The mean annual rainfall is 931mm.

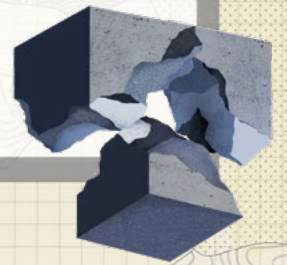
As of 1974, the district has a rural population of 93.34% implying that urban development had been scarce in this region. This high percentage meant that the land gathered majority of its revenue mainly through agriculture and farming activities. In the pre-independence era, the Idar Taluka, once covered with forests, thus saw the rise of cultivated land under *Kampawalas*; progressive cultivators who now acquired large landholdings. With their knowledge and equipment, they helped boost the agricultural production of the region.

Today, the Idar region is survived largely by cottage and oil milling industries. Stone quarries and mining activities are of great value and readily available soft wood allows for the prosperity of locally designed lacquered toys by *Kharadis*. While Sabli remains a forgotten site today, the villages of Pratapgadh and Mota Kotda with over 2000 inhabitants are in near proximity.

(*information referenced from Gujarat State Gazetteers: Sabarkantha district)

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Rendered map of Sabli showing the character of the site.
The water level approaches and recedes during different times of the year.



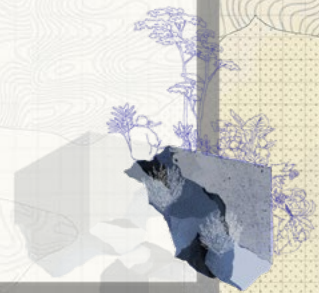
History

The development of architectural style in temples and water structures in Gujarat region between 10th to 15th century has been of significant interest to art historians and scholars. This region in Gujarat became an experimenting ground where old styles were fused with new ideas and a whole new way of building was evolved and practiced. The *Maru-Gujara* style was emblematic of the creative energy and bold expression in temple architecture between 11th to 13th century. This style of architecture was characterized by marriage between *Mahā-Māru style of the Marwar region of Rajasthan and Mahā-Gurjara style of Gujarat.*

Historically speaking, the city of Patan (which is 120 km from Sabli) was one amongst the most important centres for Jainism and it was through their patronage that numerous temples, water structures and dharamshalas were commissioned in a larger region around Patan. For example, a large number of temples were built during the stable rule of the *Solanki dynasty* which led to the flourishing of art and architecture. Sabli was one such site away from the capital city of Patan but perhaps of religious significance. The area in and around Sabli saw a plethora of building expressions in the form of Jain temples, Hindu temples, Kunds and stepwells. One may visualise this spread of structures of significance as being one that pays homage to the place for its historical or religious significance. Thus, it becomes an important historical site of pilgrimage.

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Architecture

While historical accounts are only available in fragments, it does become more apparent from the building style that most of these structures in Sabli were built between *14th to 16th century*. This period was marked by more refinement in construction systems, plan typology and ornamentation and its lineage can be traced back to the beginning of 10th to 12th century.

Jain temples derive their architectural language from that of Hindu and Buddhist temple forms. The Jain temple structures at Sabli are oriented around a *square plan* with entrances in the four cardinal directions, each of which might lead to the image of a *Tirthankara* (main deity). The temple features a large number of columns towards the periphery which is used for circumambulation. The domes and shikharas (the conical roof) are typically sharper than those seen in Hindu temples, giving Jain temple cities a distinctive skyline of several dome points arching into the sky.

Listed below are the architectural descriptions of the three structures of prominence.

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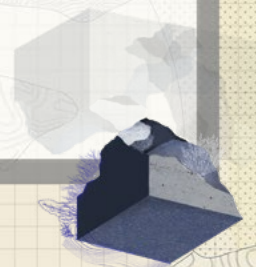
KUND-VAV

The Sabli Kund-vav (built in the 16th century) by Raja Bharmal in the memory of his queen Jivini, represents an evolution in *subterranean structures*, marking a striking shift towards a more secular function of the vav being a place of leisure. The steps of the Kund descend on three sides, and the fourth side is adapted as a multi-storied structure with rooms looking out to the lake on one side, which also provides a retreat from the blazing summer heat. The water channels found in the structure indicate that they must have been a part of a much larger complex of water systems. The vav (now neglected) transforms with change in seasons; from a viewing pavilion to a water tank that adds to the cultural diversity to the space around it.

Apart from the kund, there are also other structures of significance in the vicinity. These act as important references in providing clues for the design intervention.

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Sabli Kund

The Kund sits seamlessly at the level of the arrival path and slowly reveals itself as one approaches the structure.



SWETAMBER JAIN TEMPLE

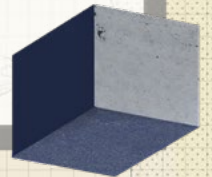
Most Jain temples are enclosed by free-standing detached compound walls, encircling the entire sacred temple area. The symbolism is that, the devotee leaves his ordinary concerns of life before entering the holy ground of the temple premises. Like most Jain temples, it also has other ancillary structures like the watch tower and an additional shrine which is estimated to be a later addition.

DIGAMBER JAIN TEMPLE

Another main distinction that the Jain temples have is that they build 'temple cities' rather than singular Hindu temples. The Digambar Jain temple complex is an example of *multiple structures within a singular boundary wall*. The circumambulation passageway consists of an enclosed corridor carried around the outside of the garbhagriha (Inner sanctum). The devotees walk around the deity in a clockwise direction as a worship ritual and symbol of respect to the temple god or goddess. The symbolism here is that this represents an encircling of the universe itself. The *Garbhagriha* is part of the courtyard that connects with the passageway on one side.

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Swetamber Jain Temple

This high plinth temple is constructed in such a way that it can be accessed even in the monsoons.



Digamber Jain Temple

The temple complex sits at the highest level of the hill and overlooks this cultural landscape.



The Challenge

The litmus test of the design proposal lies in its ability to address the issue, raise pertinent questions and establish a fresh perspective on a forgotten landscape such as Sabli. The participants need to revive or redevelop the area through an *architectural or/and landscape intervention*. While the program of the intervention is left open for the participants to define and articulate, the new intervention should aim to bring the area under the public eye.

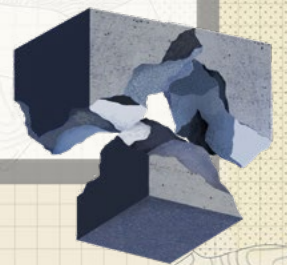
The Design intervention can be of any scale or size. However, it should be limited to the area just between the tank and temple.

** (see the red box in the site plan in dossier) .

It could deal with any issue that participants feel is relevant for the project. By imparting meaning to the site, the intervention should respect and *enhance not only its ecological condition* but also take into consideration the *nearby communities and other stakeholders* in its revitalization.

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The new intervention in the site may address one or more of the themes below:

1. LANDSCAPE AND MEMORY

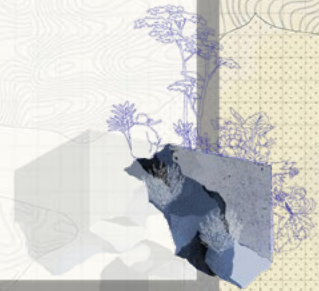
The idea that a landscape setting is a *harbinger of memories* of the place, people and their stories is often overlooked in the fast-paced development of our cities and the countryside. If one were to view landscape as collective memory, how then do we tread this landscape?

2. THE IDEA OF NATURE

The history of the arid region of Gujarat and Rajasthan is one of frugal living, working around *natural resources* and an *acknowledgement of the forces of nature*. The five-storey deep tank is a classic example of this approach; a complex water engineering structure that best encapsulates the relationship with nature back then. How should we view nature now and what would be an expression of that engagement?

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3. AGRICULTURE AND COMMUNITY

It is important to acknowledge the existence of an economic life around the heritage structure in the form of agricultural practices. The presence of fields all around these structures have a potential to create *a mutually beneficial relationship* that can be further explored as part of the design and development strategy.

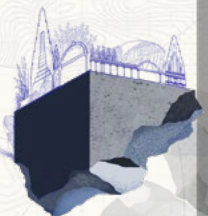
4. QUESTIONS OF ARCHETYPE

The range of structures in Sabli, ranging from single cells, to tanks, to temple complexes with multiple courtyards are *repositories of historic typologies of the region*. These archetypes are symbolic of the collective memory while its tectonics, the fine expression of the same. This rich archive of architecture can itself be an agent for new design.

Participants may or may not use one or more of the above-mentioned themes to guide their designs.

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Schedule

COMPETITION LAUNCH

30th October, 2023

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

25th February, 2024

ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS

1st April, 2024

Deliverables

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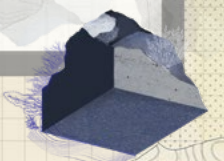
or

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- Portrait or Landscape orientation
- Maximum 2 A1 sheets
- Should not exceed 10 MB (300 dpi)
- File Name : UniqueCode_Title.jpg

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Panel Pratyush Shankar

Citylabs India. Provost and Dean, SEDA Navrachna University,
Vadodara, India

Gurjit Singh Matharoo

Founder, Matharoo Associates, Ahmedabad, India

Annette Rudolph-Cleff

Head of Urban Development and Design, TU Darmstadt, Germany

Seema Khanwalkar

Social Scientist and Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Design, CEPT
University, Ahmedabad, India

Awards

GRAND PRIZE

₹65,000

WINNER

₹50,000

5 Honourable Mentions

+ publication feature
+ certificate of achievement

RUNNER-UP

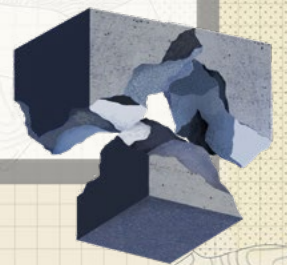
₹15,000

3 Curator's Choice

+ publication feature
+ certificate of achievement

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Registration

EARLY REGISTRATION

(30th October, 2023- 31st December, 2023)

₹3000

(For Indian Participants)

\$70

(For International Participants)

REGULAR REGISTRATION

(1st January, 2024- 25th February, 2024)

₹5000

(For Indian Participants)

\$85

(For International Participants)

1. Click [here](#) to go the registration page.
2. Fill the registration form and you will be redirected to a payment portal.
3. After the payment is made you will receive an email containing the submission link.

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Guidelines

This competition is open to all. There is no restriction on education, institution or nationality. Registration can be done as an individual or in a group (**maximum three participants**).

FAQ's

If you have any questions, you may search for answers in the online FAQ and our Instagram page, or send us an e-mail at competition@citylabsindia.com .

Remember to mark the e-mail with your unique code.

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