Interpreting a
Contemporary Urban Vernacular
for Cities:
The Case of Delhi

by

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ABSTRACT

The broad aim of this thesis is to investigate whether the regulatory environment[1] in an urban setting can be utilized to nurture appropriate urban forms. The word 'form' here includes both physical characteristics, and the use of the resultant urban artifacts and spaces by people. The thesis argues that appropriateness and 'good fit' in urban form can be best addressed through an understanding of the common denominator which organizes urban life, i.e. urban meaning perceived as a shared sensibility. In search of this elusive and somewhat nebulous sensibility, a redefinition of the word 'vernacular' has been broached and developed as the pivotal theoretical construct. Consequently, the conception of a contemporary urban vernacular has formed a daunting preoccupation, and this has been further expanded to include the delineation of urban 'types' which evolve, mature, and differentiate, influenced greatly by the processes of control and change.

As Nelson Goodman notes,'. . .knowing cannot be exclusively or even primarily a matter of determining what is true. Discovery often amounts to finding a fit.' He goes on to add that this fit is a result not of belief but of the advancement of understanding.[2] This thesis will attempt to develop an understanding of peoples' relationship with their city environment, with the eventual object of enhancing the fit between urban vernacular 'types' and control mechanisms which regulate them.

In almost any city, especially those of the third world, urban form is an outcome of processes, both within and outside of institutionalized regulatory mechanisms. This is, in turn, a result of the complex interplay of social, economic and political forces. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to address these issues comprehensively. Therefore the focus will be on developing an approach which relates urban vernacular types, to the issues of attitude and lifestyle, the mechanics of control, the articulation of roles and tasks within society, as they are expressed through the built form. I have tried to illustrate some of the arguments developed in the first part of this thesis through a case analysis of an urban vernacular type in Delhi, the capital of India. An initial foray has also been made to develop a method for field research in urban vernaculars.

The hypothesis forwarded is that by understanding the nature of socio-politico-administrative control, i.e. - the formal regulatory framework, the informal processes and tacit conventions - and vernacular types (people and places), as well as the relationship between the two, it is possible to arrive at an effective orientation for regulation which could nurture appropriate urban forms that would be supportive crucibles for living.

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[1] 'regulatory environment', as it is used here, includes the assemblage of governmental action and other measures taken by public institutions, which are either restrictive or enabling, to define the establishment's perception of appropriateness in urban form.
[2] Goodman, Indianapolis 1978.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

INTRODUCTION

A   THE SPIRIT OF THE SEARCH

> What is that white thing, over there? It is Cleon's son, says
> Aristotle - 'the white thing which we really perceive happens to
> be Cleon's son.' But we do not ask what Aristotle asks: what is
> it to see, what is it *that* one sees, what is the *one who* sees?
> Still less: what of that question itself, and what of questioning?
>
> Cornelius Castoriades[1]

The spirit of Castoriades' search has been one of questioning. At
the doorstep of critical inquiry, he sees an ordinary everyday
landscape, thrown into volatile effervescence. Devoid of a
discriminating inquisitiveness, the world rests supine; even in the
face of violent movement, we can discern Cleon's son in the garb
of a well-ordered before and after. Questions such as those that
cast him in shadow, brings us to the edge of a labyrinth. A simple,
stable, and recognized reality, begins to move in uncertain ways,
deep fault lines appear, what was clear is wrapped in a shroud;
the threshold to this obfuscate, amorphous, and murky world, lie
before us. The dilemma is whether to enter the labyrinth or to
remain outside of it?

> To think is not to get out of the cave; it is not to replace the
> uncertainty of shadows by the clear-cut outlines of things
> themselves, the flame's flickering glow by the light of the true
> Sun. To think is to enter the Labyrinth; more exactly, it is to
> make be and appear a Labyrinth when we might have stayed
> 'lying among the flowers, facing the sky'. It is to lose oneself
> amidst galleries which exist only because we never tire of
> digging them; to turn round and round at the end of a cul-de-
> sac whose entrance has been shut off behind us - until
> inexplicably, this spinning round opens up in the surrounding
> walls, cracks which offer passage.[2]

The spirit of this study embraces the Labyrinth. I have begun my
spin at the end of the cul-de-sac. At the end of this study, there
may not be a single ray of light marking a passage beyond the
walls of confinement. The effort is to initiate a process that will

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[1] Castoriades, Cambridge MA 1984; Aristotle's quote from *De Anima III*,
Clarendon Press.
[2] Castoriades, Cambridge MA 1984

build up sufficient centripetal force, to eventually let in some light, and possibly passage.

B   WHY VERNACULAR?

Kevin Lynch's speculation on the legitimacy of a 'good' city were the first sparks which ignited the verve for this inquiry. Contemporary cities have to be livable, as also manageable. The days of organic, tacitly co-ordinated, development of cities have been relegated to the past. However we may choose to indulge in romantic theorization about our urban futures, we cannot eliminate the specialist. We may define and redefine his role in development, acknowledging all the while that his persistent omnipresence is, but a fact to contend with. The essence of the relationship, between the specialist and the lay person, lies in a mutual understanding of motives, aspirations, and the pulse of life that beats in a place.

I have often thought of a furious, non-navigable river as the ideal metaphor for the divorce between the expert and the commoner. The commoner stands on one bank of the river, living out their lives, peering occasionally at the specialists on the other side with mixed feelings, from piquant curiosity, to scurrilous suspicion; responding to their actions sometimes in disdain and sometimes in awe. The group of specialist, on the other side, with a generous scattering of authority amongst them, are perpetually busy in conference among themselves, scurrying around from hither to thither, engrossed in their apparent self importance. Some of these specialists, with sophisticated equipment, entertain themselves by scrutinizing the doings of those on the other side, the resultant analysis is often flippant, riddled with myths, idiosyncracies and prejudices.

A few specialists are engrossed in the arduous task of building, what appears to be, an elegant looking bridge to the other side.

Help is not forthcoming from their compatriots, as they struggle to brave the currents without suitable tools. The commoners, are, however, very interested in the bridge. A little distance away, on the side of the specialists, sit a group of bedraggled yet energetic group of people. Evidently, this splinter group, I shall call them the 'renegades', does not enjoy a great deal of communication with the others on their side. The renegades appear to be incredibly busy too. They also have a bridge, it is a fragile structure made of twisted hemp and canvas. At the moment it is swinging wildly in the wind as a desolate figure struggles to get across. Soon it will be either washed away with the current, blown away in the wind, or destroyed by saboteurs who cannot stand the idea of any grassroot contact between the two banks. It is a losing battle, one that is fuelled by an indomitable spirit to realize their goals.

Should such a bridge be built? Evidently, some of us think that it should, others are unwilling to even consider such a malefic thought. If at all it is agreed, that such a bridge should be erected, how should the specialists go about this task? The specialists are incommunicado, they converse with and do the bidding of only those leaders who live out the doctrine of 'power at almost any cost.'[1] Sometimes this doctrine necessitates a certain permissiveness and accommodation, but these moments of reason only serve to perpetuate the larger ideology. This thesis is about sympathetic accommodation and co-habitation on the same side of the river metaphor.

The chasm formed by the river, between the world of the laity and that of the specialist, symbolizes the art of mystifying knowledge, shrouding it in an impenetrable fog with only a single passage of clarity, accessible only to those that are part of the select cliqué. The specialists have two sins to condone. First, this mystification.

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[1] I refer to all forms of power, economic, political, technical and intellectual.

Second, their indifference to the norms and conventions, which form the fabric of everyday life. Out of all this has come some of the suspicion and malevolence with which the laity regards the specialists. Both these indiscretions can be ameliorated through education, compassion, friendship, and sympathetic leadership.

Lynch writes,

> Decisions about urban policy, or the allocation of resources, or where to move, or how to build something, must use norms about good and bad.[1]

Where does this notion of good and bad come from, whose value system is it, who should adopt it and why? Lynch has grappled with each of these issues in his inimitable scholarship. I shall refrain from losing myself in his eloquence. What is moot at this stage is a conviction that I want to forward: It is the conventions and the norms of the common people that serve as the springing point for any notion of value in decision theory. The values that a specialist might bring to his field, may not correspond with those that the laity may take to their world. The specialists values must however grow from an understanding and sympathy for the other set of values, the laymens'. The communion between these two groups of people, must necessarily be a 'bond', and not one exclusively characterized by some form of 'bondage'.

> The bonds of authority or fraternity will not be like Brancusi sculptures, pure and solid, but rather ambiguous, constantly shifting from person to person (through an understanding of their needs and their worlds).[2]

This set me thinking about words which best describe and embodies an understanding of the norms and conventions that characterize the people of a place. I was also looking for a suitable umbrella under which to gather all the different pieces that I felt were relevant in the realization of such an understanding,

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[1] Lynch, Cambridge MA, 1985.
[2] Sennett, New York 1981; parenthesis are mine.

something that would stimulate and enable communication between the professional and the laity. Vernacular, appropriated and adapted from its linguistic realm, served the purpose better than any other.

C   IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS

In spite of being considered the engines of development and progress, most major cities, from Boston to Baghdad, includes the pavement dweller as well as the penthouse owner. They contain slums and skyscrapers, often sitting in brute opposition next to each other, as they do in many cities of the developing world. There is plurality and contrast, to an extent that is sometimes disturbing and occasionally invigorating. Yet, it seems reasonable to assume that hidden in all this apparent madness and confusion, there must be a certain order. An order, that constitute the grammar of an ordinary, everyday language with which to read and understand the built environment shared by the people of a place.   Maybe the complexities and the irregularities of the city are such that they preclude the legitimacy of such a reading. It is one of the objectives of this paper to present a reading of the urban fabric in light of the above uncertainty.

Folk societies probably did not worry about the existence or the meaning of the word 'vernacular'. They did lose some sleep over the notion of appropriateness, as has been the case ever since the institutionalization of authority. However, their perspective of the appropriate normally excluded the consideration of systems outside of their own. Exploration of alternatives, tempered by a profound appreciation of the prevalent is, or should be, a matter of concern in many societies today. This study of vernacular is directed, obliquely as it may be, towards the broad question of appropriateness. It may only be the first of many links in a complex concatenation that will help us understand the question, far less provide any answers. My concern is not 'to

arrive at a definition (or answers) and close the book, but to arrive at an experience',[1] one that enriches our search for those answers with more than just fact, so that we may render our solutions in our own personal languages. The implied suggestion here is that there is inappropriateness manifest in our environments. The objective of this study also acknowledges, implicitly, that we do not comprehend this inappropriateness.

The metaphorical sketch of the river, in the previous section, delineates a story which is founded upon the equation of regulation and authority, or enforcement, as it finds expression in contemporary societies. The nature of this expression, articulates, and in some ways, exerts a profound influence on our lives and our futures. This thesis does not comment upon the nature, or the impact of regulation, nor does it illustrate how an attitude of empathy with the urban vernacular can be translated into positive action. It merely presents a theoretical construct which can be used to look at the city in a particular way.

An useful analogy may illustrate better my intentions. The city can be conceptualized as a messy place, much like the desk of an apparently disorganized person in the midst of frenetic work.[2] The person knows the various underlying orders which enable him to deal quite effectively with the information and resources he has scattered across the table. It also enables him to place in some fashion, possibly coherent only to him, new information or material that he may want to retrieve at some later time. Of course, in this analog, based on an understanding of his own personality, the person imposes his authority, or his order, only on himself. If we now bring in another person, one who is endowed with a responsibility to organize the desk, it would be a virtual impossibility for this second person to accomplish his task

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[1] Ciardi, Boston 1959.

[2] the following discussion, based on the notion of the city as a messy place, has been developed from ideas spawned by John deMonchaux during discussions with him.

without either antagonising the owner of the desk, or
understanding in detail the psyché of the deskowner, as also the
nature of the mess and its underlying ordering systems. The city
could easily replace the desk in the analog; the citizens the desk
owner; and the institutional framework, as well as the
professionals the distinct 'other' whose role is to bring cogent
order to help facilitate the task that is being conducted from this
desk. The particular form of the mess, as also the underlying
systems, beliefs and norms, that characterize it, represents the
vernacular.

A city vernacular for the contemporary metropolis is, in many
ways, an uncertain perception today. The search which sets out
to bring at least some degree of order to this perception, has to
deal with even greater uncertainties. I cannot do justice to all that I
have set out to do ,within the limitations of this thesis. I do not
know if it is possible to do justice at all to issues such as those
that I have broached. Therefore, in keeping with Castoriades'
image of spinning at the end of the cul-de-sac, I shall begin my
spin with little more than an unfailing faith in the future, a
persevering optimism, and all the determination I can muster.

The thesis is divided into three parts. In the first part, I discuss the
theoretical foundations for the conceptualization of an urban
vernacular, and the study of types established on the basis of
this vernacular. The First Chapter struggles to crystallize an
understanding of the word vernacular, linking it to other
significant characteristics of contemporary life. The Second
Chapter brings this understanding to the city, and outlines an
intellectual and methodological approach to facilitate the task of
the observer. The Third Chapter introduces the notion of
temporal dynamism, or change, and how it affects the
understanding of an urban vernacular.

In the second part of the study, I start by sketching out the
development of the city of Delhi, in Chapters Four and Five.

Using this historical and cultural perspective, Chapter Six includes a rendering of a typical form of settlement in Delhi, the unauthorised colonies, through a lens that reflects the articulation of a type, as also the theoretical underpinnings, delineated in the first part. In the same Chapter, I have used another typical form of settlement in Delhi, the DDA housing, to briefly explore the manner in which an observer may approach a setting, with the objective of learning something about urban vernaculars.

In the last part of the thesis, I have tried to synthesize the various digressions that form a part of this thesis, as also the threads that tie them together. In conclusion, I have presented my perception of how this thesis may evolve into a more comprehensive treatment of the issues that have been confronted, and the ideas that have been nurtured. The literature has been diffuse, the research not always conclusive, the arguments not always decisive, and time was a very real constraint. I have, however, tried my very best to keep the discussion lively, provocative, and mobile.

CHAPTER I
THE NOTION OF VERNACULAR

1.1   VERNACULAR

Let us begin with the word vernacular itself. There is the linguistic vernacular, the historic vernacular, the commercial vernacular[1], cultural vernacular, vernacular by process, vernacular by perception[2], the timeless vernacular[3] and I am sure numerous other forms and meanings of this much used, and often misused term. The etymological root of the word comes from the Latin term *verna*, which refers to a home born slave[4] or a servant born in the house of his/her master. Essentially, a native, who is located within society as one who serves rather than one who is served. *Verna* evolved into *vernacul-us*, which meant domestic, native or indigenous. The earliest and most predominant use of the word was linguistic. Hence 'vernacular',

> . . . a language or dialect that is naturally spoken by the people of a particular country or district, frequently associated with working classes or peasantry.[5]
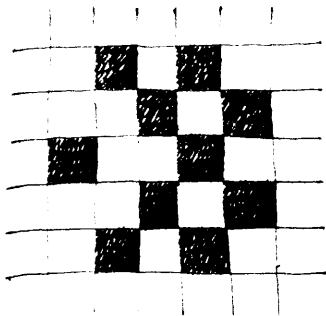
Most people who are not members of the exalted design professions, use the term 'vernacular' as an expression for a particular form of language shared by a group of people.

> It is a dialect, substandard in terms of the correct literary language of the establishment. Recent usage has expanded the definition to include other forms of expression, so that we now speak not only of vernacular language but of vernacular music, vernacular writing and vernacular architecture.[6]

In the above mentioned quote, Jackson characterizes the vernacular as a colloquial derivation of some purer form of expression.

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[1] Chase, Design Quarterly #131

[2] Although he does not use the term 'vernacular', Lynch's studies could be said to point in this direction; Lynch, Cambridge 1960.

[3] Jackson, New Haven 1984; referring to the Rudofsky sense of the term.

[4] Oxford English Dictionary (Univ. Press: Oxford; 1978)

[5] Oxford English Dictionary (Univ. Press: Oxford; 1978)

[6] Jackson, Design Quarterly #128

One of the earliest references of the word associating it with the arts was in an article published in the pages of *Sec. & Dom. Arch.,* 1857, wherein Sir G. Scott exclaims in an article 'Look at the vernacular cottage building of the day!'. The Oxford English Dictionary goes on to iterate that vernacular architecture is,

> architecture concerned with ordinary domestic and functional buildings rather than the essentially monumental.[1]

There is a very specific use of words in this definition and it may be worthwhile to ponder upon it for just a moment. Along with the domestic, 'ordinary functional buildings' have also been clubbed as a part of the vernacular. Implicitly excluded from it is that which is 'essentially monumental'. What falls under the category of 'ordinary functional buildings' which are not 'essentially monumental'? Well every building has some amount of both, the Parliament building probably imbibes an overdose of the latter while the neighborhood 'mom and pop' store or even the local supermarket essentially represents the former. Vernacular, as used in the context of architecture and human settlement, need not restrict itself to references of buildings alone. Open space, signage, and other artifacts, which are part of this realm, can also

Fig.1.1.1   'Essentially monumental', or 'ordinary functional building'? From the northern edge of Leningrad in the USSR, these examples of prefabricated apartment blocks characterize the dilemma.

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[1] Oxford English Dictionary (Univ. Press: Oxford; 1978)

inform our sensibilities about ordinary functional elements and attributes of our life settings. It is provocative, and indeed exciting to think about the realms of the vernacular based on this description. I am afraid that 'vernacular' has become a loaded word for a majority of the arts, it's meaning has more specific, and often awkwardly distorted connotations, other than that implied by the linguistic understanding, and by the definition in the Oxford English. With respect to architecture or even the built environment Jackson's definition, quoted earlier, excludes formal and spatial expressions that exhibit a desire to adhere strictly to rules and principles, or to correct and pristine forms of traditional grammars. Vernaculars often borrow in part, sometimes verbatim, from the vocabulary of traditional grammars. However, the whole is rarely a model of the original prototype. In fact the relationship between language and the city is not altogether arbitrary. In Rossi's words,

The significance of the permanent elements in the study of the

Fig.1.1.2 Squatters in Favelas, Rio de Janeiro; high density, self generated settlements, which grammar do they borrow from?

city can be compared to that which fixed structures have in linguistics; this is especially evident as the study of the city presents analogies with that of linguistics, above all in terms of the complexity of its processes of transformation and permanence.[1]

Although in his book *The Architecture of the City*, Rossi uses the permanent elements represented by certain urban artifacts as his basis for a study of urban history, he does acknowledge the mutability of the form, held up on the tenets of those fixed structures. *Shared senses* represent the essence of the word 'vernacular', yet there are other terms that imply a sense of sharing, i.e. culture, tradition, custom, to name only a few. In fact every word, every object, every phenomenon has to have some shared meaning in order to facilitate understandability. Although each individual understanding is colored by an unique reading, there are some common underpinnings upon which personal prehensions rest. How does vernacular differ from other notions of sharing? How does it accommodate the individual reading? Is it merely a stylistic tradition? Vernacular has distinct historical references, often implicit, to the existence of some kind of social hierarchy as its conceptual basis, that is also implicit in its etymological root. This means that there has to be on the one hand, the 'establishment' at large, which sets the rules and principles (legal, political, cultural, aesthetic etc..) as also 'another element which for one reason or another cannot comply (partially or totally) with those standards (rules and principles), and devises pragmatic substitutes.'[2] The establishment, which is often the arbiter of taste, is more under willful control as it remains close to so called 'universally accepted laws', the 'universe', in this case, maybe international, national, regional or even local. The vernacular is more often subject to circumstances which are often beyond willful control.

The permanent forms and spaces in the community, the infrastructure, derives from authority of the establishment; it is
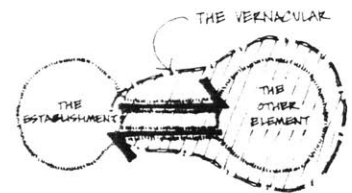
1 Rossi, Cambridge MA 1986.
2 Jackson, Design Quarterly #128, parenthesis are my additions.
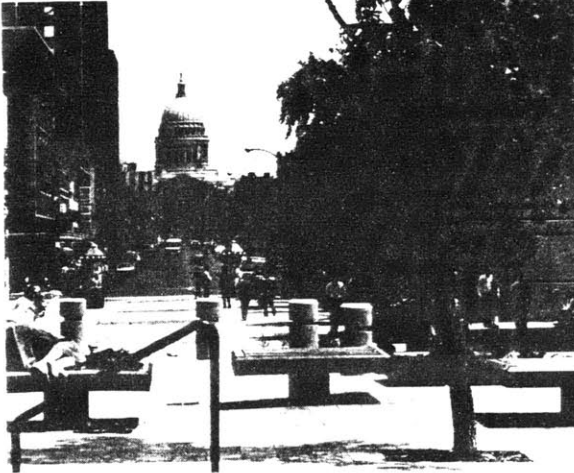
Fig.1.1.3 The dominance of the 'establishment' Madison, Wisconsin; setting the pristine code.
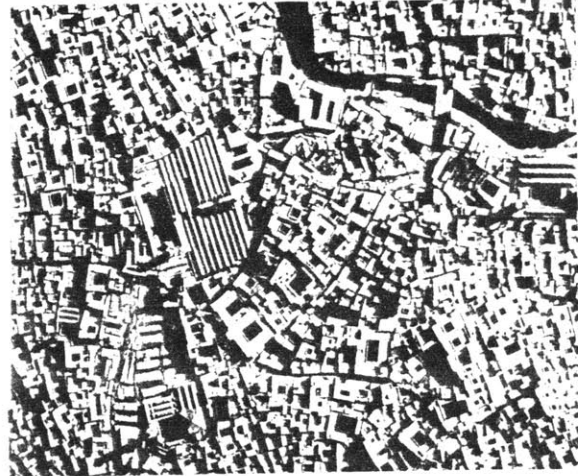
Fig.1.1.4 The central part of Fez, Morocco; the in significant 'other', unable to conform in the purist traditions.

the vernacular that in most cases determine how those forms and spaces are used.[1]

Fig.1.1.5 Uzés, France.

Fig.1.1.6 South End, Boston.

The essence of 'sharing' in a tacit vernacular is one of common experience in a specific context, under the umbrella of the same establishment, or the same set of 'rules and principles' as we have discussed earlier. In much the same way that the framework of a unique set of 'rules and principles' can accommodate an infinite number of vernacular responses shaped by circumstance and by historical process, the vernacular itself leaves sufficient room for infinite forms of individual expression. The vernacular expresses certain norms and standards in terms of the methods adopted, the rules followed, and often in the subtler nuances of style. The difference between these norms and standards, and those of the establishment, lies in the greater degree of explicitness and a degree of relative inflexibility, characteristic of the latter.

A majority of references to vernacular in popular professional parlance, seems to denote a direct association either with the past, with folk cultures, or both, typified by a strong attachment to formal elements. The popular imagination is so taken up by this

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[1] Jackson, Design Quarterly #128

interpretation that the mere suggestion of the word 'vernacular' in most situations establishes a lock on some specific visual images. I am afraid this represents a rather limited perspective in the appreciation of the term. In almost all these references to the term, vernacular has connotations which are either almost exclusively rural or include only the semi preserved, traditional section within the urban realm. To think of a vernacular in and around the vicinity of Delhi today, would almost certainly evoke images of settings which are either pastoral, like the semi rural urban fringe, or of the traditional urban core, in this case the

Fig.1.1.7 Anticoli Corrado in the Sabine Mountains near Rome; a typical Italian hilltown, this would satisfy most professionals as a typical 'vernacular' image. Some would go so far as to exclude most everything else other than this kind of preserved, semi rustic setting from categorization under vernacular.

city of Shahjahanabad[1] in some present or bygone temporal context.

In the following section I will explore some of the notions of 'vernacular' and synthesize an interpretation that will build upon the preceding section and refute some prevalent notions. The intention is to relate the vernacular to contemporary lifestyles and values. I will attempt to briefly address the conflicting dualisms, e.g. modernism and traditionalism, self-conscious and unselfconscious etc.., that must be accommodated in any interpretation of a contemporary vernacular.

1.2   VERNACULAR, TRADITIONAL AND INDIGENOUS

At the outset I would like to briefly make a loose distinction between three keywords which are interchanged freely in most dialogues centered around the vernacular. Confusing though they appear to be, they have distinct meanings. The words are 'indigenous', 'tradition(al)' and 'vernacular' itself. At the risk of oversimplification, I shall begin by abstracting the meaning of these terms from the dictionary.

'Indigenous', whether it is object, attitude, practice or phenomenon, is essentially set apart from the other terms by virtue of its origins, which are rooted in the local soil. 'Born or produced naturally in a country or a region'.[2] By implication, it could not possibly have originated outside the physical region it characterizes. 'Tradition' refers to the entire bundle of attitudes, objects, practices and phenomenon which is shared by many and is the inheritance of a common past. *Traditio*, the Latin root,

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[1] the traditional city built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 1648 which stills forms an active, congested, problem ridden old city within the Delhi Municipal Area.
[2] Oxford English Dictionary (Univ. Press: Oxford; 1978)

means delivery, surrender, a handing down. Tradition is defined
as,

> the action of transmitting or 'handing down', or fact of being
> handed down, from one to another, or from generation to
> generation; transmission of statements, beliefs, rules,
> custom, or the like, especially by word of mouth or by practise
> without writing. [1]

Discussion of the term 'vernacular' has already been initiated
earlier in the text, however we must put it in perspective with
these other terms. While being linguistic in its most oft-quoted
connotations, *vernacular refers to those attitudes, objects,
practices and phenomenon which are shared through common
belief or perception by a group of people, usually of no special
status, as it is used or appropriated for a particular time.* This
conception generally limits it to a definite geographical region. A
vernacular, which consists of tradition amongst other things, may
itself transmit these, and stimulate the evolution of other
traditions over the passage of time, to a new interpretation of the
vernacular in the future. Of these three terms, 'tradition' seems to
have the most tenuous links with physical fixity, or direct

Fig.1.2.1   *Saarinen's Gateway Arch, St. Louis;
a tradition of urban sculpture finds
expression in the American midwest.*

Fig.1.2.2   *Zadkine's War Memorial, Rotterdam;
the tradition of urban sculpture finds
expression in the Netherlands.*

[1] Oxford English Dictionary (Univ. Press: Oxford; 1978)

associations limited exclusively by a geographical specificity. Building with stone, for example, is a traditional practise in parts of India, in Italy, as well as in parts of Latin America. Of course, it is not the same tradition in the way it evolved over time, the way it is articulated into building, and in the way it communicates meaning, in each of these three places. Let us look at another example. Prayer is a very significant institution in Islam, it is indeed a way of life. Certain aspects of the prayers form part of a common religious tradition across many parts of the world, although each place is the home of a distinct and unique vernacular.

How are these three terms related to each other? Vernacular, refers to the world of the laity,[1] devoid of any exclusive socio-economic status. The traditional, or possibly even the indigenous, does not take strict exception to either socio-economic or intellectual exclusivity. The conception of the laity, is in itself a complex notion, especially so in contemporary society which is ordered by layers of overlapping socio-economic strata spread across a band that exhibits great polarity at the ends. In spite of apparent egalitarian aspirations, it is a somewhat delicate and carefully maintained[2] economic hierarchy which sets in relief and helps us appreciate the layers of popular culture in these societies. This popular culture exhibits far greater heterogenity as compared to those from more traditional societies. Therefore, we have to be careful about broad generalities in our interpretations of the vernacular. Status itself is not altogether alien to the notion of vernacular, especially when it expresses minor socio-economic differentiation within the larger stratas of society. Tradition too, is a significant part of a vernacular experience, but only as T.S. Eliot describes the true sense

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[1] references to the use of vernacular which does otherwise is rare, one instance is Rudofsky's *Architecture Without Architects* which includes examples of pedigreed architecture, e.g. the Jantar Mantar complex in New Delhi.

[2] Linn, Washington DC 1983.

Fig.1.2.4 A colonial legacy? Vernacular apparel, yet distinctly non-
traditional; a family in front of their tin-roofed shanty home in
Cape Town, South Africa.

of tradition as that which.

> . . . involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past,
> but also of its present . . .[1]

However, a vernacular could well imbibe non traditional elements,
either derived from internal or external influences, adapted to
suit present utility or sensibility. A good example is the vernacular
dress habits in many third world cities, which exhibit striking
western influences. Status is expressed within this vernacular,
maybe through brand names (or their absence), cost or even
more subtly through the design or print of the particular item of
clothing. In some developed countries the personal automobile
has become 'vernacularized', yet this phenomenon has its
origins in economic and technological forces rather than in the
power of tradition[2]. In essence, both 'vernacular' and 'tradition'
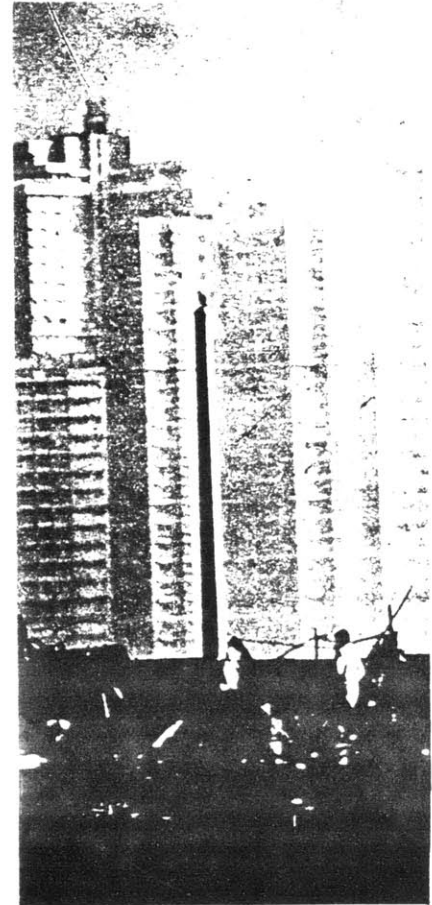
Fig.1.2.3 Bombay slums; skyscrapers

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[1] Eliot, New York 1950.
[2] It could be argued that politics, in the form of the democratic 'tradition'
played a role in this process. It is my contention that the economic and
technological forces played a greater role in popularizing the private
automobile.
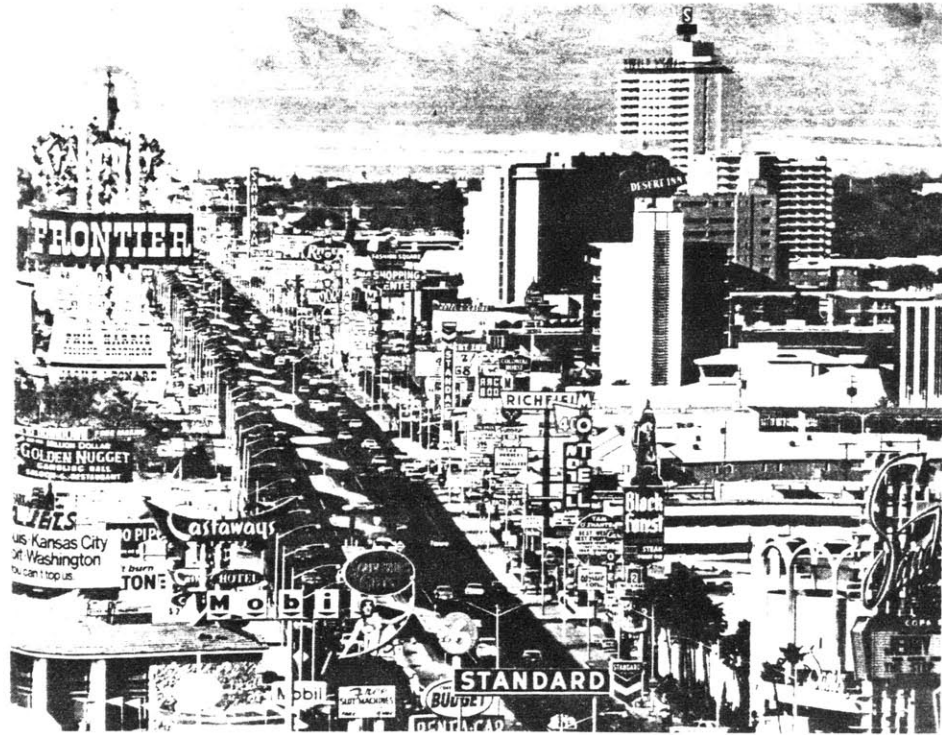
Fig.1.2.5   *The vernacularization of the automobile, and the ensuing landscape; The Upper Strip, Las Vegas.*
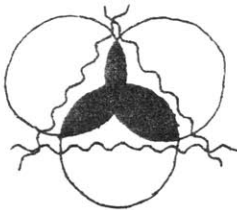
have mutually exclusive components, yet they share a lot that in common. Similarly, 'indigenous', in its referential framework, overlaps to some extent with one or both the other terms. Yet, it has, distinct areas where its connotations exclude those of the other terms. For instance some of the unique forms of intermediate personal transport operations in third world cities, like jitneys, tempos, various forms of rickshaws etc., has little to do with the 'traditional', though it clearly represents a response[1] that cannot be excluded from the vernacular and is indeed indigenous.
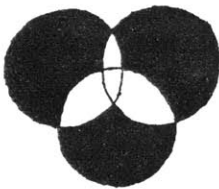
We may also think of examples of the indigenous that does not fit either traditional or vernacular interpretation today. A simple illustration is the historic practise of 'jwahaar' or self immolation in defeat, prevalent among Rajput nobility upto the seventeenth century. After defeat in battle, the courtesans, wives and other

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[1] to the problem of inadequate public transportation.
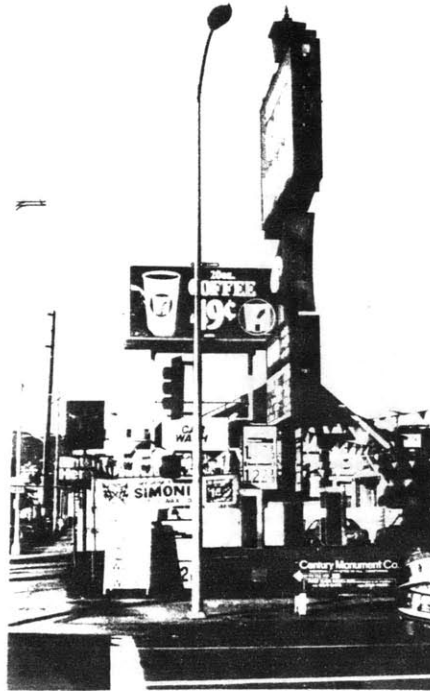
Fig.1.2.6 Santa Monica Boulevard and Gower Street, Hollywood, California. The strip highway consumerist landscape in America; indigenous, vernacular, yet not traditional.

female members of the nobility immolated themselves to avoid the humiliation of being converted into slaves. This practise was known as 'Jwahaar' and was prevalent in the north west and central India. At one time it was the way of life, unquestioned, infallible; today we see it only as an archaic historic practise, which originated in a specific part of the country.

I do not claim that this is an entirely comprehensive interpretation of these terms, nor do these definitions harbor pretensions of approaching absolute truths; the objective here is to try and stimulate an appreciation of fine distinctions that exist between the three. It is true that with reference to certain attributes of our environment, the usage of these words is often perceived as overlapping, but each term does have its own distinct connotations. How the word is used often determines its meaning. I may casually refer to the delicately proportioned and exquisitely detailed Sullivanesque, Chicago tower architecture as either traditional, vernacular or indigenous. Contingent upon my

frame of reference, each usage could be meaningful. Yet, I must be aware of the sense each word conveys to appropriate the one best suited to my purpose. Every urban environment, expresses indigenity, tradition and vernacular. The mix, the mutual overlaps, or the relative significance of each varies from city to city and across time.

1.3   MORE ON VERNACULAR

One of the foremost authorities on 'vernacular', Rapoport, defines it as the built environment of peasant and pre- industrial societies[1]. In eliminating all other societies from this definition, he endows the word vernacular with a fixity of reference which excludes a large number and types of human settlements. Unfortunately, this has become the accepted, and somewhat superfluous notion of 'vernacular' in the professions dealing with the built environment. Surely, by virtue of its generic meaning, that of products, processes and symbol, which are a part of the lives of the laity, it is quite apparent that a vernacular operates and is decipherable in every collective human environment. The exception, of course would be a society which displays a perfect and complete state of anarchy. By a perfect state of anarchy, I do not refer to the social theory of anarchism[2] but to an extreme, whence convention and heresy cannot be clearly identified.[3] Maybe even such a society could be said to possess a vernacular, in which the normative would consist of a denial of the normative! On the other hand, it is true that the notion of vernacular should not be confused with populism. As Rudofsky mentions in his book *Architecture Without Architects*,
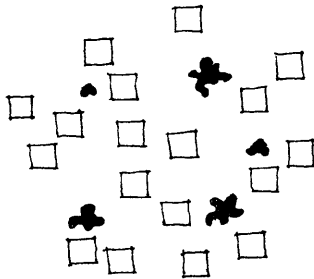
Vernacular architecture does not go through fashion cycles.[4]

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[1] Rapoport, Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1969.
[2] Woodstock, New York 1962.
[3] .'...and all *free men stand godlike and kingly, a generation of princes as Shelley has described it.'* Woodstock, New York 1962..
[4] Rudofsky, New York 1964.

The deep and somewhat fluid relationships between people and their lifestyle, nurtured within and expressed through the built environment, forms true vernacular systems. These systems themselves could possess a benevolent disposition to fashion cycles, yet exclude the inheritance of that very benevolence. Bertolt Brecht resonates a similar sentiment in 'Things which Pass' (1925),

> In civilized countries there are no fashions: it is an honor to resemble the models.[1]

Alexander in discussing the concept of tradition says,

> First, to be a living language, it must be the shared vision of a group of people, very specific to their culture, able to capture their hopes and dreams, containing many childhood memories, and special local ways of doing things.[2]

In my mind this is a better description of vernacular than it is of tradition. Tradition often fails to accommodate the 'hopes and dreams' of people. The desire for modern, concrete, occidental house forms in many third world countries could be accommodated within a vernacular, a rather difficult social aspiration for tradition to shelter under its awning. Except for some urban environments created (Brasilia, Chandigarh) or reconstructed (Hiroshima) almost from scratch, I cannot think of any city or large urban setting which fails to realize to some extent the vision that Alexander speaks of. Some, of course, do better than others. Even Chandigarh and Hiroshima as they age, I am sure will, begin to articulate this common vision to some extent. By implication, Rapoport (folk and pre-industrial societies) seems reluctant to acknowledge the existence of a vernacular for some environments as opposed to others. His perception of vernacular appears to be a phenomenon which is indeed somewhat privileged.

Fig.1.3.1   Chandigarh

Although he does not explicitly use the word, Habraken explains

[1] Culot, OPPOSITIONS Fall 1978.

[2] Alexander, New York 1979.

the sense of a vernacular as that which is tacitly understood by all, an implicit system. He adds however that this system contains the capacity for constant change and perfection through the application of the most recent developments in appropriate technology within the social fabric that nurtures it[1].

This interpretation is a counter position to Rudofsky's argument that vernacular is immutable and represents perfection itself.[2] Although closer to the target, Habraken's definition somewhat idealizes the vernacular, this is contingent on what he means by 'appropriate' in technology as also its relationship with the host society 'that nurtures it'. The vernacular is not always the pristine, unadulterated idiom of integrity that we
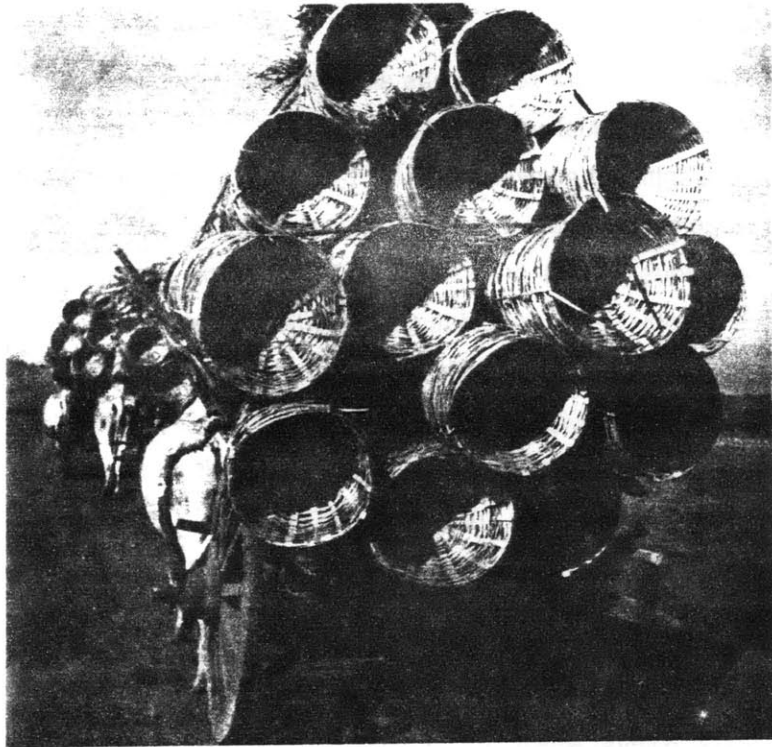
Fig.1.3.2 *Vernacular? Wicker travels well on rough Indian roads. Technology, when affordable, may replace the cows with a tractor.*

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[1] Habraken, OHI 1985.
[2] Rudofsky, New York 1964.

sometime imagine it to be. It is, in fact a marriage of diverse motives, conveniences, and circumstances, sometimes altogether incompatible in terms of temperament or purpose. Some very inappropriate, often imported technologies can be found parading as the prevalent norm, predominantly for reasons related to status. What better example than the use of reinforced concrete in some parts of the world? Rudofsky's conception of vernacular too, is in a broad sense not alien to Rapoport's in its attempt to attribute vernacular with some form of exclusiveness and, in a sense, that elusiveness normally associated with high style.

> In contrast the new houses were explosions of individual expressions gone awry. Every house was unique, an extension of its owner's implacable ego. The design idiosyncrasies of each dwelling slobbered all over themselves. *John Nichols.*[1]

It is true that modern society has allowed itself great liberties in expressing individual will, sometimes in a manner which redirects popular sentiment away from those traditional values which are not altogether inappropriate. As a result some artificial values and selfconscious notions have been set in operation through the forces of populism, power, status and privileged knowledge. The idiosyncrasies of high style has also become somewhat democratized through fashion and the legitimacy, and indeed desirability, of arbitrary personal expression. This has brought about strong criticism from the literati, and a pejorative interpretation of anything that has to do with mass culture. Herbert Gans sums up the impassé between high culture and mass culture in contemporary America in the following words,

> The advocates of high culture criticize popular culture as a mass culture which has harmful side effects on both individuals consuming it and on society as a whole, while the users of mass culture ignore the critique, reject high culture, and continue to patronize the sellers of media fare and consumer goods.[2]

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[1] Nichols, New York 1981.
[2] Gans, New York 1974.
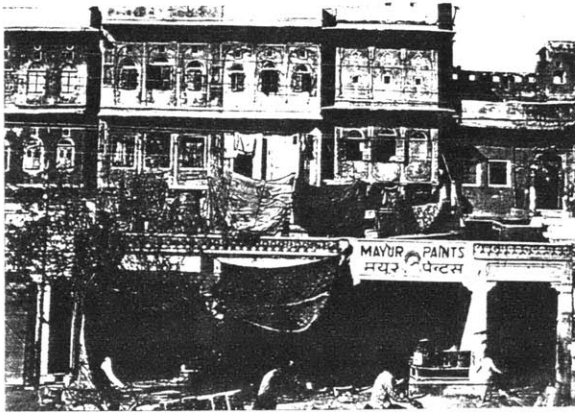
Fig.1.3.3   A prevailing vernacular; integrated
into life patterns over a long period
of time.
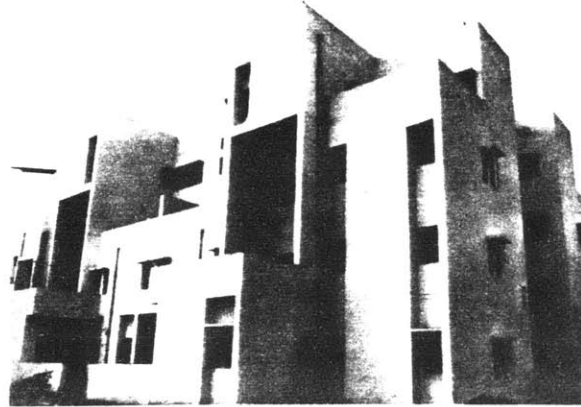
Fig.1.3.4   An imposition; the process of
adaptation will, over time, absorb
this novel vocabulary into the
vernacular.

He argues that both high, and mass cultures, are equally legitimate in their own terms, each function to complement values and tastes prevalent in corresponding sections of society.

Some erstwhile vernacular values are displaced by others that people acknowledge, but find difficult to accept until such time that these new values themselves dissolve into the larger consciousness of popular culture. Everyone aspires for high style and status through means that are popular, attainable, yet strange, and sometimes incomprehensible. Yet over time these values are colored by local ways of doing things and get gradually absorbed into the mainstream, even as the purists cry bloody murder. A good example is the way people choose to organize the spaces in their homes. An elaborate formal living room is a common sight in the homes of many middle income Indian families, in spite of the fact that almost all social interaction usually took place in other parts of the house. The traditional equivalent, associated more often than not with the affluent, was the *baithak* or the sitting room which was partially segregated from the main house. The seating, articulated by bolsters, was entirely on the floor. The space *nouveau* was distinctly inspired by occidental models and used occasionally when associates of the workplace or distanced social visitors came home, or there was a gathering too large to accommodate in the other spaces.

The decor, size and the physical importance of the room was often out of sync with respect to its economic and functional utility. It was primarily the over-representation it portrayed symbolically that sustained its perdure. Over time, in spite of these artificialities, the western living room has come to prevail, albeit with local accoutrements, as an integral part of many households. The objective here is to highlight the superimposition of non vernacular values on a vernacular system and the change over time from tolerated incompatibility to accepted norm. Some of the impositions do not survive the test of time and get phased out, others get mutated into something else, which is as remote from the imposition as it was, in turn, from the pre-existing norm.

Sharing of images through superficial recognition does not necessarily constitute a vernacular. A vernacular emerges out of a shared sense which goes deeper than mere physical appearances, in which the relationship between something, and its role within the system, is understood by all. It could be characterized as an implicitly shared appreciation of meaning. Considering all that has been said, it appears only natural that ancient dwellings at Longhouse Pueblo in Mesa Verde, Colorado or mid fifteenth century Carcassonne in France or early nineteenth century Manhattan should each have an equally legitimate vernacular. Of course we cannot learn the same things from these environments in as much as they are different settings in different times. Vernacular does not pertain to be an exclusive and abstruse notion, it refers to certain attributes of any environment which contains people, since it is people who by their collective actions, determine vernacular. What this vernacular happens to express is quite another matter.

1.4   VERNACULAR BY PROCESS; VERNACULAR BY PERCEPTION
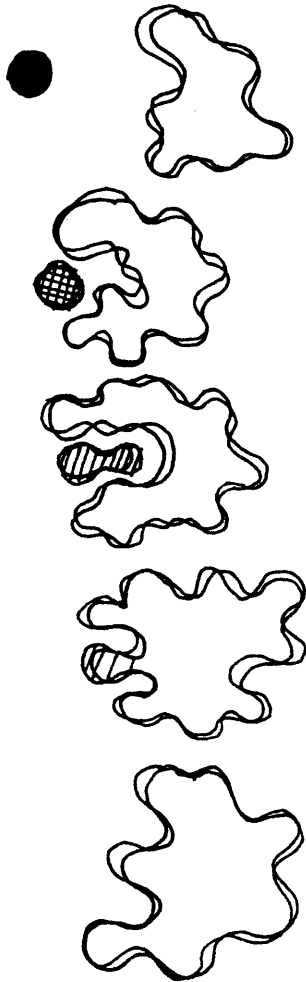
Vernaculars develop over time, there is altogether nothing that is an instant vernacular. Sometime, new technology, legal statute, and other such interventions introduce new ways of doing things almost overnight, yet it is only over time that they get absorbed into vernaculars. These interventions can be said to have entered the process of active vernacularization once they fall into a holistic, coherent system for the concerned people. This can happen when prevalent ways of life are modified to accommodate this intervention, or when the intervention itself transforms sufficiently to fit into the existing *status quo*, or, as is most common, both. As Halbwachs writes in *La Mémoire Collective*,

> When a group is introduced into a part of space, it transforms it to its image, but at the same time, it yields and adapts itself to certain material things which resist it. It encloses itself in a framework that it has constructed. The image of the external environment and the stable relationship that it maintains with it pass into the realm of the idea that it has of itself.[1]

Let us investigate this idea a little further. The new mass housing developed by the Delhi Development Authority in the sixties, was alien to the people who were asked to move into them. Developed along the lines of western low income housing, these developments presented a new kind of room layout, a new aesthetic, a new relationship of the building to the street, a new perception of scale, a new perception of the degree of monotony human beings are asked to tolerate and numerous other novel qualities. Families moved in right away since in India, very few people have the luxury of choice in these matters. Over two decades people have pulled and pushed, broken walls, added rooms, covered courtyards, terraces, enclosed public greens, all in an effort to increase living accommodation without having the necessary means to develop or extend the new

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[1] Halbwachs, *La Mémoire Collective*. (Presses Universitaires de France: Paris; 1950); Rossi, Cambridge MA 1986.
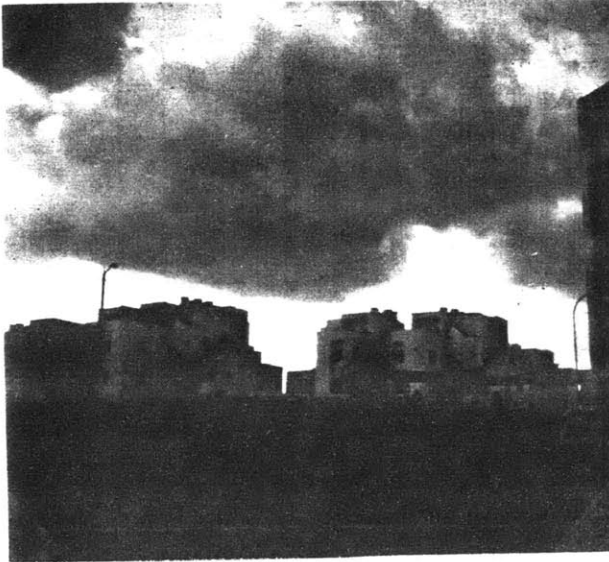
Fig.1.4.1   DDA Housing, as it was introduced
into the urban landscape of Delhi.
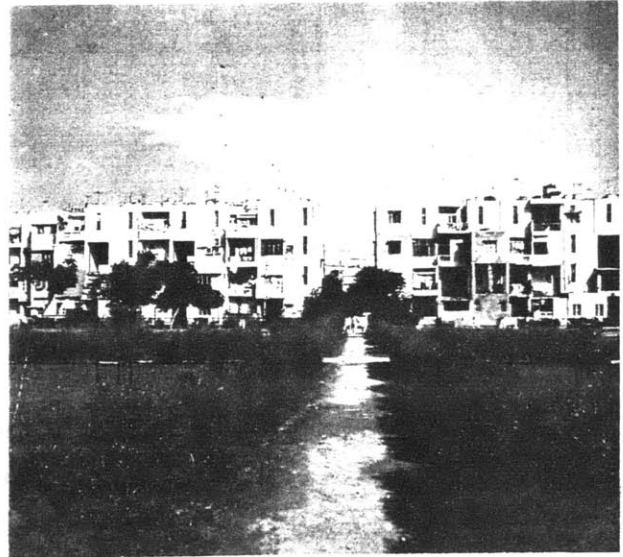
Fig.1.4.2   DDA Housing, as it looks today,
transformed by everyday life.

vocabulary of design and construction. Over time as people have
adjusted to the new form, as they have seen neighbors
sprout additions and extensions in familiar techniques and
means. as the DDA has altered its designs marginally to
accommodate so called traditional essences, the
vernacularization process was initiated. We have here a
quintessential case where people made the difference as they
brought about a transformation in a new and alien incursion into
their lives. The new housing forms did in effect force the people
to change some of their ways too, however I shall illustrate that
case with a somewhat different example.

During the sixties, another major technological innovation that
entered the lives of certain stratas of society in Delhi was the
television. All of a sudden, the living room changed its
orientation, everything seemed to gravitate towards the TV. In
fact it became a veritable mini-theater as neighbors and friends
would congregate to watch popular programs. Through the
seventies and into the eighties, the TV made itself more
affordable, more colorful and offered a greater diversity in its
offerings. The ownership of the 'idiot box' proliferated, peoples

lifestyles changed to accommodate the TV. Mr.Ghosh refused all invitation to any social engagement on Wednesday evenings, (other than those that were tied up with his job and were mandatory to attend) for he had his favorite soap opera on that day of the week. Similarly in Mr.Bhatia's home the entire seating arrangement at the dining table was reorganized so that everyone could have a strategic view of the news at nine! At this particular dining table conversation came to a dead halt, except on those occasions that little Mr. Bhatia, nine years old, complained about the repetitiveness of the news and had to be silenced. Little did the TV change, apart from its programs and the extra features incorporated in the design. Physically, it just became a familiar sight in the household as it sat in its place in the dining room. Socially it acquired a certain meaning as a source of information and entertainment as also something that redefined the way the family functioned at mealtime. The quintessential case of people modifying their lives, in specific instances rather drastically, to accommodate this new household innovation. The TV pushed its way into the vernacular idiom with astonishing rapidity.

Both these examples illustrate the process by which unfamiliar cultural phenomena get absorbed into the vernacular. It is essentially a process determined by the mechanics required to bring about a change in the perception of the new element. This change is brought about by either a gradual appreciation (familiarity) or endowment of meaning over time. The question of process and perception is inter-related. A vernacular process could also mean the social, economic and political processes that are associated with certain ends as separate from the ends itself. For example, the construction of houses in a city. As technology takes over parts of the construction process with prefabrication and mechanical aids, specially in some third world cities where reliance on labor intensive techniques is normally very high, the role of labor diminishes. The division of labor changes and a new process is initiated. However, since people normally do not want

to change the appearance of their house drastically from that of their neighbors- nor is such a change, if at all, a necessary consequence of improved technique- the visible features of the building do not alter much. The high-tech process is geared to produce almost a clone of the low-tech process. In this case even though the process is radical, the perception of the completed house is in sympathy with the vernacular idiom.

The converse of that is that of a drastic alteration in perception without the use of an altogether novel process. Consider the proposal to build the John Hancock Tower in Boston. Some of those who had reason to traverse through or experience Copley Place or the Charles River waterfront from Cambridge must have felt some discomfort at the sight of this giant monolith rising surreptitiously from the earth, impervious to their sentiments. To some degree their space-time continuum had been disturbed. The degree of this disruption could be influenced by the extent and nature of publicity; an effort which could induce the familiarization process to begin prior to the construction as people erect a surrogate mental image of the new building. Lynch writes of the,

Fig.1.4.3   View of Boston from the Cambridge Waterfront, 1950's.

Fig.1.4.4   View of the Boston skyline from the Cambridge Waterfront, 1975.

the mental representation of the character and structure of the geographic world - as a scaffold to which we attach meanings and a guide by which we order our movement.[1]

Barely twenty five years later, it is almost impossible to conceive of a space-time continuum without the Hancock adorning the Boston skyline as it stands guardian over the Trinity Church. A drastic alteration has been absorbed into the vernacular, time has been the only 'process' in this case, apart from the media that may have been partially responsible. However, the Hancock is not a building that embodies an egalitarian symbol. It stands for the power of the private corporations and their role in the re-emergence of Boston as a financial center. Yet it appears to be a vernacular perception of the cityscape. What does this mean in terms of the relationship between the elite and the laity? This brings us to the question of vernacular systems, as opposed to a singular aspect of vernacular isolated from the totality.

1.5   VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE, VERNACULAR SYSTEMS

For convenience I have chosen to use vernacular architecture as the single aspect of a vernacular in attempting to portray its relationship with the totality. The dichotomy between vernacular architecture and vernacular systems has been the creation of a coterie of over-zealous romanticists, interested in objectifying something, rather than in describing a latent subjectivity that is inherent in society. Design professionals have for long chosen to deal exclusively with vernacular architecture while often referring to far more than just that. The built environment is much more than simply architecture or physical artifacts. It represents a setting which includes buildings of various types, streets and the gaps between these buildings. It could also be said to include a people, system of living, a process of building, and a sharing of symbolic values and meanings. Rapoport acknowledges this concern for a vernacular 'design' (both in terms of product and

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[1] Lynch, Cambridge 1985.

process) in preference to vernacular architecture. He terms the domain of vernacular design to be the 'cultural landscape' of a place which includes lifestyle, activity systems, and cognitive schemata[1]. A vernacular totality in a place-time setting is indeed difficult, if not impossible to conceptualize. A substantial portion of this sentiment remains buried under impenetrable layers of tacit systems. Our inability to gauge the subtle nuances and associations that influence popular choice only serve to highlight the stumbling blocks.[2] What this exploration will attempt to do is relate the production and use cycle of the built environment to some aspects of the vernacular which lend themselves to identification, if not to exact measurement. The fact that the concept of 'vernacular' refers to much more than just the formal attributes of the built environment must be recognized as a legitimate concern in approaching the problems facing the contemporary city.

This notion of a vernacular system leads us to realize that there must be a mutual relationship between 'high style'/ grand tradition of design and vernacular design. After all, every vernacular aligns itself to specific traditions of high style. Neither can be totally comprehended when viewed in isolation. As
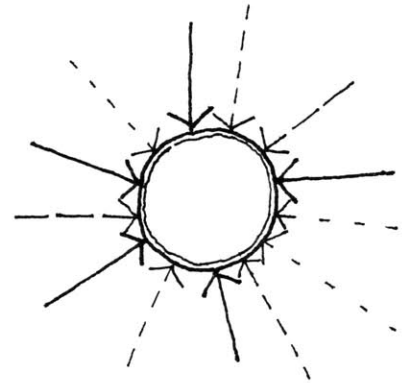
Fig.1.5.1   The supermarket.   Fig.1.5.2   Brady Bunch   Fig.1.5.3   Haymarket, Boston
Parts of the same vernacular system.

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[1] Rapoport, New York 1983.
[2] refer Childs, H.L. *Public Opinion: Nature, Formation and Role.* (Van Nostrand: Princeton NJ; 1965)

Venturi, Scott Brown & Izenour writes in their book, *Learning from Las Vegas*,

> . . to gain insight from the commonplace is nothing new: Fine art often follows folk art (and vice versa). . . early Modern architects appropriated an existing and conventional industrial vocabulary without much adaption, Le Corbusier loved grain elevators and steamships. . .[1]

Even in the classic scenario that Gans describes, in his book *Popular Culture and High Culture*, the high culture is at odds with mass culture, the aspersion cast by the cultural elité on their less sophisticated brethren lies is founded upon some sort of degenerated plagiarism.

> Popular (mass) culture borrows from high culture, thus debasing it. . . mass culture is an aberration born of commercial greed and public ignorance.[2]

Implicit in this disparagement is the acknowledgement of a certain relationship between the popular and high culture, albeit claims of it being a one-way influence. Van den Haag' s conception further highlights this belief that the existence of this ersatz mass culture is essentially the loss of high culture,

> Corruption of past high cultures by popular culture takes

Fig.1.5.4   *Dejeuner Sur L'Herbe, by Manet. High Art.*
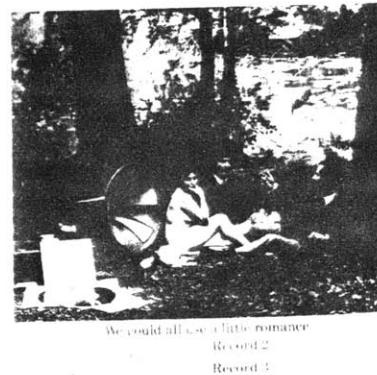
Fig.1.5.5   *Record company advertisement. Manet appropriated for mass consumption, albeit with pretensions to high style.*

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[1] Venturi, Scott Brown & Izenour, Cambridge MA 1986; parenthesis is mine.
[2] Gans, New York 1973.

numerous forms, starting with direct adulteration. Bach
candied by Stokowski, Bizet coarsened by Rodgers and
Hammerstein. . . Freud vulgarized into columns of newspaper
correspondence advice. . . Corruption also takes the form of
mutilation and condensation . . . works are cut, condensed,
simplified and rewritten until all possibilities of unfamiliar or
esthetic experience are strained out. . .[1]

This point of view fails to acknowledge that high culture borrows
from popular culture just as much as the reverse. The inspiration
provided to high culture by the proponents of jazz and folk
music, the appropriation of popular myths by high culture
playwrights, the sparks of creative ideas which emanated from
comic strips and commercial art, substantiates this claim.

In the case of the built environment too, for example, the Jama
Masjid or the Great Mosque in Shahjahanabad, Delhi is set into
the surrounding matrix, and cannot be fully understood in
isolation. The larger social forces which help articulate the
vernacular, often operate at a different sensibility to give rise to
the grand tradition. In the case of Jama Masjid, most of the motifs,
elements and material treatments can be traced to the
surrounding vernacular of the old 'new town' of Shahjahanabad.
Conversely, some of the uniqueness of the mosque has been
transcribed over time into the vernacular syntax. Issues of scale
and spatial articulation also address certain symbiotic
relationships between vernacular and high style. The use of the
courtyard as the prime element in organizing space, is an
attribute shared by the mosque as well as the surrounding
neighborhoods.

The intimacy of this relationship between vernacular and high
style varies from one setting to another. For example, the Newars
of the Kathmandu region in Nepal have a vernacular house form
which absorbs a great deal of the high style, reflecting a close
relationship. Differentiation is expressed as a matter of subtle

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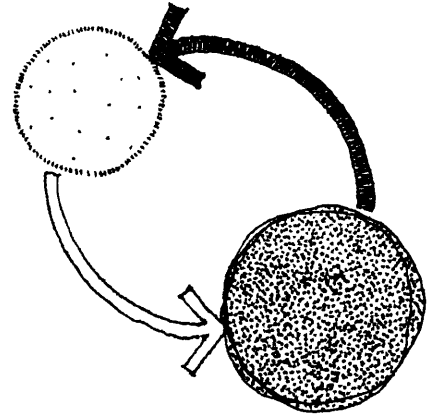
[1] Van den Haag, Glencoe IL 1957.

Fig.1.5.6   Newar houses in Kathmandu, Nepal.
Vernacular.
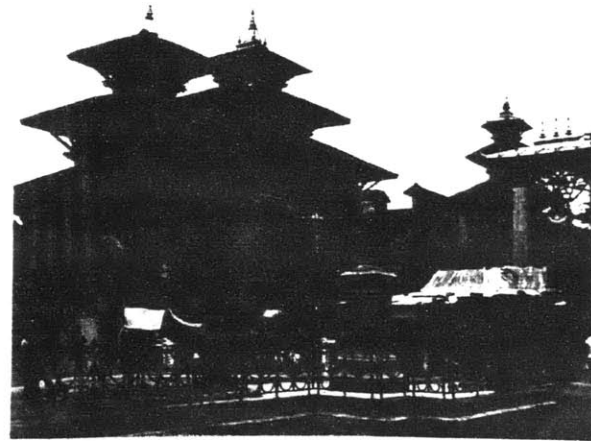
Fig.1.5.7   The Royal Durbar at Patan, Nepal.
High Style.

is expressed largely as a matter of subtle changes in scale and decoration.[1] On the other hand the vocabulary of Richard Roger's Lloyd's Building in London, or Lutyen's grand plan for New Delhi, greatly distances them from what may, possibly be understood as the high style correspondents for the vernaculars of each of these urban environments. Such disregard does not always produce bad buildings, nor is it a matter of rule that anything new must always correspond to latent vernacular systems in every way. Time serves as a very effective negotiator, while society reorients its vision of a high style that corresponds its vernacular. As this new structure gets absorbed into the normative perception of place, it exerts a pressure on society to align itself closer to it, both physically and symbolically. However, this lends credence to the notion that there are high styles that are better aligned to a vernacular at a certain point of time than others. A 'vernacular high style' would be one that is, for a time-place specific, understood by all as the high style which best corresponds the local vernacular by virtue of its formal attributes, its symbolic meaning, and its place within the vernacular system.[2] This notion of reading the vernacular and the high style, in some

[1] discussions with Tara Prakash Shrestha.
[2] ibid., pp.26.

sense of simultaneity and rapport, will give us fresh insights into that aspect of 'vernacular' which would otherwise remain unclear and nebulous.

1.6   TRADITIONALISM AND MODERNISM

Vernacular essentially addresses a familiar way of life. While dealing with this familiarity, it would be useful to discuss the idea of traditionalism and modernism. This will also be useful from the point of view of understanding the nature of some of the contradictions of contemporary society as well as the complexity of its inherent pluralism. Our lives today are orchestrated across many frames of reference, some are narrow in perspective, others wide; some are traditional, others modern[1]. We are constantly switching from one to another, or experiencing various degrees of concurrence, almost imperceptibly. Within this plurality, vernacular, more often than not, is conceived as a direct outgrowth of tradition. Although there is some element of truth in this conception, it is not altogether accurate. Of course, it is the historical processes that give shape to the vernacular, yet the cumulative outcome of these processes reflect innovation and creative adaption that denies a predisposition to tradition.

The concept of traditionalism, implies a fundamental operating structure which is dominated by an order which organizes human sentiments into judgements based on the principle of rightness. The sense of rightness arises from a religious or a strong social base which establishes a reasonably rigid and infallible value system. Modernism on the other hand is dominated by an order which uses mutual usefulness as a basis for establishing an order. This perception of mutual usefulness is articulated from necessity and expediency. The classic elucidation of this notion has been Robert Redfield's description of a 'moral' and a 'technical' order,

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[1] Mann, JAE 1985.

Technical and moral order name two contrasting aspects of all human societies. The phrases stand for two distinguishable ways in which the activities of men are co-ordinated. [The phrase 'moral order' is used to designate] all the binding together of men through implicit convictions as to what is right through similarities of conscience. The moral order is therefore always based on what is peculiarly human - sentiments, morality, conscience - and in the first place arises in the groups where people are intimately associated with one another. . . . By a corresponding extension of another and more familiar term, all the other forms of co-ordination of activity which appear in human societies may be brought together and contrasted with the moral order under the phrase 'the technical order'. The bonds that co-ordinate the activities of men in the technical order do not rest on convictions as to the good life; they are not characterized by a foundation in human sentiments; they can exist even without the knowledge of those bound together that they are bound together. The technical order is that order which results from mutual usefulness, from deliberate coercion, or from the mere utilization of the same means. In the technical order men are bound by things, or are themselves things.[1]

He further classifies cities as predominantly (not exclusively) of the 'moral' order, e.g. Peiping, Lhasa, Uaxactun, fourteenth century Liège; and others as predominantly of the 'technical' order, e.g. Bruges, Lübeck, London, Washington D.C. While the doctrine of traditionalism puts an emphasis on believing in preference to seeing, modernism does the converse. Although, both orders are subject to the dynamics of change, traditionalism displays a relatively greater inertia and resistance against any form of transformation. Separation of the two orders is really an academic reality, the dividing line between the two being etched onto a relatively undifferentiated fabric. What we perceive as the moral order ceases to exist without the crutches offered by the technical order and vice-versa. Lisa Peattie, Redfield's daughter, introduces a dynamic dualism missing from her father's writings,

The technical order rests on a set of common understandings as to the right, the relevant, and as to the boundaries and structure of our practical concerns. The moral order of consensus and concern rests on the ideas of practical interest. . . Work is a part of the technical order that turns out to have its basic mainsprings in the moral order, and to have, in turn, in the manner of its organization, profound consequences for the moral order. The family is an institution of the moral order that is shaped by the technical order and that constitutes

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[1] Redfield, Ithaca 1971.

an important component of technical processes. . .
Educational planning, as part of manpower planning and the
creation of human capital, is part of the technical order;
schools are equally important as institutions of political and
cultural socialization. [1]

In the name of progress, vernacular has been centered on the
notion of establishing a 'moral order', much as the concept of
economic development has been centered on the
establishment of a 'technical order'. The two had, in effect, been
divided into different spheres of competence which argued the
incompatibility of one with the other. The 'moral order' of tradition,
community, collective ritual and the 'cake of custom' is seen
largely as an obstacle to development. On the other hand the
indiscriminate imposition of technology, universality, expediency
and profit-orientation seem to be tainted by an insensitivity and
disdain towards the vernacular's inherent resilience and restraint.

A contemporary interpretation of the modern vernacular has to
accommodate both these orders. Although limited in some ways,
Kouwenhaven's perception of vernacular does this, and
incorporates an appreciation of the dynamics of change, as is
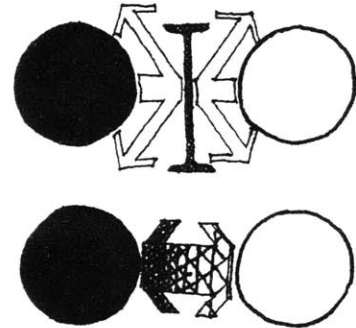
Fig.1.6.1   At the edge of a small canal in
            Strasbourg, Germany.
            Tradition; the moral order?
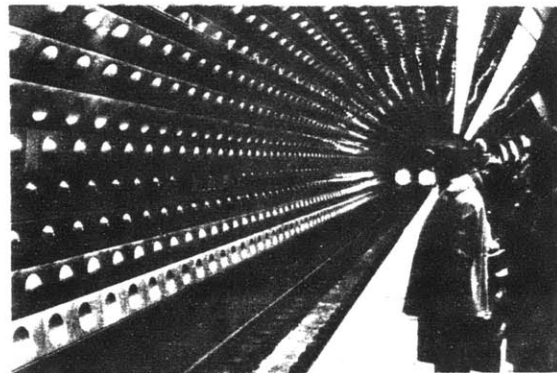
Fig.1.6.2   At the station, Prague's new subway.
            Modernity; the technical order?

[1] Peattie, New York/London 1981.

evident in his description of the American civilization,"...that often untidy vernacular ferment produced when the technology of manufactured power and the democratic spirit work together"[1]. Both traditionalism, in the form of the democratic spirit, and modernism, in the ever escalating technology of manufactured power, are accommodated and operate concurrently. How successful this marriage has been is a matter of another debate. In cities, we often come across situations which clearly represent one order, more than the other. In Delhi for example, a majority of the new high-rise commercial office buildings represents a phenomenon which exemplifies Redfield's notion of modernism or the establishment of a dominant 'technical order', as applied to the built environment. Buildings, that is, not merely qualified as artifacts, but also as motifs or symbols of a certain socio-economic system. As clerks and peons gossip and chat in offices over innumerable cups of tea, and a strictly hierarchical and stratified division of labor perpetuates feudal memories from the past, it is impossible to ignore the vestigial undercurrents of a dormant traditionalism or 'moral order'.

On the other hand, large sections of Shahjahanabad, the old, walled city of Delhi, represents the best examples of the other extreme, that is of a dominant traditionalism or a fabric of 'moral order'. Neither example is, of course, anywhere near perfect since they are colored by deep and often indistinguishable infiltrations from the other order. For instance, in some areas of Shahjahanabad, this 'moral' order cannot be said to exist unrivalled in an environment where large numbers of different modes of transport, including the automobile, are competing for right of way on a street, fifteen foot wide. Expediency and utility have overrun and reconfigured the usage of a street that had been created to accommodate a movement corridor serving a captive population and a smaller homogenized traffic. On the

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[1] Kouwenhoven, Chicago 1982.

other hand, the guiding principles of the technical order is somewhat held at bay in most of the inner sections of the old city. The layout of streets and buildings, in themselves, defy a preoccupation with expediency and utilitarianism, as modernism would prefer to dictate. The extremely narrow and winding streets often end in cul-de-sacs. These streets are defined by buildings springing from their immediate edge, three or four stories high. The concomitant social lifestyle places a high premium on the values of community and social solidarity. This is so much so that the advent of modernism has only been able to filter into these areas through the interstices of a dense and almost impermeable mesh of traditionalism. Consequently, its impact, though discernible, has been limited.

I have tried to illustrate and highlight the coexistence of the forces of modernism and traditionalism[1] in the contemporary urban scene using rather simplistic examples, ignoring the multitudinous levels at which this analysis could be carried out. For instance, our analysis could be brought to bear upon, or include, the economic life of the city. This viewpoint of the city is

Fig.1.6.3   Traditionalism as a way of life.
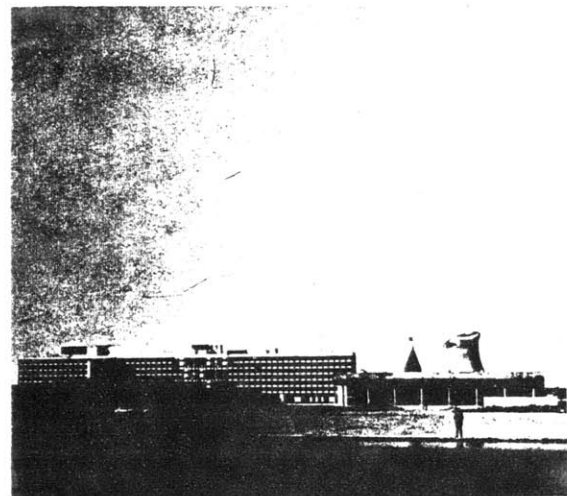
Fig.1.6.4   Modernism as a way of life. Corbusier's Chandigarh, 'the spirit of a new nation.'

[1] largely in accordance with Redfield's interpretations.

also enriched by a concurrent dualism, that of formal (modern) and informal (traditional) processes.[1] The interpenetration of these forces occur at every level often through rather complex relationships and juxtapositions which are difficult to comprehend. One might ask, how can one separate this dualism more effectively, if only to understand it better? One might also ask, if there is anything like a 'right' balance between the two in a contemporary urban vernacular? These questions have no single answer if at all. Repeating a phrase from Goodman's *Ways of Worldmaking*, one that I have quoted earlier,

> ...knowing cannot be exclusively or even primarily a matter of determining what is true. Discovery often amounts to finding a fit.[2]

He goes on to add that this fit is a result not of belief but of the advancement of understanding. It is this understanding that has to be nurtured within a larger framework, presently powered largely by implicit belief and a bevy of seemingly innocuous assumptions. It is only when we strive towards this end, that a quintessential fit may evolve over time, that stimulates and enhances the man-environment symbiosis necessary for the healthy development of our cities[3].

1.7 CONSCIOUS, SELFCONSCIOUS, AND UNSELFCONSCIOUS

A vernacular manifests itself through products, processes and attitudes of living human systems. Society is overly conscious about certain issues while remaining unselfconscious about others. Just like modernism and traditionalism which coexist in simultaneity[4], each society displays self-conscious, conscious and unselfconscious orientations at the same time. These states

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[1] Peattie, IRSR 1980.

[2] Goodman, Indianapolis 1978.

[3] McHarg, Philadelphia 1971.

[4] *Ibid.* pp.17, refer to the example of middle class adaptation of the western living room.

of consciousness affects life uniquely in different cultural contexts.

There has been some attempt to characterize at least one of these three states of societal consciousness. This is Alexander's description of unselfconscious cultures focused on building activity, yet with some degree of accuracy it could be read as generic. He outlines some of the salient features. First, there is little thought in these cultures about architecture or design. Second, there is a right and a wrong way of building[1] which is largely implicit, as is the learning process. Third, specialization is rare due to limited division of labor. Fourth, the technology of communication is not developed. Fifth, there is little value attached to individual ideas, there is no special market for inventiveness. The self-conscious process, he iterates, is all that the unselfconscious is not[2]. Alexander's analysis seems to make a glaring omission. He does not describe or mention the significance of an intermediate state, one in which the creative sensitivity of the unselfconscious, and the critical self-examination of the selfconscious can be harnessed constructively. I refer here to a critical consciousness that synthesizes the best of the two extremes. Alexander's interpretation of a critically conscious culture may not distinguish itself from the unselfconscious, however, there is definitely a distinction between the conscious and the unselfconscious.

It is important to dwell momentarily on the distinctions between the three; 'conscious', 'selfconscious', as also 'unselfconscious'. Conscious refers to an awareness of some sort, as in 'conscious of one's surroundings' or 'conscious of one's actions' or as the dictionary defines it 'having the mental faculties fully active'. Selfconscious describes an exaggerated sense of awareness of the self as an outcome of other conscious presences, either real

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[1] This could be read as corresponding to those cultures where the 'moral order' is predominant.

[2] Alexander, Cambridge 1964.
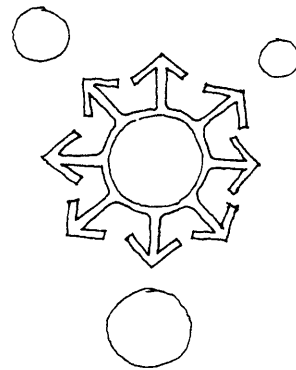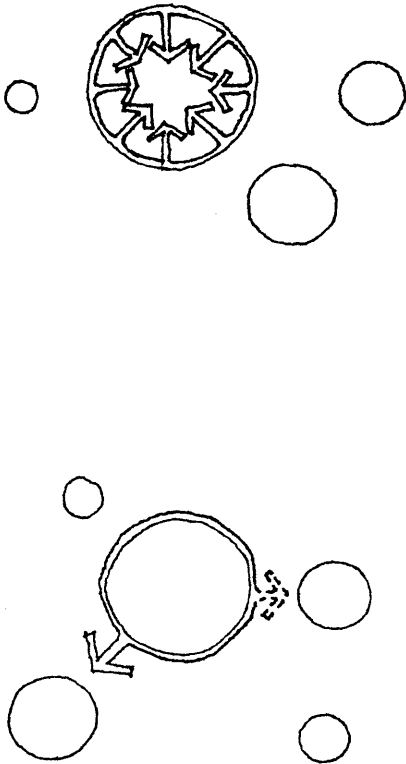
or imaginary. The dictionary meaning is to be 'made (to feel) uneasy by the observation of others'. Essentially this implies that a selfconscious act, or process, is one that displays aberration from some reasonable course by virtue of the discomfort arising from the presence of these so called 'other presences'. This alteration primarily diverts the conscious focus from the act or process to the self. Extending this argument, an unselfconscious act or process is one that does not acknowledge other presences even though their presence may sometimes be perceived. In fact an unselfconscious orientation is something that is realized without having 'the mental faculties fully alive', as in doing something as a matter of habit. Going one step further with this line of reasoning, a conscious societal state acknowledges other presences, critically assesses the implications, nurtures creativity, and allows action largely on considered merit. In this case, the act or the process itself remains the central conscious focus and not the self.

An interesting example could be the massive desertification that is the cause for serious concern in some portions of Africa.[1] The peasants use the wood for domestic purposes and continue this habitual unselfconscious practice. They are generally unaware of the 'other presences', in the form of a threat to critical ecological balances. Some of them may perceive changes in the microclimate, but are inadequately informed to acknowledge these presences, or attribute these changes to their actions. The government, on the other hand, comes under pressure from the UN and other international agencies to curb these trends. It perceives these agencies as the disconcerting 'other presences'. It comes down hard on the peasants, banning the felling of trees without making any alternative provisions to address the needs of the people. This is surely a self conscious response, tied to the lack of farsightedness and fears of having to forego the foreign aid that is often at stake. Either or both, the

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[1] discussions with Peter Rowe.

peasants and the government, could adopt alternatives nurtured by a more comprehensive understanding of the task at hand. The peasants need education and awareness, the government needs awareness too. Both need to eventually adopt an attitude that is sympathetic to the environment. In short, their actions are informed by insufficient information and an inadequacy to exercise critical judgement. This informed, critical element, as part of social consciousness or attitudinal orientation, would characterize the conscious focus.

It is pertinent at this point to ask if selfconscious, unselfconscious, and conscious orientations can be recognized and fostered in the context of the built environment. Is it possible to infer, that the central issue with respect to the development of a critical consciousness is a matter of understanding the 'other presences' as mechanisms of active, passive, or tacit control, and taking measures to mold these mechanisms as well as the attitudes that color the perception of these externalities? For an answer to that we have to again ask a question, viz., what *are* the various forms of this control, and what are the various attitudes that we use to confront, conciliate, and condone control (from passive compliance to compulsive antagonism)? We will leave this unanswered for the moment,[1] and return to the question of the various states of collective consciousness.
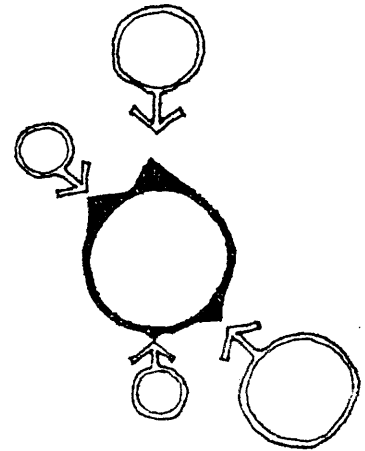
The important issue here, is to try and determine how these controls and concomitant societal attitudes are related to the notion of vernacular. A large section of literature dealing with the vernacular advocate the direct equation between the unselfconscious process and a better contextual fit of the product.[2] This equation is normally supported either by

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[1] some reflections on this matter has been enumerated in Section Three.

[2] These thoughts appear in some form in Barbara Hutton's *'The Unsophisticated Arts'* (London, 1945); Ralph Linton's, "Primitive Art", *The Kenyon Review*, 3:34-51(Winter 1941); Sumner's 'Folkways';

elucidating a better organization within the system, that is a compatible reciprocity, or 'fit', between forms of control and attitudes prevalent in society. Less convincingly, this elusive fit is also explained away as a result of a greater innate sensitivity of the craftsmen and artists of unselfconscious cultures. The unselfconscious process codifies the right and the wrong through an infallible system of social mores, reinforced by myths, legends and rituals. This codification gives definite meanings to both process and product of such significance that all thoughtful criticism and trivial change is discouraged[1], relatively freezing the system across time. If there is a failure or inadequacy in the product, direct, immediate action rectifies or replaces it. There is a certain authoritarian disposition which permeates the social, economic and political consciousness, and forms another aspect of the unselfconscious system. The system is equilibrium

Fig.1.7.1   The old walled city of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan, India. A better organization, or merely better craftsmen? As a system, was the society that created this settlement selfconscious? It is today, but primarily as a consequence of indiscriminate marketing of antiquity, for tourism.

A.R.Radcliffe Brown's, *'Structure and Function in Primitive Society'* (Glencoe, Ill., 1952); (from Alexander, Cambridge 1964.)
[1] for examples refer Alexander, Cambridge 1964.

oriented, as Alexander writes,"misfit provides the incentive to change, while good fit provides none"[1]. Change occurs slowly, and only when there is incentive enough to disturb the inherent inertia of the system. As a result, change takes place largely as a series of minor adjustments to an established system. In the selfconscious process, change is sometimes rapid and
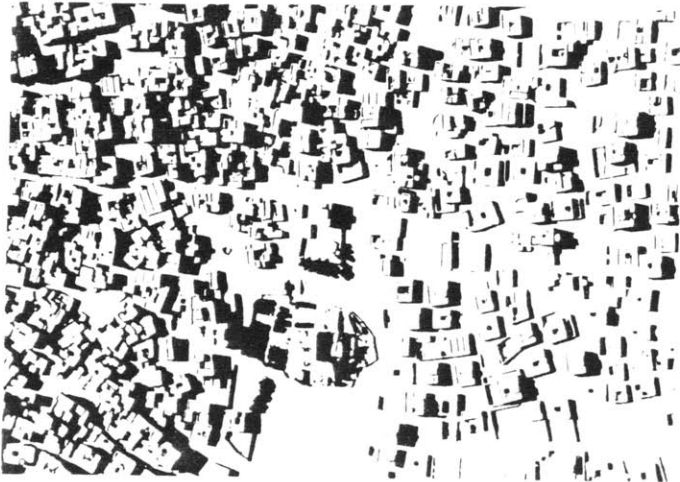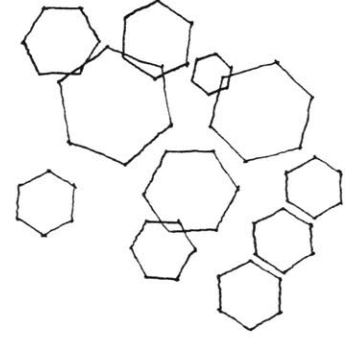
Fig.1.7.2   Plan of a town in Yemen; the doctrine of change as a series of minor adjustments to an established system.

Fig.1.7.3   Modern housing in Taipei, Taiwan; the doctrine of 'anything goes'!
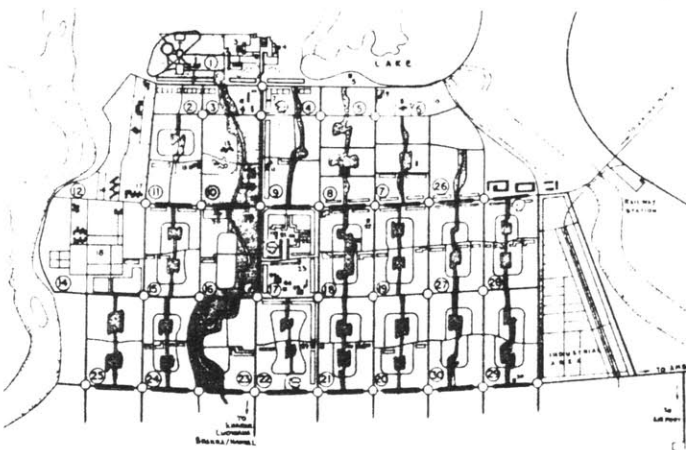
Fig.1.7.4   The plan of Chandigarh, India; the doctrine of selfconscious ideology over all else.

Fig.1.7.5   Washington Street in Boston; the doctrine of optimal control - a conscious orientation?

[1] Alexander, Cambridge 1964.
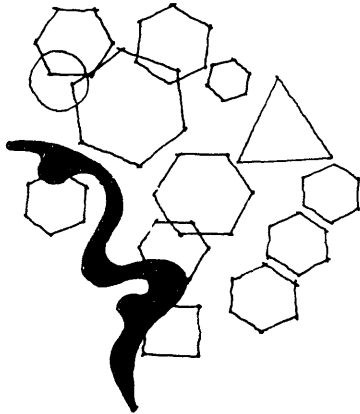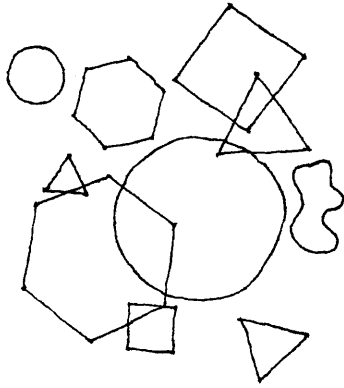
unrestrained, the smallest motivation is incentive enough to initiate all kinds of change. Traditional restraint dissolves, the critical process is also largely denied or distorted, the scope and extent of possible change is limited only by constraints of technology and resources. From the umbrella of the 'the only way', form making gets pushed into the realm of '(almost) anything goes!' The selfconscious process also expresses itself, at other times, as an unyielding dogmatic imposition, applied top-down, that refuses to acknowledge the legitimacy of anything other than the obsessive expression of its own insecurities. Often, this attitude takes on the stance of authority knows best, as it takes over the mantle of decision making to a minute degree of detail, and scoffs at the sound of delegation. The conscious process is one in which the element of informed, critical judgement play a dominant role. It carefully assesses and balances the tensions between tradition and modernity, it outlaws a slavishness to either the selfconscious or the unselfconscious. Tradition is retained under scrutiny, change is moderated to appropriate dimensions. However, in opposition to Alexander, the question of equilibrium is central to human systems, even selfconscious systems and certainly conscious ones cannot be denied an equilibrium orientation. The equilibrium tendency for unselfconscious systems are tuned more finely and encompass smaller details.

Yet, is each system exclusive of the other? Is it only traditional societies which display characteristics of predominant unself-consciousness while modern societies are largely selfconscious. What of the conscious, has it no place? Post revolution Cuba, which can be cast as modern in its egalitarian aspirations and as an unique socio-economic experiment, is an interesting case in point. An ideology that politicized work[1] through moral incentives, attempted to create a large degree of consciousness within society. As Bernardo says of the Cuban case,

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[1] Peattie, New York/London 1981.

> Moral stimulation was not implemented solely as a mobilizer of effort and skills for a massive investment effort but as a social invention to replace the old socio-moral norms inherited from the past.[1]

As this new system manifested itself one could discern certain attributes which identified each of the three levels of consciousness.

> (This system cannot) be said to 'stifle discussion'; work and events are continually being discussed, and the general level of articulateness is, again, one of the exhilarating features of such a system.[2]

> . . . .such a system certainly does not encourage dissent, or alternative views of the nature of things.[2]

> . . . .the downplaying of individual expression that goes along with building a 'unity of motives'.[2]

In the first instance, we encounter a conscious orientation for society wherein discussion acts as the medium for stimulating critical judgement. In the second case, the discouragement of dissent highlights a selfconscious orientation. The third sentence indicates a desire to inculcate an unselfconscious orientation whence the need to question uniform motives may never arise. Although these maybe crude examples, they highlight the layering among each of these levels of consciousness, within society. Like in the social, economic and political spheres of human life, and as also in built environments, selfconscious, conscious and unselfconscious processes coexist and cannot be cast into stereotypes.

As an illustration, which draws from the context of the physical environment, let us consider the case of a family in a lower middle income neighborhood in Delhi, who decides to build a small house for his family. Land as well as other resources are extremely limited, and an architect is an unmitigated luxury. In

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[1] Bernardo, Tuscaloosa 1971.
[2] Peattie, New York/London 1981.
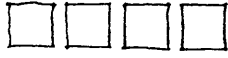
such a situation, the choice of brick as a material for building enclosure, represents no real exercise of choice. The family's decision is based on an implicit understanding that this material is affordable, relatively permanent, is modular and consequently permits flexibility, serves its purpose of enclosure and is also socially appropriate. This decision is not the result of a market survey, feasibility study, structural analysis or considered aesthetic judgement; it is just perceived implicitly to be the appropriate choice, to fit adequately the purpose at hand. There is no critical judgement exercised in this instance, the prevalent practise is not questioned as a prelude to adoption, nor is there a consideration of alternatives. Although there is a strong sense of adequacy, there is also a certain reluctance to critical thinking, born of a blind acceptance of an existing norms and accepted ways of doing things. On the other hand, there is, on occasion, the attempt to force a deviation from norm, the 'something special' that is just to set oneself apart from the 'other presences.' We may hear the man tell his wife, or maybe the *mistri* (master mason/contractor), something like, 'we want the front wall to be plastered and painted, and something special for the entrance steps like terrazzo or Kotah stone'. Identity, status and associated insecurities are the concerns which drive the selfconscious. The potential for conscious choice presents itself on those numerous occasions when critical decisions have to be made. For instance, the decision to relocate a window from its traditional orientation, based on the fact that an adjoining house overlooks the room, involves a critical assessment of the established *status quo* and a consequent deviation from the norm.
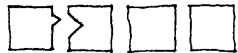
Each of these states of consciousness essentially ascribe an attitudinal orientation, which is often a crucial factor in determining how we approach, and deal with problems, goals,

Fig.1.7.6   The townscape in Sanaa, Yemen. The result of an amenable balance between the unselfconscious, the conscious, and the selfconscious, prompted by, and reflecting the socio-cultural matrix. Aren't we struggling to find this balance using the contemporary idiom?

objectives, and tasks. From the individual to the large public institution, awareness and attitude may combine to determine how one chooses to approach any task at hand. An example of a municipal authority, in a hypothetical city, may be useful in throwing some light on this matter. The primary task of this civic body is to guide development in and around the city. The process of developing the masterplan for the city, which is one of the more important responsibilities of this august body, involves quite a few people, and is conducted under the watchful eye of the public, the media, the government and members of the body themselves. It is this informal supervision as well as the competence of the experts, that is expected to mitigate the effects of the plan, the so called checks and balances. This administrative body, is also the only institution of its kind in the city. We can assume that it has certain unique responsibilities to dispense, and a unique status as a significant part of the city establishment. Let us also assume that it can function in two extreme and contrasting ways. The status it enjoys can grow out of the effectiveness with which it views, and performs, its

responsibilities. Alternatively, its performance could be a direct function of its status, capitalizing largely on a capacity to enhance its political powerbase. In the former case, the performance of the institution has some incidental bearing on its status, and not so much the reverse. Consequently, it is orientated towards achieving improved performance standards in carrying out its responsibilities. In the latter case, the emphasis distinctly shifts to status-building. By working towards, and enhancing, its status, the authority aims at wielding greater potential effectiveness and control over its domain.

It could be said that in the former case, the authority functions in a style that is consistent with an attitudinal orientation that assigns a high value to awareness, critical judgement, and social purpose. Its energies are directed outside of what could be called its 'selfconscious', in an effort to accomplish its task. What the institution is, is a direct consequence of what it does, therefore concentrating on the doing. In the latter case, the institutional function is carried out with selfconsciousness, since the energy is directed inwards. The concern, and preoccupation, rests on acquiring and enhancing an image that is self aggrandizing, more than it is socially purposeful in carrying out its institutional responsibilities. In this case, the institution's power, becomes a consequence of what it can make certain 'others' see it to be, so it concentrates on looking good. It is true of course, that while operating under the 'performance' model, the institution is definitely also interested in portraying a constructive image. Conversely, while shaping its image under the 'egocentric' model, the institution is also interested in performance. However, the objectives, goal orientation, and performance style, in each case, would be distinctly different. Each attitude-orientation model that the institution adopts, would result in masterplans which would reflect these positions implicitly, if not otherwise. In practice civic institutions, as well as the other major parts which makes up the urban process, conduct themselves under the proprietorship of all three of these orientations. It is only a

combination of these three, in some form or manner, that determines its operating emphasis. Although this treatment of collective consciousness does not provide all the answers, it certainly supports and encourages the development of a critical consciousness, that adopts the two tenets of awareness and understanding.

A product of the selfconscious process has to satisfy the complex set of requirements for the context of its use. It has to accomplish this without the benefit of a definite, preordained method which has through its evolution, ironed out some of the inadequacies of earlier products and solutions used for the same purpose. A conscious process does the same but absorbs the benefits of that definite, preordained method, without being totally subservient to it. Unselfconscious processes largely follow implicit rules and 'shared wisdoms', selfconscious processes replace these with explicit rules, conditions and patent idiosyncrasies, conscious processes accommodate the best of both, as also a flexible didactic. New technology and new methods do not remain a source of mystification forever, specially if they are related directly to the lives of the people, either through the moral and the technical order.[1] In this sense, the basis for unconditional criticism of modern societies, i.e. man's subservient posture with respect to the machine, to the means rather than the ends, indicates a lack of perceptiveness that denies certain forms of critical judgement. It is this perceived combination of 'usefulness' and 'rightness' which eventually absorbs it into the local vernacular. A vernacular does absorb some of the selfconscious processes that find expression within the system, some of the absorption is also the outcome of a conscious process. Unselfconscious processes are certainly a part of the vernacular, that is the essence of their unselfconscious or tacit nature. At this stage, it seems sufficient to note that although a contemporary vernacular, in its totality, is

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[1] *ibid.* pp. 17.

generally an unselfconscious notion, it does absorb the conscious and the selfconscious orientations of society. The three states mentioned in this section are simultaneously operative at all levels within the vernacular. This is an essential characteristic of vernaculars as much as it is also representative of societies. The task at hand is to broaden the base of the critical consciousness within society, and to nurture awareness in a manner that educates the people and the establishment about their respective roles and goals. In my opinion, the coming to terms with a vernacular signals the first step in fostering a deeper mutual understanding between specialists and community, upon which the superstructure for an enlightened community could be built.

1.8   SOCIAL CLASS AND STATUS

Both social class and status are complex sociological issues. They play a significant role in the conception of a vernacular, and the development of types. Let me begin by touching upon the singularity of each of these two concepts of social differentiation. In the textbooks of social science, status has been defined in numerous ways. It can be defined as any or all of the following,

> position in society; position in a hierarchy; any social category; any quality indexed by objective characteristics such as income or occupation; prestige; and a collection of rights and duties.[1]

The classical definition from Ralph Linton's, *The Study of Man* (1936) portrays status as a 'position in a particular pattern.'[2] This definition allows each individual to enjoy different positions of status, since every person is a participant in many social patterns. Status can either be ascribed, as in the case of a prince or a diabetic, or achieved as in the case of a waitress or an executive.

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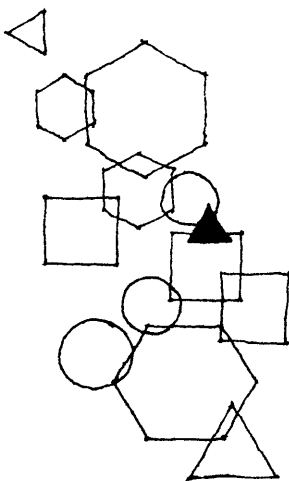
[1] Vanfossen, Boston 1979.

[2] Linton, Ralph. The Study of Man. (Appleton-Century-Crofts: New York; 1936); from Vanfossen, Boston 1979.

Society forms complex webs of human relationships, buoyed considerably upon status associations.

Social class on the other hand, represents

> a group of people with similar economic conditions and lifestyles who interact with each other, maintain exclusive boundaries, are conscious of their common group membership, and are separated by clearly obvious degrees of social distance from other groups.[1]

A social class grouping, is set apart from other such groupings, both in terms of economic criteria (and consequently living style), and behavior and attitudes. There exists a common tendency to interpret the setting apart of classes,   generally a vertical alignment, or stratification, within society. A social class remains conscious of its differences from other classes, as also the boundaries that are set up between any two classes. These class boundaries are maintained through tradition, custom, or even legally, as in the case of apartheid South Africa. Societies today, which are organized according to classes, display broadly similar structures. Characteristically, a powerful and wealthy elité, of small numbers, remain permanent tenants at the top. They are followed by a upper-middle strata, one which normally provides the technical expertise to develop and manage the economy. The next level is the middle strata, comprising of the lower level white collar and the skilled blue collar workers, typically the book-keepers and the machine operators. Last, and often the most populous, specially in developing nations, is the semiskilled and unskilled labor, the muscles of society, that do the menial work.[2]
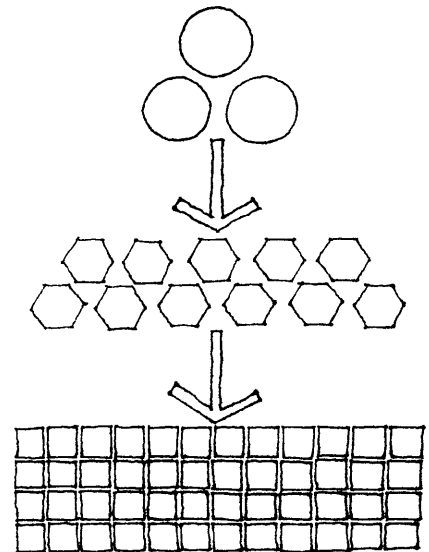
Class, as derived from 'classification', differentiates horizontally. The implicit status statement reflected in positioning the elité at the top, as I have just done, is an affirmation of vertical inequality, as commonly and erroneously expressed through the

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[1] Vanfossen, Boston 1979.

[2] Vanfossen, Boston 1979. .

unqualified usage of the word 'class'. The concept of class lies essentially in the study of differences in social orientation, i.e. attitudes, lifestyles etc. ., without coloring these differences with notions of status or privilege. The moment we introduce a value to these differences, as representative of inequality, we are speaking of status. Inequality between social classes is generally determined by economic, political or prestige dimensions. While the former was largely a Marxian notion, the latter two were outlined by Max Weber.

Different, yet co-related vernaculars, can often be attributed to the existence of broad social differences, conceptualized as classes and sub-classes. In contemporary societies, we can discern certain vernacular trends cutting across class boundaries, as also those that can identify, and are well defined within, a specific social class. A good example of the former, in Delhi, till the time videos entered the market, was the popular habit of an occasional visit to the movies. The daily-wage laborer, and the executive, both took great pleasure in this casual *divertissément*. Little wonder that India has the largest film industry in the world.[1] Of course the selection of the films, the frequency of movie visits, the specific choices of movie houses, the kind of

Fig.1.8.1   *The film habit, emphasized through hoardings in Delhi; a vernacular expressed across many fronts.*

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[1] that is, if you use the total number of films produced per year as the criteria.

comments and critiques offered after the film are all attributes of a vernacular that establishes itself, by and large, along the lines of class boundaries. The profusion of elaborate movie hoardings, considered by some the epitomé of popular art, embodies the environmental analog of a behavioral vernacular - the penchant for movie-going that runs through society.

Differences between people do not always represent status statements. The status-associations that society, collectively or as different social groups, endow to the interpretation of these distinctions, render them potent as symbols of inequality. For instance, an identical blue and red shirt, in most societies, would not be read as a significant statement of social difference. However, a grey suit tailored at Bond Street and another bought of the street in Cairo would most certainly make a social statement to a trained eye. Therefore, the images of status held by one who perceives the differences between people, as all of us do, is of consequence in determining which vital signs indicate status. As a foreigner, new in Cambridge, I sometimes found myself mistaking the casual usage of certain names and namebrands as mere conversational props, while quite often, they are in reality subtle status markers, often used deliberately to nurture an association with a specific status group. At other times, since I was evaluating them using an alien set of status-associations, I misconstrued casual statements as status signals.

It is significant, at this point, to note that status is often attached to various aspects of social life, while at the same time it is denied others. The status associated with any specific aspect of social life, be it the ownership of an object, membership in a group, or the control exercised over others, changes across time and across cultures. For instance, today, in most cultures, ownership of a radio does not endow someone with any perceivable status, while on the other hand, building or owning your own home certainly sets you apart from others who have not done the same. In other words, home-ownership enjoys a certain status,

especially if it happens to be a house designed by a reputable architect. In some cultures, in the past, housebuilding, especially in rural areas, has been irrelevant from the view point of status; everyone builds or owns their own homes. Owning a radio in such a time-place setting, however, could indeed endow one with a status much greater than that enjoyed by a homeowner today.

We can discern in this example the relationship between status and the selfconscious act. The concept of status itself is an outcome of the selfconsciousness of societies. The desire to express differentiation as a response to 'other presences', leads to an overly conscious focus on the self. Following this argument, owning or building a home today, has definitely become more of a selfconscious act than it is to have an ordinary AM/FM receiver. Although house ownership is a perfectly natural tendency, its dramatic importance in society reflects value, expressed as selfconsciousness. Similarly, the radio in urban India, in the early twentieth century, could be a source of great selfconsciousness. There seems to be a greater tendency towards selfconsciousness with increasing status. As society has become more and more stratified, and as the number of ways this stratification occurs has increased, a complex system of 'statusing' has become operative at various levels. This has complicated the selfconscious act to a great degree, so much so that it is clothed in elaborate disguises and cannot be easily discerned as simply the polar contrast of the unselfconscious.

The question of meaningful cognition is central in the relationship between vernaculars and social differentiations. Any identification of social differentiation in the city indicates a cognizance of meaning, attributed directly or indirectly (by association etc. .) to all aspects of urban life. As I have mentioned before, meaning does not always necessarily divide society vertically. Vernaculars, by their nature, form the language which is

used to express these meanings, both vertical (divisive) and horizontal (differential).

This chapter attempts to deal with issues related to certain notions of vernacular. The argument presented questions some of the prevalent perceptions and sketches out a different way in which vernacular could be appreciated. It is merely the beginnings of a longer search. There were two major points raised. First, that the conception of a vernacular, is valid for all forms of collective human systems which includes the built environment. Second, that the characteristic features of this vernacular cannot be easily defined, categorically stated, nor does it lend itself to identification by virtue of a specific set of criteria or symptoms which are universal of all vernaculars.[1] In essence, the expression of vernacular traits is place specific and community specific. Vernacular systems represent the sharing of a common vocabulary, or a shared sensibility, understood largely implicitly, yet often qualified explicitly, by all those who share some common values. This forms a broad framework within which vernaculars can be understood.

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[1] concurrent multi level dualisms, *ibid.* pp.17, 20, 27-31.

CHAPTER II
THE MEANING OF A VERNACULAR FOR CITIES

2.1 **LOOKING AT THE CITY**

As life is disorderly, so is the city. . . .
Baudelaire[1]

Man[2] built the first city, like many things he did, in his own image. Every street that was laid out, every stone that was placed and every hope that was invested in this new place was a symbol of his aspirations for a better future for his kith and his kin, and for himself. Over time, the city grew in progressive stages. At some time during this expansion, the city developed a life of its own.[3] It no longer remained in awe of its creator, it had developed a strength and a character of its own. Thus, the son of the man who built the city, became its slave. Thereon the city began to cast men in its image. Those that were born in the city, those that
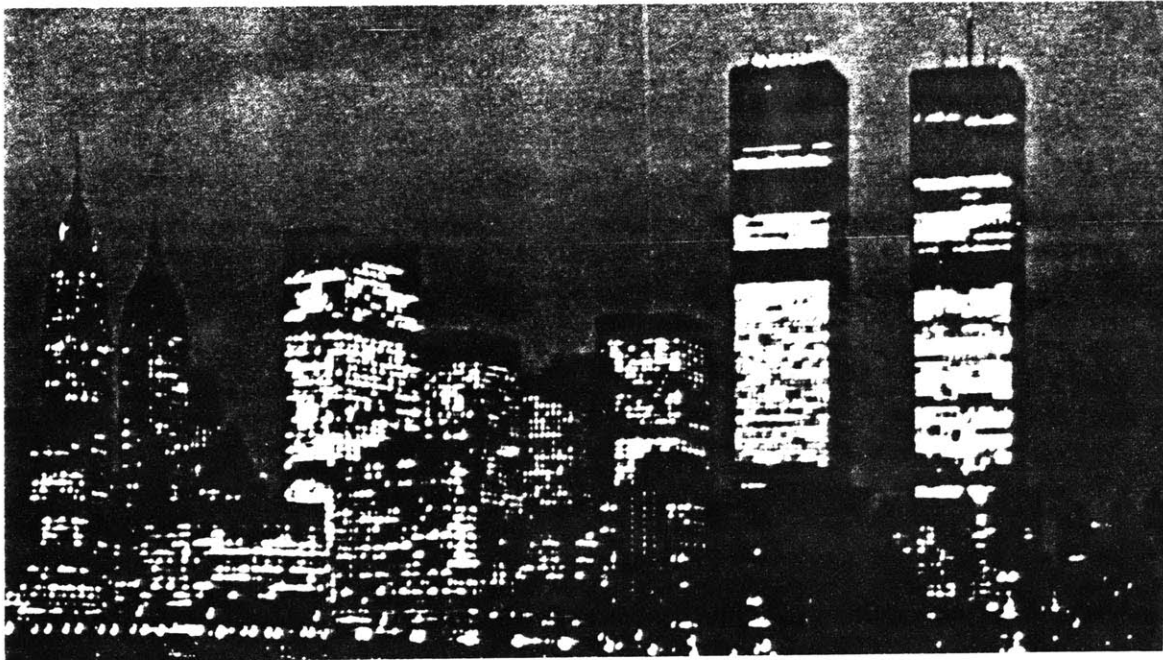
Fig.2.1.1   The dazzling night view of Manhattan. . . who can deny this setting a metaphoric life of its own?

1 Baudelaire. *Through the Chaos of the Living City*; from Castells, London 1983.
2 used as generic for the human race, no sexual connotations.
3 refer to Spengler's perspective on the soul of the city. Spengler, in Sennett, Englewood Cliff NJ, 1969.

travelled great distances to get there, and those that yearned to
get away, were all mesmerized by this shimmering megalith, the
city. Before long, they were chanting in unison, the catchy tune
of compulsive urbanity. Although the city does develop
something close to a life of its own, certain characteristics of
society does have a profound influence over this life that the city
seems to enjoy. Weber highlighted this in linking the culture of
cities to economic and political orientations of society.[1]

We often come across conflicting, polar, attitudes and
dispositions towards the city, which color our reading of it, either
as a heavenly manifestation or as the Devil himself, either
approaching utopia or distopia (Mumford called it Necropolis,
rather a strange antonym if he was using it to contrast with
utopia[2]). The satanic image, that of the city as a diabolic setting,
has often predominated academic as well as popular thinking at
various points in time. For example the following lament in *Evita*,
makes a spirited plea against the overbearing city,

> Eva, beware of the city
> It's hungry and cold, can't be controlled -
> it is mad
> Those who are fools are swallowed up
> whole
> And those who are not become
> What they should not become
> Changed - in short they go bad.[3]

Even films like 'Metropolis' and 'Blade Runner', present
backdrops built upon this theme of a diabolic setting
projected into the future.

Among the theoreticians who pioneered the field of urban
sociology, the work of Ferdinand Toennies provides us an
insight into this pessimistic perspective of urbanity. His theory of

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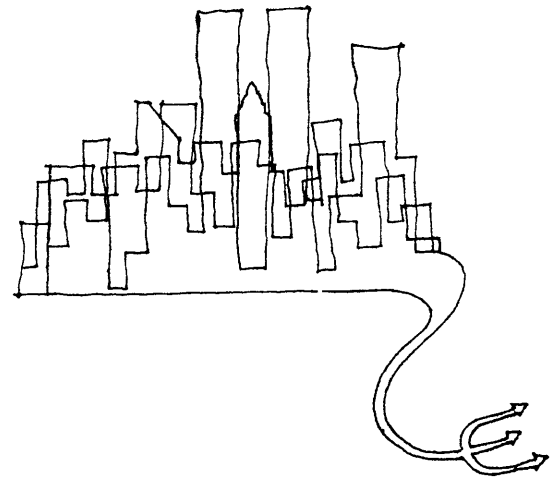
[1] Weber, Glencoe IL, 1958.

[2] Mumford, New York 1961.

[3] Tim Rice, Evita; from Spates & Macionis, New York 1982.

HOMICIDE   SUICIDE   DRUG ADDICTION   JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

ALCOHOLISM   ROBBERY   RAPE   AGGRAVATED ASSAULT

Fig.2.1.2 Ian McHarg's study of crime and social disease in Washington D.C. The city as a diabolic setting?

Gemeinschaft and *Gesellschaft,* of 'community' and 'association', of 'village' and 'city 'explores this theme,

> In *Gesellschaft.* . . everybody is by himself and isolated, and there exists a condition of tension against all others. . . intrusions are regarded as hostile acts. Such a negative attitude towards one another becomes the normal and always underlying relation of these power-endowed individuals. . . nobody wants to grant and produce anything for another individual, nor will he be inclined to give ungrudgingly to another individual, if it not be in exchange for a gift or labor equivalent that he considers at least equal to what he has given.[1]

He was not alone in adopting this stance, almost nihilistic in its predicament. Georg Simmel[2] commented upon this generically from a social psychologist's viewpoint. Daniel Patrick Moynihan echoes this sentiment too,

> The individual who pollutes the air with his factory and the ghetto kid who breaks store windows both represent the same thing. They don't care about each other - or what they do to

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[1] Toennies, New York 1963.
[2] Simmel, Englewood Cliff NJ 1969.

each other.[1]

There is also the adulation, the admiration, and the wonder, that is bestowed upon this largest of mans' creations, the city. People serenade the dynamism, and the energy of the city, and revere it with impetuous ardor. T.S. Eliot, in 'The Waste Lands', endows this sentiment with a folksy familiarity, in his description of life in London,

> 'This music crept by me upon the waters'
> And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria
>   Street.
> O City city, I can sometimes hear
> Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
> The pleasant whining of a mandolin
> And a clatter and a chatter from within
> Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the
>   walls
> Of Magnus Martyr hold
> Inexplicable splendor of Ionian white and
>   gold.[2]
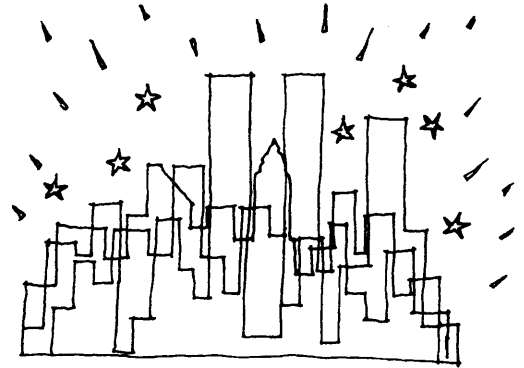
For theorists and students of urban sociology, it is more difficult to completely endorse this exuberance, in spite of growth and prosperity, since it is easier to ignore the virtues than it is to ignore the shortcomings of the city. However, there are exceptions. Emilé Durkheim, like Toennies, developed a model of contrasting types, that of 'mechanical solidarity', analogous to *Gemeinschaft*, and 'organic solidarity', analogous to *Gesellschaft*. He couldfind reason to adopt a benign disposition towards the city because,

> (The) yoke that we submit to (in modern society) is much less heavy than when society controls us (mechanical solidarity), and it leaves us much more place open for free play of our initiative (organic solidarity).[3]

Although major ground was broken in the study of the city and society, this Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde approach in the evaluation of cities, denied the metropolis of its essential complexity. Later

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[1] Peter, New York 1980.

[2] T.S.Eliot, "The Waste Land"; from Spates & Macionis, New York 1982.

[3] Durkheim, New York 1964.

Fig.2.1.3   Esplanade fireworks on the Charles River in Boston. The city as a robust and vivacious setting?

studies, more analytical and with the benefit of hindsight, acknowledged both dark and bright sides as different faces of the same enigma. As Eisenstadt & Shachar observes, of attitudes towards the city,

> . . on one hand the appreciation of all the power, wealth, and potential creativity stored up within the city, and on the other hand fear of its corrupting influence contrasting with the supposedly simple virtues of the countryside.[1]

In my opinion, cities, in urban theory, are centered on three sets of highly interdependent cause-effect relationships. First is the relationship between people, as individuals and as community. Second, the relationship between people and the environment, and finally the relationship between people, politics and the distribution of resources. Every urban theorist concentrates on these relationships with an orientation that gives one of these three equations the principal role in their theories, while accommodating the others with varying emphasis. The classic theories of Robert Ezra Park, Louis Wirth, Robert Redfield et al., as well as the earlier group of European pioneers, Simmel,

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[1] Eisenstadt & Shachar, Newbury Park CA 1987.

Toennies, Durkheim et al., are centered on the relationship between people in the city. The hypotheses which focus on the people-environment relationship, can be found amongst a diverse corps of urban theorists including Ebenezer Howard, Kevin Lynch, Le Corbusier, Aldo Rossi, Robert Venturi and numerous others. There is a vast range of attitudes among this group of experts, from that of the utopian architect-visionary, to the puritan environmentalist. The relationship between people and the political economy of cities, have occupied theorists including Max Weber, Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Manuel Castells, Henri Lefevre, the World Bank[1] etc. .

Definitions of the city, and theories to explain how it functions, have been propounded by the hundreds, the utopian's and the realist's visions of the 'ideal' and the 'good' city proliferate. Yet the city, and its relationship to man, remains elusive. With a certain flourish, the city defies the numerous verdicts we pass on it. The images we piece together, of cities all over the world, are a rather inadequate and distorted commentary of their virtues and
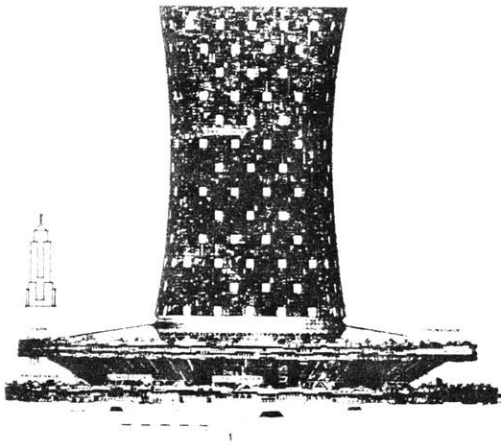
Fig.2.1.4   Paolo Soleri's Babel II D; the utopian
            vision of the city.
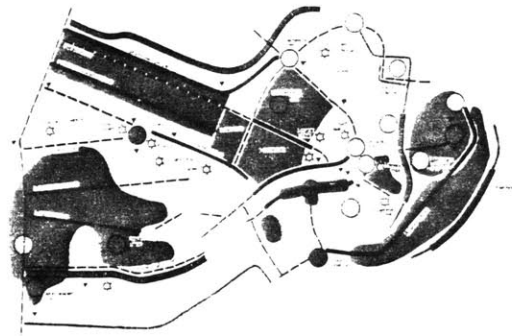
Fig.2.1.5   Kevin Lynch's map, the visual form of
            Boston. The realist's perspective of the
            city?

[1] in as much as institutions such as the World Bank can be said to have adopted a theoretical framework based on collective research and their institutional purpose.

their sins. They perpetuate myths and indeed build upon them, while concealed from the glare of the spotlights, the recondite city continues to function. Cities get classified along various lines, these include urban ambience, historical greatness, entertainment, trade interest, wealth, political significance etc.. Besides,

> There are many ways to think of a city. A city can be thought of as built form - buildings, open spaces, passages, barriers. It can be thought of as a system of rules and regulations - taxes, building codes, rules of ownership and tenancy. It can be thought of as social relationships and social institutions - neighborhoods, organizations and ethnic groupings. It can be thought of as an arena of power and of the political arrangements which organize power. It can appear as an economic system - capital investment, supplies of labor, housing and land markets. In reality, any city is all of these.[1]

Each of these ways of perceiving the city, in the end leads to the others. For example, the Aristotelian city, of 'businesses and neighborhoods and of people with individual and collective purposes'[2], and the Platonic city, of 'schematic diagrams of urban form, renderings'[3], coincides at some point. This happens when the Platonic vision gets rendered in Aristotelian pragmatism or conversely Aristotelian pragmatism is accomodated, however inadequately, in Platonic visions. Each city can be conceived through either Aristotelian or Platonic lenses, each perspective, in some way, defining the eloquence of the other. In Duncan's words,

> A way of life (Aristotelian) and its setting (Platonic) comprise an interdependent unity. Either is regarded as extrinsic to the other only at the peril of overlooking the interrelations on which depends the stability of the system as a whole.[4]

This dichotomy essentially reflects a rationale, adopted to enable prioritization from different positions in society. It roughly determines what the researcher will study and what she will 'leave

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[1] Peattie, Ann Arbor MI 1987.

[2] Peattie, Ann Arbor MI 1987.

[3] Peattie, Ann Arbor MI 1987.

[4] Duncan, Chicago 1964.

behind in the dust."[1] In grappling with the city, these inter-related perspectives have to be entertained. Every city contains within its folds urban vernaculars that offers us an account of its past, an insight into its present and a glimpse into its future. This vernacular assimilates the good, the bad and the ugly. It also presents us with a commentary on all the three sets of relationships, that I have mentioned earlier, which are used to conceptualize the city. The vernacular forms a perception that contains and is, in turn, contained by a people, a place and a time. We must continue to 're-examine our distaste for the city-limits "vernacular"'[2], if we are ever to reach out for the lofty aspirations we have for our cities. The following sections attempt to grapple with the broad dynamics of this vernacular for the city.

2.2   CONVENTION & SHARING

As I have illustrated in the previous chapter[3], the notion of sharing and convention is central to the realization of a vernacular. The question of sharing, of agreement, of social contracts, tacit norms and rules and consequently of convention,[4] which grows out of a tradition of sharing, is a rather difficult one, when we focus on the city. The two important questions that form a formidable barrier to the formulation of quick answers are, who is doing the sharing and what is it that they are sharing?

As I have discussed before, there are various kinds of distinctions that can be made between people living in the same city, people who share the same physical environment. We can differentiate them by age, sex, class, occupation, education, interests, affiliations. . . and the list goes on and on. Is it possible that they share some of the same meanings, the same

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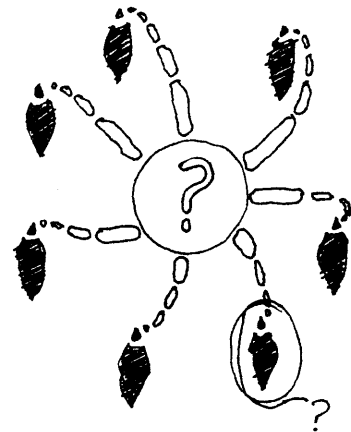
[1] Michelson, Reading MA 1976.

[2] Rodwin, Rizzoli 1982.

[3] ibid. pp.

[4] refer to Lewis, Oxford 1986 for a philosophical study which offers an in-depth analysis of conventions.

perceptions, even if it be a minute portion of their individual worlds? However we may choose to read this realm that is shared, the central argument presented here is that conventions, in that they implicitly house the perception of the normative, form the backbone of any urban vernacular. This sense of convention, marks out the limits of the 'good' and the 'bad', of 'identity' and 'alienation', and the 'usual' and 'unusual'. The total bundle of conventions, that ascribe a body of 'normatives', form the casing that frames and composes the treatment of rationality. That is not to say that the 'unusual' is always by implication 'bad'. The world ascribed, or described, by these three pairs of antonyms is not segregated by linear boundaries, it is more akin to a set of complex, overlapping volumes.

It is almost impossible to record, analyse, and define, all of the various nuances which inform the shared sense of tradition that Rossi calls 'Collective Memory',

> . . . as the relationship of the collective to its place, (the collective memory) helps us to grasp the significance of the

Fig.2.2.1   Le Corbusier: Paris, Plan Voisin, figure ground plan. Planners often desire singular control, sometimes they are even able to exercise such control. . .

Fig.2.2.2   Shantytown in Caracas, Venezuela. 1925, Control often evades the planner altogether. . .

urban structure, its individuality, and its architecture which is the form of this individuality.[1]

The exact nature of this sharing can sometimes be felt, but can rarely, if ever, be comprehended explicitly. A substratum of our consciousness that recognizes this shared perception does guide our collective endeavors, of design, of manufacturing, of development.[2] It has always been the desire of the specialists, that the growth and evolution of contemporary cities remain under the scepterof control by a few, who claim to know better than the rest. This belief does not translate into reality, although not for any lack of effort on the part of these experts. Total control over development is a planners myth. Paraphrasing Habraken,

> There is an unspoken professional ideology in which the physical environment of modern man is viewed as the product - indeed the design - of the controlling professional mind.[3]

Surely, the hardheaded determination of the planner is a force to reckon with, but this obstinacy does not always succeed in channelling the growth of the city the way it intends to. I would be giving credence to another myth if I were to say that desirable socio-economic development would take place without planning. It is only when planning and the implementation of policy is enlightened by a far greater comprehension of social processes, and the consequent implications on urban form, that we may begin to understand control in a more holistic sense. To me, the notion of totalitarian control over the built environment, expressed as a position or as a course of action, appears to be a misguided orientation. Accommodation, rather than control, seems to be a far more realistic approach in guiding development. To accommodate successfully, one has to understand the relationship and compatibility between people, their lives, and place. There is a great degree of uncertainty

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[1] Rossi, Cambridge MA 1986.

[2] refer to account of manufacture of the Steinway piano as it evolved from a tradition of piano making, also more in a vernacular strain, the evolution of the American Indian bark canoe; Habraken, Cambridge MA 1985.

[3] Habraken, Cambridge MA 1985.
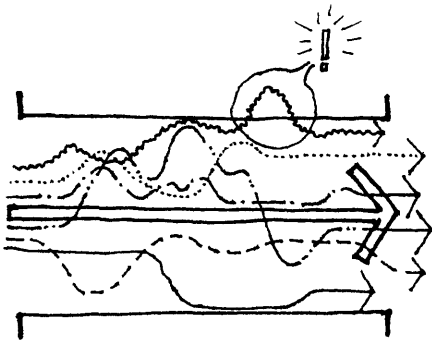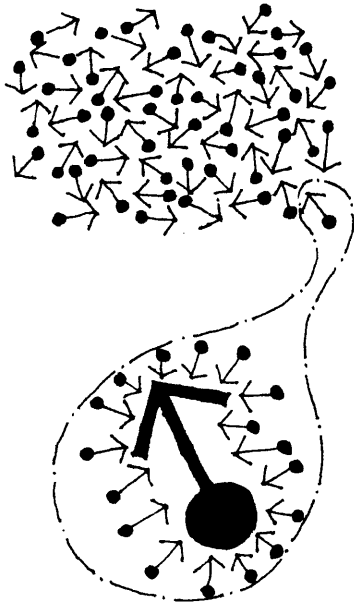
about what, and how much, we understand of ourselves, specially as millions of us act as independent vectors in a single urban equation. This urban equation, in turn, has innumerable dynamic constraints acting upon each of those vectors. Yet, in as much as they are different, certain attributes of these vectors are not so unique.

> . . . the various kinds of urban perspectives held by the resident of a city are constructed from spatial representations resulting from membership in particular social worlds.[1]

Our perception of the world around us is largely shaped by the social worlds we participate in, those that we share and those that we don't. When we share, we are in the common mold, when we do not, we deviate and express ourselves as different from the community. However, the limits of acceptable individual expression, or deviation, from norm, is defined by the common mold. Normally, the smallest of these 'social worlds' is the family, while the shared identity of the residents of the city forms the largest group. The amount we share increases as we telescope from the larger world to the smaller. Conventions are reasonably well defined for the family, they gets more and more nebulous as we account for more people. An urban vernacular, typically refers to a subject population that is larger than the family.[2] On the other hand, if the entire city is incorporated within a single vernacular umbrella, either very little will fall under it, or extensive study may have to be conducted before a sufficient body of information and analysis can render such a conception useful. Max Weber's interpretation of the city hints at the presence of such an unity within the system. He refers to this unity as

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[1] Strauss, Anselm. *Images of the American City*. (The Free Press: New York; 1961); from Michelson, Reading MA, 1976.

[2] although theoretically, a vernacular for the family is not entirely inconceivable, as in the form of special words of significance or endearment.
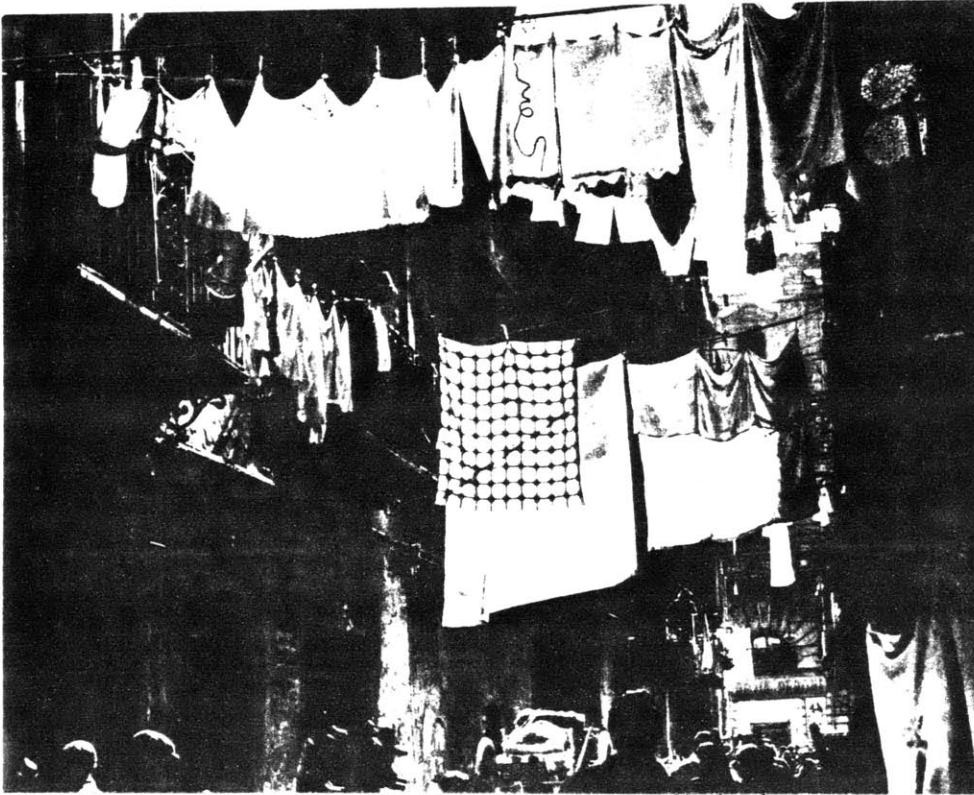
Fig.2.2.3 *Festive air pervades the lava paved streets of Naples in Italy. The wash flutters between balconies, no surprise that the Neapolitans jest that their laundry is their flag. A well worn convention here, a similar expression of lifestyle may be considered deviant in most other settings.*

'community', and characterizes it as the expression and institutionalization of a body of shared understanding,

> . . .total system of life forces brought into some kind of equilibrium. . . self-maintaining, restoring its order in the face of disturbances. . .a total systematic unit of inter-human life distinguished not by a single institution but by an order of institutions,[1]

It is possible that contemporary cities have transcended this sense of an unitary 'community', and instead, may contain many such communities. René Dubos narrates a typical scene in New York, and presents us with an interesting, and in some ways humorous, perspective into an urban vernacular, one which portrays the sense of the city as a singular entity with considerable success.

On a hot and humid Friday during midsummer, I landed at

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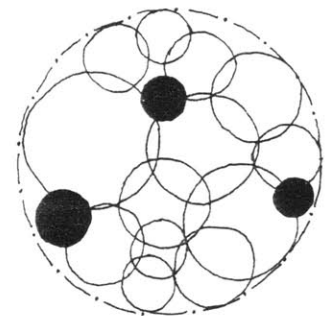
[1] Weber, Glencoe, IL 1958.

Kennedy Airport early in the afternoon. The taxi-cab that was taking me home was soon caught in a traffic jam, which gave the driver an opportunity to express his views on the state of the world. Noting my foreign accent, he assumed that I was unacquainted with the United States and proceeded to enlighten me on the superiorities of American life. As the cab stood still in the sultry air saturated with gasoline fumes (he remarked), "The reason there are so many people on the road at this hour is that we have plenty of leisure in this country and all of us can afford an automobile." As we removed our coat and mopped our brow, he added forcefully, "In the United States we all live like kings."[1]

Dubos goes on to point out that the taxi driver could perform his task effectively, as did the millions of other persons on the road, that afternoon, while at the same time breathing gasoline fumes, competing with countless anonymous motorists, and surveying the dismal monotony and ugliness of the highway landscape. There are moments of everyday life that are embedded in Dubos' anecdote, which almost every New Yorker identifies with and shares tacitly. The conceptualization of an urban vernacular which attempts to ascribe the entire city, borders on the banal in terms of its value as a tool in understanding development. To conceive of urban vernaculars that bind people in smaller, more specific, and focused groups, along lines of economic class, social caste, ethnic groups, neighborhoods, political affiliations, professions, religious affiliations, and numerous other forms of associations, is to enrich a conception that is otherwise too unwieldy and all embracing. Therefore, any individual, could concurrently absorb many vernaculars. The essential pre-requisite for the study of urban vernaculars is the identification of a suitable criterion, which can be used to articulate 'types'. The rendering of a larger conceptualization of a vernacular for the city[2], could be synthesized from the selected paradigm used for the study[3], or even through a comparative study across paradigms.

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[1] Dubos, New York 1968.

[2] ascribing the city as a single entity.

[3] by paradigms, I refer to the different criteria that could be used to define broad 'types' for the study of urban vernaculars.

The search for meaning, through an interpretation of urban vernaculars, can only help us inch a little closer to an improved understanding of our cities and ourselves. Each city is unique, although threads of similarity may run through many cities. Just as all cities have a living population, buildings, and infrastructure, they also have vernaculars; yet, the specifics for each city remains distinctive. A shared body of norms is one of the major factors which help us evaluate our life situations and also provide us with cues with which to direct our collective reasoning. Society's response to some situations may be entirely rational, while its response to other situations may be guided entirely by emotion. The issues that a particular society is emotional about, and the extent of rationality it feels comfortable with in dealing with particular types of problems, are all deeply colored by prevalent undercurrents of convention. For instance, the expression of pride in the city is a good example of social discretion that is evaluative, yet not altogether rational in its justification. World Fair's and Olympic Games are an immense drain on the resources of any city, resources which could be surely used to alleviate more pressing problems, yet cities and citizens participate vigorously in these theatrical mega-events. Bostonian's unequivocally root for the Celtics and the Red Sox. Emotions often run high, as responses to victories and defeats often transcend the rational. As Henry Millon emphasizes, 'Cities clearly have pride.'[1]

There are numerous exigencies of technology, politics and economics which shape the circumstances of our times. When these influences prevail upon the existing status quo, some aspects of the shared bundle of perceptions that constitutes the vernacular, is felt to be unsuitable and inappropriate. It is at times like this that society collectively reasseses some of these conventions and norms that it subscribes to. 'The city is a

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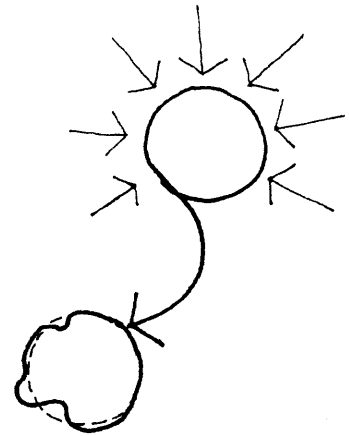
[1] Henry Millon in conversation with Frank P. Hosken; Hosken, Cambridge MA 1973.

process'[1], essentially one which results from the interaction of exigencies and the collective social schemata.

A vernacular for the city is largely made up of the sum and substance of convention. Some of these conventions are stable, others shaky or in transition, some conventions are time-honored, others are new. If the urban vernacular is so uncertain and susceptible to change, yet specific in its time-place orientation, is there any criteria which could render this complex structure of convention legible for study?

Numerous attempts have been made to chart similar complexities, notable among these being the well known Ekistics grid. In spite of its apparent complexity, this grid does not provide the comprehensiveness it sets out to establish, primarily as a result of a lack of fluidity among the various boxes, both horizontal and vertical. The formulation of 'types', is probably the best way to study as dynamic a notion as the urban vernacular. According to Habraken, shared perceptions are based on the concept of 'type'. He describes the type as an image of conventional forms (of people, buildings, lifestyles etc..) prevalent in society, that remain latent in the minds of people at the outset of any individual or collective endeavor. Each type allows a range of variation.[2] Like the notion of vernaculars, this notion of type could absorb an immense degree of complexity.

> The word 'type' represents not so much the image of a thing to be copied or perfectly imitated . . . . type, on the contrary, is an object according to which one can conceive works that do not resemble one another at all. We also see that all inventions, notwithstanding subsequent changes, always retain their elementary principle in a way that is clear and manifest to the senses and to reason. It is similar to a kind of nucleus around which the development and variations of forms to which the object was susceptible gather and mesh.[3]

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[1] Hosken, Cambridge MA 1973.

[2] Habraken, Cambridge MA 1985.

[3] Quatremère de Quincy, Antoine Chrysostôme. *Dictionnaire historique d'architecture comprenant dan son plan les notions historiques, descriptives, archaeologiques, biographiques, théoriques, didactiques et pratiques de cet art*, Vol.2 (Paris; 1832); from Rossi, Cambridge 1986.

Quartermeré de Quincy's definition of 'type' emphasizes its role as an useful prop for abstraction. For example, balloon frame construction could be said to constitute a 'type' of house building technique in the New England area. The numerous possibilities for variation within the broad realization of the type, is abstracted and assimilated within the overall definition. Similarly, a study of urban vernaculars based on 'type' is limited, in its scope for interpretation, by the degree of abstraction and indeterminacy built into the 'type' itself. What is required is a more comprehensive articulation of 'type' as a descriptive and analytical tool. An exercise in 'type' analysis necessarily shuns determinism, instead it is sympathetic to the notion of relative congruence (and consequently incongruence) of systems, or orders, of understanding. Michelson introduced a somewhat similar model calling it an *intersystem congruence model,*

> of states of variables in one system coexisting better with states of variables in another system, than with other alternative states.[1]

For this purpose, I have identified five, inter-related, orders, with which to explore each 'type'. The conceptualization of 'type' from any of these orders of understanding should reinforce and support the other four. These are as follows,

    a. Attitudes
    b. Lifestyles
    c. Control
    d. Roles and Tasks
    e. Forms and Places

Each of these are explained briefly in the following section.

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[1] Michelson, Reading MA 1976.

2.3   ATTITUDES

At the outset I will attempt to identify what an attitude means, with respect to both the individual and society. Thereafter, I shall illustrate how an understanding of attitudinal dispositions can help us interpret an urban vernacular. In the field of social psychology, numerous definitions and explanations have been provided for attitudes that people may adopt. There has been considerable study in this area, a large section of which specifically relates to the development of public opinion. Originally, the term 'attitude' referred to a bodily posture or position, as in,'He sat slumped in an attitude of dejection.' As we use it more often it has come to mean something closer to a posture of the mind. In the field of social sciences, a number of definitions have been put forward, each with its own set of criteria for determining what an attitude is. The most accepted social science definition is one forwarded by Gordon Allport,

> An attitude is a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related.[1]

Fig.2.3.1   'He sat slumped in an attitude of dejection.'

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[1]Allport, G. Attitudes. in C. Murchison, ed. A Handbook of Social Psychology (Clark Univ. Press: Worcester MA; 1935); from Oskamp, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1977.

Although complex in its wording, this definition is quite comprehensive. It implies that an attitude is not behavior itself, it is something that readies us for behavior, a predisposition to respond in a certain way. Attitudes are not innate, they are

'learned, they develop and they are organized through experience.'[1]

Although attitudes can be modified and are often subject to change, they are also relatively enduring. Attitudes are also motivational, in that they do not represent a passive response to external conditions alone, but are evaluative (likes and dislikes) and could drive people to seek or accomplish certain ends. Attitudes are directed towards what social scientists call 'attitude objects'[2], which may include, as the case may be, people, places, ideas, concepts, and situations. These so called 'attitude objects' in the urban domain, could include almost anything from the politician of the local ward, the neighbor, the neighborhood, the downtown, specific buildings, govternment policy towards

Fig.2.3.2 Farmers pass the time, playing ultimó, in a small town in northern Hungary. What does this sketch of everyday life tell us about attitudes? We could interpret a certain attitude about time, recreation, and social practice.

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[1] Halloran, Westport CT 1970.
[2] Oskamp, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1977; Halloran, Westport CT 1970; Chisman, University Park PA 1976.

housing, homeless people. . . . all the way to cost of bricks and the location of the front door to the house.

An attitude is made up of three components, and this has been very appropriately illustrated by Oskamp in the following passage. To illustrate these components, he uses Martians as the attitude object.
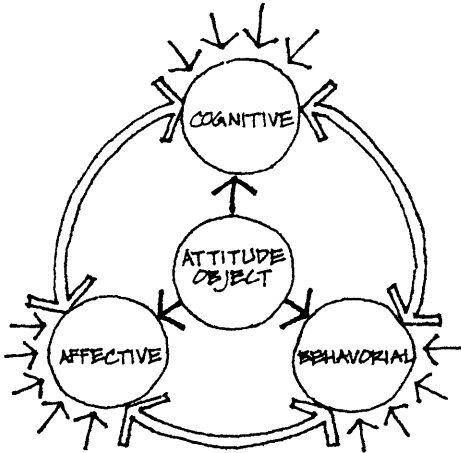
> i. A **cognitive** component, consisting of ideas and beliefs which the attitude holder has about the object. Examples would be "Martians have green skins and antennae coming out of their foreheads."
> ii. An **affective** (emotional) component. This refers to the feelings and emotions one has towards the object. For instance,"Martians make me feel uncomfortable, I don't like Martians."
> iii. A **behavioral** component, consisting of one's action tendencies towards the object. For example, "If I saw a Martian, I'd run away as fast as I could."[1]

These three distinctions are often indistinguishable, one from the other. The affective component incorporates three major conceptual frameworks within which people make judgements, viz. the normative, intellectual and aesthetic.[2] Attitude formation is attributed to a learning process that includes, among other things, personal experiences, family influences in early life, education, peer and reference group pressures, as well as the influence of all forms of media. If it is an individual who is forming the attitude, genetic predispositions influence the process, in terms of a community, this is not of particular significance.

Earlier in the text, I had pointed out certain differences between three closely related terms, i.e. vernacular, tradition and indigenous.[3] Likewise, in this section I would like to explore, briefly, the terms 'belief', 'opinion', 'habit', 'value' and 'attitude'. I will explore these concepts with reference to a single individual, the collective interpretation would be an extension of this singular application.

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[1] Oskamp, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1977

[2] Black, Orlando 1984.

[3] *ibid.* pp.

The difference between a 'belief' and an 'attitude' has been broached in the earlier explanation for the cognitive component of attitudes.[1] Belief can be described as

> 'subjective probability that an object has a particular characteristic.'[2]

This is congruent with the cognitive dimension of attitudes. People have various, often unrelated, beliefs about the same object. 'This book is a thriller' and, 'This book is inexpensive', expresses beliefs about the book, but cannot be construed as related in any significant way. A decision to buy the book expresses a distinct attitude towards inexpensive thrillers. An attitude does not necessarily reflect all the beliefs that may be held about an attitude object. However, every attitude reflects some form of belief. Therefore beliefs inform the readiness for behavior that Allport calls attitude.[3]

Sociologists have proposed various meanings for 'opinion', some of which have a factual, rather than a judgemental orientation.[4] Our everyday, common sense, lay appreciation of the word 'opinion' has strong judgemental connotations. Child's definition is probably the most comprehensive and it also succeeds in accommodating the layman's perspective.[5] He proposes a distinction based on overtness versus covertness; opinion as the overt verbal or written expression, of an underlying, covert attitude. Opinions, therefore, according to him, are largely attitude statements. There is an inconsistency built into this interpretation - opinions may be held implicitly, while attitudes could be stated explicitly. this inconsistency may only be a matter of semantics since the two notions are rather closely

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[1] *ibid.* pp.

[2] Fishbein, M. & I. Ajzen. "Attitudes and Opinions", Annual Review of Psychology, 1972, 23; from Oskamp, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1977.

[3] *ibid.* pp.

[4] Osgood, Suci & Tannebaum, 1957; from Oskamp, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1977.

[5] Childs, Princeton NJ 1965.

inter related; any difference between the two may at times be purely nominal.

Value is seen as a significant life goal or an underlying code that justifies or explains behavior. A value is generally considered a positive entity, a quality that guides and structures motivation in a person or society. These are therefore, ends rather than means, and may function as the central storehouse which provides the fodder for the development of a belief system, which, in turn, informs attitudes. Habits are relatively easy to distinguish from attitudes. They are automatic and standardized behavior, normally responses to specific kinds of stimuli. Attitude is not behavior, and an attitude may be behaviorally expressed in many different ways. The formation of attitudes always involve some amount of evaluative and emotive judgement, while habits are conditioned responses which do not necessarily reflect critical thought.[1]

How does this help us in interpreting an urban vernacular? It is obvious that attitudes play some significant role in shaping peoples' responses to their environment, by creating predispositions. Individual attitudinal complexities and variations are of limited significance in this study, as compared to those aspects which reflect attitudes collectively. Attitudinal dispositions are one of the major building blocks of urban life. Oftentimes, they influence development and change, and channelise decisions in directions, quite different from those that would be purely the result of economic and political forces. Walter Firey deals with this issue in his study on land usage in Boston. He illustrates the resistance of a historical burial ground, to powerful forces advocating the case of commercial buildings; of an open green, resisting highway development; of Beacon Hill, resisting medium and high rise residential development.[2] In

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[1] Oskamp, Englewood Cliffs NJ 1977.
[2] Firey, Cambridge MA 1947.

my knowledge, there has been very few studies conducted, on collective attitudes of an urban population, as they may tell us more about the way the built environment actually is put to work. Hawley laments the lack of an interdisciplinary perspective in the study of urban phenomena, his specific reference, directed to the field of human ecology,

> Attitudes, sentiments, motivations, and the like are eliminated from consideration not because they are unimportant but because the assumptions and point of view of human ecology are not adapted to their treatment.[1]

Essentially, this negligence boils down to an inability to accommodate, or to build bridges, that span the abyss between disciplinary boundaries. The best known study with regard to some critical aspects of urban imagery has been conducted by Kevin Lynch.[2] However, Lynch's study deals primarily with beliefs, as defined earlier in this section. This pathfinding study, delineated in *The Image of the City*, analyses the images that people have of places. It would be interesting to explore how these images contribute to the formation of attitudes about places. I am sure there are other studies too, they are either very specialized in their orientation, or have escaped my attention. The amount of insight such a study could offer cannot be overestimated. A branch of urban studies that collects, analyses, and relates, collective attitudes to the management and control of the physical urban environment, might indeed throw some fresh insight into the professional perspective of the built environment.

Attitudes shape vision. The case of Ciudad Guyana, portrayed in Lisa Peattie's sensitive rendition, *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guyana*,is illustrative of the need for a better understanding of the way in which people align themselves to visions of a future.

> The various actors - the CVG (Corporación Venezolana de Guyana) top administration, the American and Venezuelan

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[1] Hawley, New York 1950.

[2] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1960.

planners, the engineers, the local business elite and politicians, the ordinary citizens - did not, it turns out, have quite the same sorts of future in mind. But it is important to realize that they largely felt as though they did; while they argued about what was to be done, they shared in the exhilarating sense of being part of a historic process.[1]

Amongst other issues, a study of attitudes within each group, could help draw a more comprehensive interpretion of the differences in the vision that each group conjures up. Consequently, it is possible that a more appropriate orientation could be pursued in matters of planning, that is supported on a broader shelf of consistency. Some of the differences among these groups may seem to be irreconciliable, however, solutions that grow out of a sensitive understanding of the issues, may outline better tools of negotiation and compromise, than would be possible otherwise.

Let us dwell momentarily on such a thought before we move on. The created environment of the city is essentially the product of a rather complex process. This process includes individual, social, economic, political and technical spheres of influence (control?). Specifically with respect to the larger spheres of influence, this process is also instrumental in shaping policy, or government attitude towards urban development. Influence, tempered by attitudes, is also instrumental in determining how the urban population interprets, and responds to this policy framework. This process of evolution acts upon, and is in turn acted upon, by history; that which has already been put in place. The attitudes of
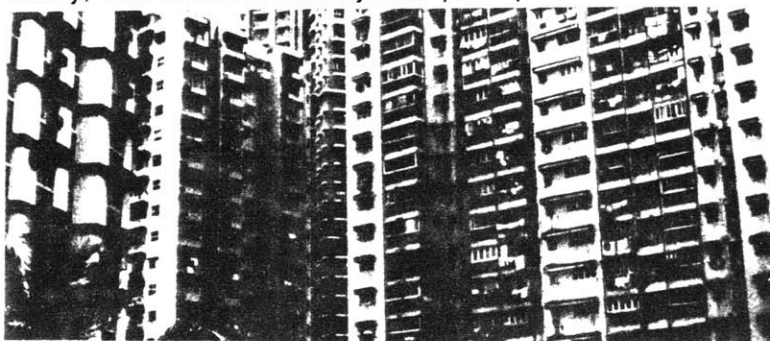
Fig.2.3.3   Housing in Bombay, attitudes syncopated with housing?

[1] Peattie, Ann Arbor MI 1987.

Fig.2.3.3   Apartment buildings in New York City reflects a certain attitude towards mass housing.
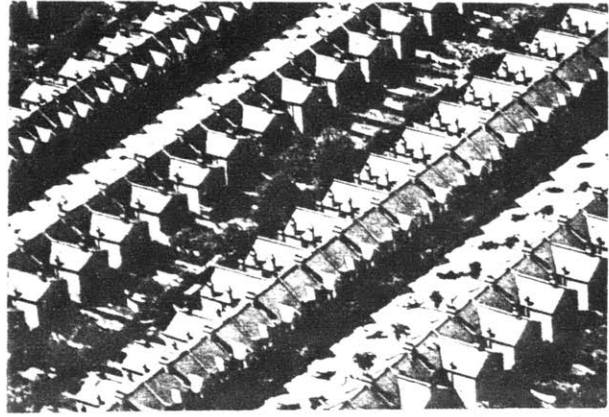
Fig.2.3.4   Typical London houses. These houses also represent an attitude towards mass housing.

The immediate question that comes to mind in each case - who's attitudes do they reflect and why?

people, as a component of the urban vernacular, provides us with a commentary on their life situation, the synthesis of the past, present, and future, that gives them a unique viewpoint. Attitudes also color the relationship they develop with each other and with the built environment. The study of attitudes needs to be directed at issues pertinent to both the process and the product, as reflected through a study of lifestyles, control, roles, and finally, through the articulation of forms and places . Over time, it may be possible to study attitudinal changes, as well as their relationship to the various aspects of the process and the subsequent product of the urban environment.

2.4   LIFESTYLES

As in the case of 'attitudes', sociology offers us numerous definitions and interpretations of the word 'lifestyle'. These are sometimes contradictory and, at best, confusing. The word has been bandied about by Weber, who felt that power, both economic and political, had a strong influence on lifestyle. It is a descriptive means by which classes could be stratified and differentiated, among other things, in terms of status.[1] The weakness of this proposition lies in the fact that class, and status,

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[1] Sobel, New York 1981.

are only two of the many determinants of lifestyle, other attributes of culture are equally strong factors.[1] Other definitions were forwarded by Veblen, Chapin, Sewell and Barber[2] but the central hypothesis remained, that of lifestyle as an indicator of social position.

As the lack of consensus continued on what constituted lifestyle, sociologists remained in a quandary. In 1970, Tallman and Morgner defined it more generally as,

> ... a broad rubric under which a number of behavioral activities and orientations can be included, each of which require a distinctive investment of the individual's resources and money.[3]

Picking up on this tentative suggestion that lifestyles and consumption exhibit correspondence, Sobel attempted to

Fig.2.4.1 A co-ordinated study of the consumption patterns of the people who frequent this supermarket will certainly give us valuable insights into their lifestyle. However, there will remain many aspects of lifestyle that will not surface at the end of such a study.

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[1] It is true however, that culture, in its holistic interpretation, would include issues of class and status, as they manifest themselves in a specific cultural setting.

[2] for a detailed account of these definitions, refer to Sobel, New York 1981.

[3] Tallman, Irving & Ramona Morgner. "Life-style differences among urban and suburban blue-collar families", Social Forces #48; from Sobel, New York 1981.

provide a tenable method for conducting an empirical study of lifestyle from which deeper inferences could be made. He sketched out the correlation between lifestyle and consumption, through a historical analysis of the American experience of the last one hundred and twenty years. His argument establishes the saliency of consumption, and he goes on to say,

> . . consumption best indexes lifestyle. . it better indexes lifestyle than plausible alternatives, such as work and leisure. Consumption is expressive (a requisite of lifestyle) if the consumer is free to choose what he or she consumes. . the work situation (on the other hand) is structured, with built in constraints for most workers (characterizing a lack of choice at a certain level). . Free time and consumption are highly associated, if you want to know what people do with their free time, look at their consumption bundle.[1]

I think Sobel's point is well taken, however I must confess that lifestyle cannot be divorced from work and leisure, or from ritual and social conduct. All of these human actions normally entail a smaller degree of free choice than does consumption in most societies; societies in which the state exerts pervasive restriction over consumption, form notable exceptions. However, the form and content of restrictions on free choice, shaped by convention, both tacit and explicit, irrespective of whether it affects work, leisure, or social conduct, illuminates the study of lifestyles. For instance, is it possible to eliminate the impact of peoples' specific responses to climate from the question of lifestyle, or explain it away merely on the basis of consumption patterns, of people buying umbrellas, skis, and eyeshades?

Apart from providing a sketch on consumption, social status, and class differentiation, lifestyle has other attributes, and is not merely a behavioral orientation. It is, I would say at the risk of being banal, the style of lives and it is indeed just that, 'life-style'. A brief sojourn into the interpretation of 'style', as used with reference to the analysis of artworks, literature, and other forms of expression, could well provide us with sufficient insight to

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[1] Sobel, New York 1981.

construct a reasonable model for comprehending the term 'lifestyle'. In fact Sobel quotes the fol lowing definition, derived from the artistic use of the word 'style',

> . . . a distinctive, hence recognizable, mode of living.[1]

He does however restrict himself to defining a particular style as a characteristic feature, used to distinguish something from other manifestations of style. However, style could very well be used to highlight broad similarities, as in the case of works done by different creative personalities in the Bauhaus movement. Even when style is used in this sense, we do use the word to distinguish, as we would the Bauhaus from the De Stijl. The point I am making here is that distinction is not the only, or the major purpose of style. Style, it is normally assumed, is how something is expressed, not what is expressed, which is considered to be more a question of form rather than of content. However, Hough counters this by saying,

Fig.2.4.2   'Pan Pursuing Syrinx" by Hendrick van Balen I, 17th century, National Gallery, London. Pan portrays desire in this painting, as he pursues Syrinx, the surprised nymph.

Fig.2.4.3   A striking similarity in the image portrayed in this publicity campaign , and that shown in fig.2.4.2. The two images use similar devices to convey their message, i.e. gestures of models and mythological figures, romantic use of nature , stereotype of woman as a sex-object etc. . Yet, each picture is stylistically different, and this difference tells us something distinct about both the form and the content of each.

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[1] Sobel, New York 1981.

. . . is not each different way of saying in fact the saying of a
different thing?[1]

Conversely, Goodman points out that as in the *œuvre* of
paintings produced by Van Gogh or Seurat, or the designs by Le
Corbusier, different themes, messages, and sensitivities, were
expressed in the same stylistic tradition by each artist. He goes
on to add that,

> style comprises certain characteristic features both of what is
> said and of how it is said, both of subject and of wording, both
> of content and of form.[2]

Style also includes the affective and purely subjective aspects of
the work or object. Thus apart from how what it is that is being
said, is said, certain features of

> what is expressed (is). . . intimately interrelated and involved in
> style.[3]

Style aims at characterizing the question of who, where, and
when? Style is also that which highlights the uniqueness of the
work, at the same time situating it within a larger realization, i.e.,a
specific period, school or place. It functions, in some ways, as an
individual signature and in other ways as a group signature.
Stylistic analysis helps distinguish Cubist from Surrealist, as also
Picasso from Braque or Duchaump[4]. In fact a single work of art,
say Picasso's *Guernica*, may be distinguished stylistically from his
other works; yet under a different frame of reference, it may be
considered stylistically similar, and integral, to the collection of his
works. Therefore it is a simultaneous commentary on attributes of
individuality as well as of community. Goodman ends by finally
defining style as,

> consist (ing) of those features of the symbolic functioning of a
> work that are characteristic of author, period, place or school.

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[1] Hough, Graham. *Style and Stylistics.* (London; 1969); from Goodman,
Indianapolis IN 1985.

[2] Goodman, Indianapolis IN 1985.

[3] Goodman, Indianapolis IN 1985.

[4] The three artists are known as exponents of the Cubist movement in
art.

Styles are normally accessible only to the knowing (trained?) eye or ear.[1]

The task at hand is to redirect our focus back to lifestyle and see how far we can carry this analogy of 'style', from art to everyday life. If our lives were works of art, what would its form, content and expression be? Although these three, form, content, and expression, are not mutually exclusive characteristics of a 'work', a broad distinction can be made between them. Expression presents us with the most direct analogy. Parallel to the expressive quality of art, which embellishes content and form, is the intrinsic flair, and the cultural idiosyncrasies, the *au fond*, that colors, and inspires the rendering of our lifestyle functions. This aspect of lifestyle can be described only in abstraction, partly by inference, as against exclusive observation and analysis. Content, is analogous to the underlying set of values, beliefs, and attitudes, which inform and motivate our actions. For instance, if a large number of people believe that families can be best raised in a suburban setting, we have a situation of mental congruence between 'familism' and 'suburbanism'.[2] This can be noted as an attitude towards a specific form of lifestyle. This aspect of lifestyle can be described subjectively and can be observed through opinion and attitude analysis. The equivalent of form, is the way in which those tasks, routines, activities, and other lifestyle functions, which reflect the content, and incorporate the expressive element, are organized. Form encompasses all the lifestyle functions themselves and can be described in objective terms. Lifestyle, if one thinks of it as that which renders the accomplishment of essential human functions with something more than merely a mechanistic, undifferentiated monotone, is significantly concerned with the features of 'the symbolic functioning of'[3] our lives that are characteristic of an individual or a group.

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[1] Goodman, Indianapolis IN 1985; paranthesis are mine.

[2] Bell, New York 1958.

[3] refer Goodman's definition above; also note how Sobel and I make the same analogous reasoning, from 'style' to 'lifestyle', yet come up with

The 'style'-istic aspect of every lifestyle is central to the formulation of an essay on a particular 'type', as it may be used to understand the urban vernacular. Naturally, the frame of reference in this study, for the synthesis of lifestyles, is the community. At present, there is a limited science of lifestyle study; whatever little there is, views the matter exclusively from the viewpoint of the sociologist or the anthropologist. The relationship between lifestyles and their evolution, and urban vernaculars manifested through these particular lifestyles, could indeed better inform the way we perceive our cities, both in vision and in retrospect. Lifestyle integrates indistinguishably with the other orders that are, in my opinion, essential ingredients in the development of type. For instance, a family raising children from the twentieth floor of a high-rise building may adopt a lifestyle very different from the bungalow-family. A two hour commute to work versus one that is a five minute walk, can play havoc on any notion of lifestyle consistency under different physical, but similar socio-cultural circumstances.[1] In each of these instances, the dynamics and the significance of attitudes, control, roles, and the articulation of forms and places, in shaping lifestyles remains part of an intellectually intimidating imbroglio.

Problems with respect to the study of lifestyles, also include the issue of defining how lifestyles can be grouped. Is the basis to be economic, political, ethnographic, occupational, or merely the physical arrangements of life-space? Or should it be a criteria that takes into account all of these issues? Another difficulty lies with the selection of a method for data assimilation. Should the collection of data and analysis be either statistical, or a qualitative description, or rather an intuitive evaluation.

very different definitions of lifestyle by starting out with different perspectives on 'style'.
[1] Michelson, Reading MA 1976.

These questions cause great consternation because they are complex and no ready answer can be provided immediately. Yet they remain crucial issues and must be investigated in depth. It suffices at this stage to say that attitudes, among other factors, shape peoples' worlds and inform lifestyles. Lifestyles, in turn, have a great deal to do with what is characteristic about the way that a specific group of people conduct their lives, including the manner in which they choose to distribute available resources of time, space, and money. The following sections will develop the scenario of the type to a greater degree of resolution. The purpose of such a study of urban vernaculars, articulated through types, which, in turn, are understood through a conjunction of five inter-related orders, will emerge in greater clarity.

2.5   CONTROL
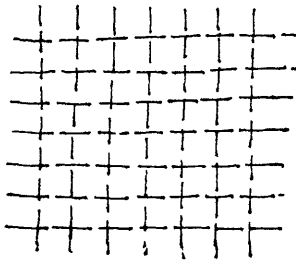
Control, as it represents a direct outcome of man's desire for order, encompasses rather a broad field. Order implies an abstinence from deviation, the imposition of certain rules and regulations, however minimal or implied, which fosters some degree of conformity.

> The term 'control' could . . be used to describe virtually any type of human behavior, be it the modification of inanimate things, the domestication of plants and animals, or social interaction.[1]

There has been an immense volume of research published, and theories expounded in the field of control, specially social control as it relates to theories of social stratification and class struggle (Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Ross etc.). Substantial work has been done from the perspective of law as it relates to control over deviant behavior. With some inspiration from Black's definition of social control,[2] we can derive a general definition of control as may be found pertinent in dealing with issues of the urban built environment. According to this definition, control could be said

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[1] Gibbs, ed. Beverley Hills CA, 1982.
[2] Black, Orlando 1984.
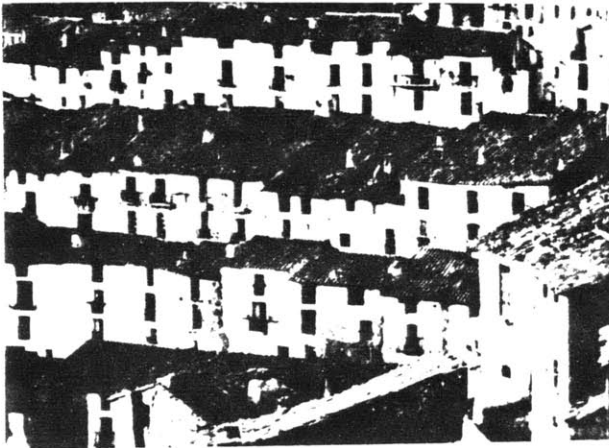
Fig.2.5.1   The Spanish town of Villa Hermosa. An
implicit system of control maintains order.
This 'control' does almost everything that
modern planning accomplishes. Bsides, it
also supports a compatible fabric of life, both
technically and socially. Applied to
contemporary urban situations, this form
of control would refuse to accommodate
the diversity of attitudes and lifestyles that
have to be recognized. Is the answer
necessarily anonimityy,and explicitly
imposed control mechanisms to regulate
form?
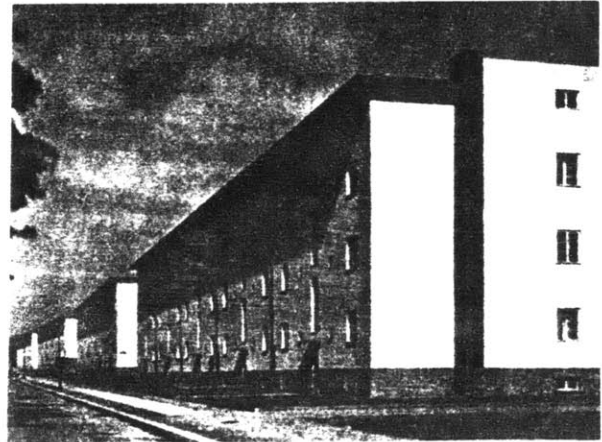
Fig.2.5.2   Britz housing project, Berlin-Neukölln,
Bruno Taut. A predominantly explicit
system of control maintains order. This
system supports anonymity and anomie.
Different and unrelated lifestyles find
expression and can co-exist in close
proximity of each other. Should control
mechanisms concentrate on social
organizationor on built form? Is there a
link between the two variables in this
equation?

to include all the practices by which people define, and respond
to deviant tendencies. The defining takes the form of rules, both
explicit and implicit, while the response to these tendencies take
the form of enforcement. To conduct a nuclear reaction
successfully, one must specify the greatest degree of control,
Chernobyl or worse threatens should deviation take root. On the
other hand, to ensure that rules are not regarded with disdain,
some form of overt or covert consequences for disregard has to
be set in place. Enforcement can take the form of incentive or
punishment.

Essential to the study of control is the understanding of who is
controlling and who or what is being controlled. The definition of
what is 'deviation', and what is not, depends entirely upon the
perspective that is adopted to view a specific issue. For instance,
the Civil Rights movement in America under the leadership of

Martin Luther King Jr. was struggling to set right, what was according to the protagonists, a prevalent yet deviant set of attitudes towards colored people from a human rights point of view. It was an effort to impose control from the bottom-up, in the hierarchy of social authority. The control mechanisms and sanctions imposed by Gov. George Wallace of Alabama, to quell the movement in his state, often by drastic measures, was a response to what appeared to him to be a blatant and daring deviation from the *status quo* of social norms. The gubernatorial action was a case of top-down control. President Lyndon Johnson stepped in at a critical juncture during the protest march to Montgomery and thwarted some of Gov. George Wallace's efforts, based on his own perspective of what was deviant, and by how much. His actions were supported by the timely verdict from the judiciary, defending the people's right to march peacefully in protest.[1] Besides the prevalent methods of the more common, top-down control, Baumgartner points out various forms of bottom-up control, exercised by the subordinate classes. These include rebellion, covert retaliation, non-cooperation, appeals, flight and distress. The disadvantaged sections of society who cannot best utilize the provisions of law to their benefit have, and do exercise control in these various forms.[2]
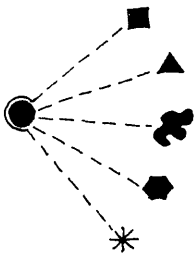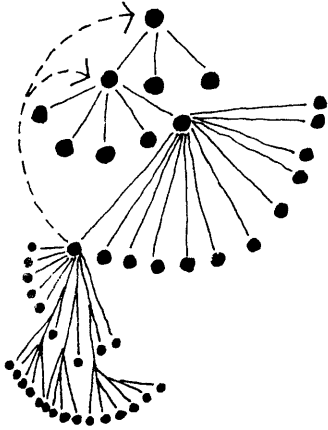
There are occasions when it seems that control is exercised not to foster conformity, but to encourage deviation. More often than not, control articulated in this fashion is fallacious. As an example we can cite the passive control exercised by the Yves Saint Laurent and Giorgio Armani's of the fashion world. The influence that these designers exercise, in concert with the media, to foster deviant tendencies in clothing is indeed a form of passive control; passive, since their explicit intention is not to control but

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[1] the analysis is based on a TV report on the 'March to Montgomery', screened on WPB, Channel-2; Mar.2, 1988.

[2] for detailed discussions, refer Baumgartner, M.P. "Social Control from Below"; in Black, Orlando 1984.

to promote. When certain things are promoted in preference of others, control is indeed exercised on the audience's sensibilities. However, we can turn the tables around and perceive this form of 'pro-deviant' control as really being an effort in perpetuating conformity. Considering that Armani and Saint Laurent target their campaigns and their designs at the very affluent sections of society, those who pride themselves as the trend setters for society. It is not difficult to visualize how new fashions enable the members of the economic clique, to conform to this practice.[1] Since these *avant gardé* items of fashion lie beyond the reach of the masses, it helps strengthens traditional status roles in society, maintaining the (appropriately worded)*status in quo*.

At this stage it is indeed a moot point to interpose, in relief, two broad interpretations of the word 'control', with different connotations. First, control as an expression of intent to dominate, or to impose one's will to accomplish certain ends. Second, control as a potential of the characteristic function of a person or thing. The control that the municipal authority exercises in establishing some degree of conformity in the built environment, could fall under the first interpretation. On the other hand, the control exercised by a space, by virtue of its physical manifestation, i.e., shape, size, orientation etc., as enabling or disabling certain functions within its sphere of containment, would exemplify the second interpretation of control.

The ability to exercise control, with intent to do so, is power. If two or more figurative entities are interacting with each other, the one with the dominant power exercises the greater potential control over the others, while subsequent powers fill up successive rungs on the ladder of control. Both issues of power and control can be handled either microscopically (individual) or

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[1] Morris, London 1977.

macroscopically (community, society). The focus of this study rests predominantly on the macroscopic. Like in every other sphere of human influence, the phenomenon of overt (direct, purposeful) and covert (indirect, consequential) control is of critical importance in structuring the way in which we build, use, and read our cities. Comprehension of the dynamics of urban vernaculars must follow an understanding of the reciprocal control relationship that exists between people and their environment. We control our surroundings in the way we develop it to reflect our needs, our attitudes, our values and our lifestyles. Our surroundings indeed contribute in shaping those very attitudes, values, and lifestyles. The simple act of erecting a wall in the city symbolizes our control over the environment. Similarly, the manner in which the wall is placed in the urban landscape, within an existing fabric, symbolizes the mute control the city exercises over us. Once the wall is erected, we witness another example of control as a consequence of functional capacity, as it either enables or disables certain human actions. We manipulate the city to conform to our expectations. Simultaneously, the city manipulates us to conform to the opportunities it presents. If a house has only one door, its only entrance, it is a statement of implicit control, one that applauds conformity.

How does the issue of control inform an urban vernacular? Earlier sections have dealt with the significance of attitudes and lifestyles in enlightening our understanding of an urban vernacular as more than merely spaces, formal elements, and embellishments. The vernacular of the city is imbued with use and value. The notion of vernaculars bring into relief the specific structure and meaning system of a community or a society as it is reflected through the articulation of the urban environment. For instance, the various newspaper vending machines, that can be seen in various strategic streetside locations in and around Boston, provide us with clues that could well throw light upon some aspect of the urban lifestyle, values and attitudes of the

people. It tells us that people like to buy newspapers from the roadside; that the media finds a place of some importance within society; that a lot of people do not get newspapers delivered at home, or do not find time to read them at home, or alternatively are unable to take the newspaper away from home with them when they leave for work in the morning; that awareness and information regarding affairs of current interest figures high on people's list of priorities; that sufficient people can afford to buy newspapers.[1] With greater study it could tell us a lot more, and allow us to be less speculative about the clues that have been illustrated above. Undoubtedly, the newspaper vending machine occupies a place in the shared world of vernacular urban culture in Boston. By virtue of its omnipresence, it is a vernacular which cuts across the notion of 'types' within the city.

This example also illustrates the issue of control as it informs urban vernaculars. The newspaper distributors own this little blue or yellow box at the street corner. The people on the street have a conditional control over the box; if they insert a quarter, they can get a newspaper. This is a mechanism designed to prevent deviant behavior. However, no one but the man in the van, who comes to service this box, has control over access to the compartment where the quarters are deposited. Yet everyone who happens to pass by, can look through the frontpiece, read the headlines, and enjoy the choice of access to the paper.[2] What lies inside the box, the newspaper itself, is altogether another commentary on the issue of control. The design of the box enables all of this. This control relationship that has been established is understood and accepted implicitly by everyone.

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[1] In Delhi for instance, there are mobile newspaper vending machines. . . young boys who vend evening newspapers to the returning crowd of office-goers. The reason they have to be mobile is because the majority of the customers are affluent and are in automobiles and the vendors have to weave their way through the traffic at lights, and weave out as soon as the light turns green. Some people cannot read, or are too poor, others are not interested. Most who read the daily papers, have them delivered at home.

[2] for access too, is a form of control.

Even the street kid who might vandalize the box, understands it, that is exactly why he may choose to target the socially accepted order, represented by this innocuous machine, to express some form of protest or discontent. Any major change that is made in this elemental relationship will disturb the order of understanding. Any change in the location of this box from the streetside to, let's say the post office, will upset its established meaning as an urban artifact. In essence, such changes will disrupt this little element of the urban vernacular.

The study of control enables an understanding of the essential, and the superfluous processes, that characterize the stabilizing and the disturbing forces which act upon an urban vernacular. These forces have to be examined closely along with the relationships they underwrite. Are the stabilizing forces enslaving

Fig.2.5.3   Workers' homes adjoin factories in Monterrey, Mexico. Layers of control lie hidden in this regimental settlement, maintaining a critical balance or imbalance.

Fig.2.5.4   Massive displays of banners and slogans designed to foster conformity through solidarity and the perception of a common purpose. This scene 35 miles northwest of Peking at the site of the Ming Tomb dam, symbolizes a specific form of socio-political control.

and sapping the vital energy of society? Are the dynamic new forces disturbing the status quo for fatuous ends? Further, the consistency between attitudes, lifestyles, and control, especially how they inform each other, ought to be scrutinized. Inconsistencies in these realms, sets up processes which are often counter-productive and debilitates the vitality and growth potential of society greatly. It is this understanding of the vernacular that will open new doors to the craft of place-making.

2.6   ROLES AND TASKS

Attitudes, lifestyle, and mutually established control relationships, form the genesis of the roles and tasks that people set out for themselves, expect of other people, as well as of the objects and spaces that endow legibility to our surroundings. The various roles that each individual plays reflect his/her values and attitudes[1] and those of society. Analogous to the multiplicity of status, each individual has a complex repertory of roles.[2]
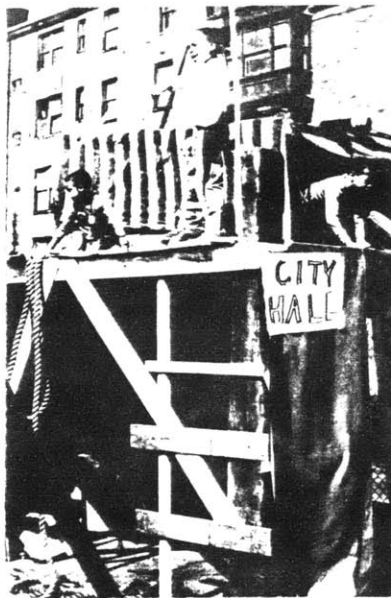
Fig.2.6.1   Conformity, conflict and creativity?

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[1] as also his attitudes about society's values and attitudes.
[2] Heiss, New York 1981.

Similarly, buildings and spaces are also perceived to have roles as society and individuals interpret them. Based on a complex set of attitudinal and informational constructs, people endow their environment, in whole or in parts, with a 'should do' or 'should be' role. According to Zurcher, this notion of 'should' comes from,

> . . . expectations associated with established and recognized roles, with roles in informal and atypical situations, and with the person's own self-concept and inclinations.[1]
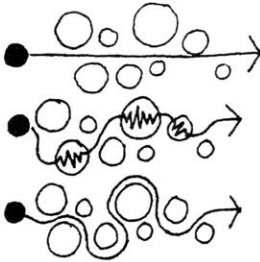
Role playing essentially involves conformity, conflict, and creativity. It also involves expectations about each of these three states of role playing. Our urban environment is as much a collective outcome of individual and societal role-playing, as the structuring of society. The vernacular helps give expression to these roles assigned to places and settings through the roles assigned to social and political institutions. Within the confines of
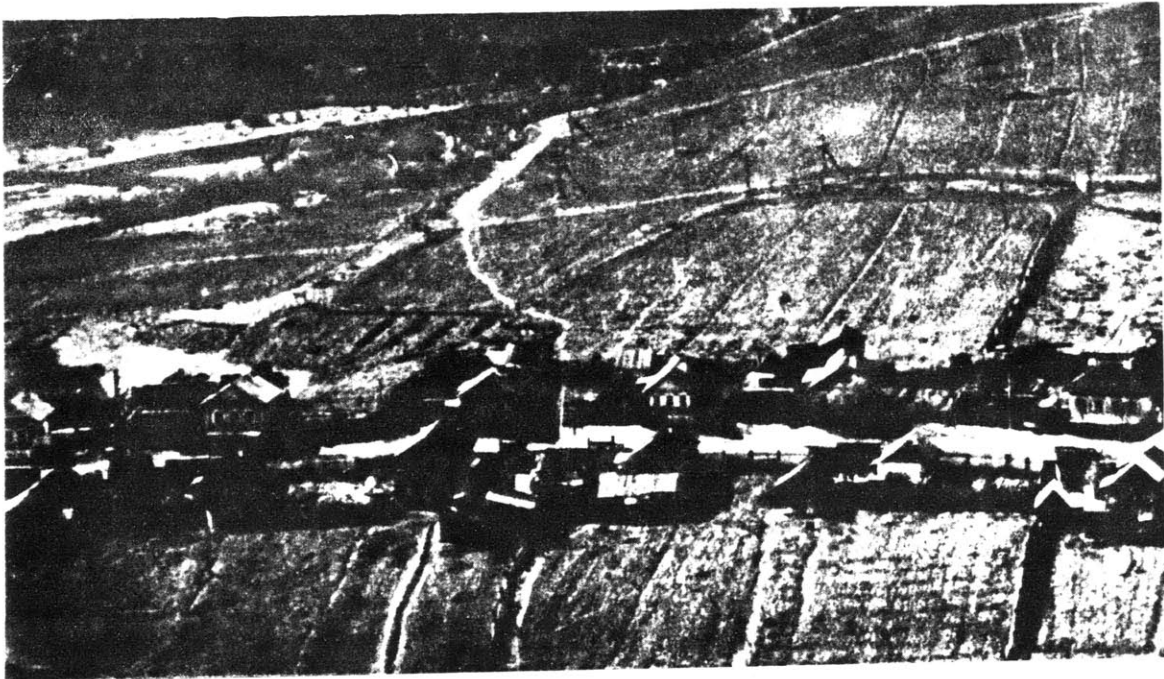
Fig.2.6.2 *A farm village in Siberia, Russia is laid out on characteristic collective lines. Peasants can grow crops for themselves on plots just behind their houses. A relationship between lifestyle, control, roles, and the resultant forms and places that is far too transparent compared to the complexity of urban environments.*

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[1] Zurcher, Beverly Hills CA 1983.

this vernacular sensibility, there are built-in overlapping boundaries which define the extent of those realms that are amenable to either conformity, conflict, or creativity. It is only under unusual circumstances that these boundaries are transgressed. The Watergate crisis and President Nixon's perceived part in the drama that unfolded overturned role-expectations drastically, beyond the limits within which conflict could have been accommodated creatively, or overlooked. Similarly, extreme conformity may induce role conflict too, causing monotony and disinterest. This supports the built in capacity of role-expectations to accommodate a reasonable dose of conflict.

Let us use the example of a typical bazaar, to illustrate some of the dynamics of role. The bazaar serves the function of various roles for various people and groups. It combines its commercial
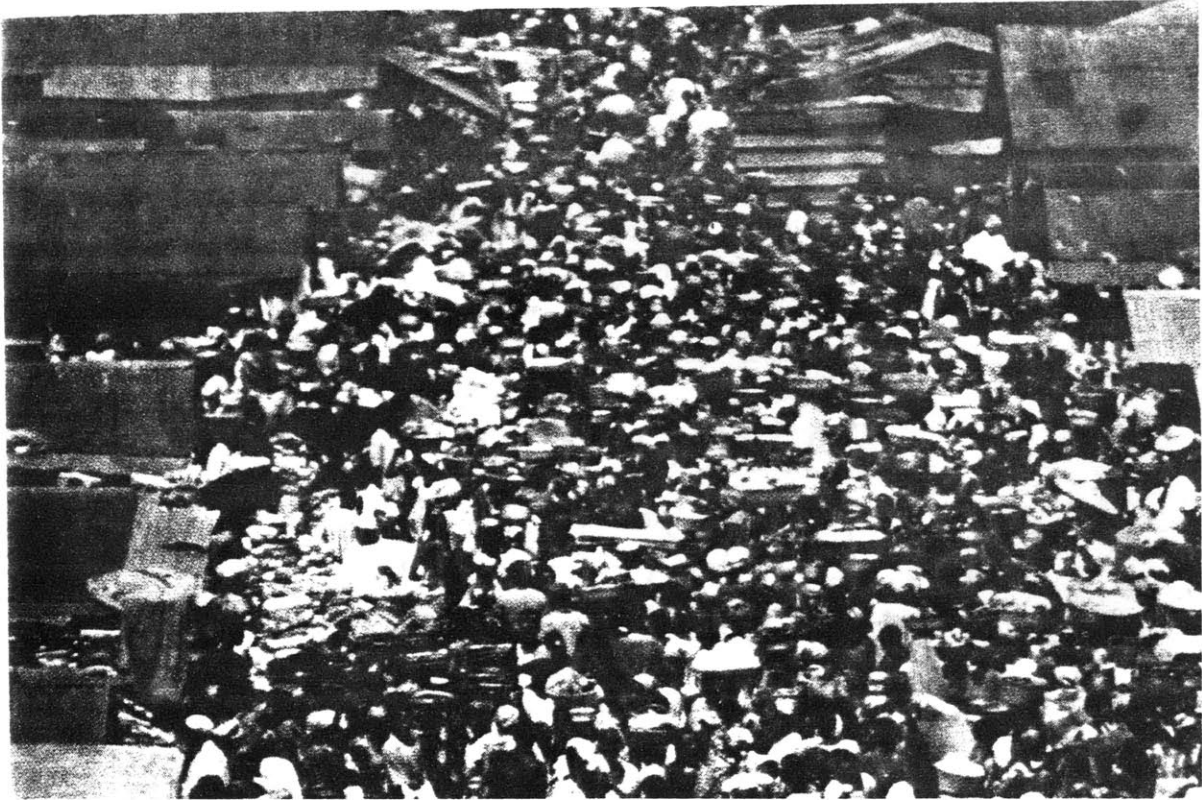
Fig.2.6.3 *Teeming market in Kumasi, Ghana. Role multiplicity, the bustling activity, the frenetic bargaining, and occasionally the idyllic pedestriamor the sedentary observer.*

role as a place for shopping, commercial activity, business and trade with its social role as a place for meeting, recreation, discussion, retreat, observation etc. . Let us consider a microscopic situation, that of a small retailer of miscellaneous goods, whose shop fronts the main thoroughfare in a bazaar. From general issues of location, physical appearance, and purpose, to specifics, such as shopkeeper's demeanor, his/her clothes, appearance of other people in the shop (customers, friends of the proprietor and others), manner in which wares are displayed etc., all inform us of ways in which roles are being played out. For the most part, we see conformity, although conflict does surface every now and then.
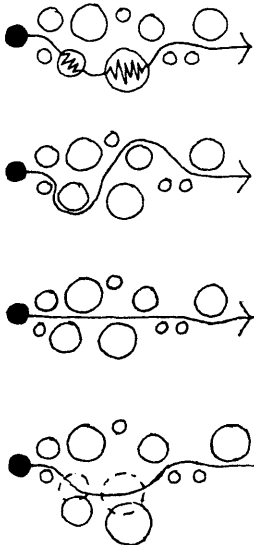
Conflict is either dealt with in the form of a creative redefinition of role, or by suppression, which denies the particular conflict any scope for further expression,[1] or even by the perpetuation of the conflict situation until it is absorbed into the prevalent framework of role-expectation and assessment. Conflict could arise from deviation in role-playing, initiated by anyone or anything that is a participant in the socio-physical environment. The offensive customer, the reticent and uncooperative shopkeeper, the shop as an active clubhouse for local stalwarts, the presence of unusual or unexpected wares, an unusual spatial organization, a conflicting external appearance, maybe some of the sources which give rise to role conflict. The subject-person who experiences the conflict can redefine the role creatively, based on information he/she perceives from the conflict situation. For instance if the reticent and uncooperative shopkeeper happens to be mute and deaf, and if this comes to the attention of the frustrated customer, creative role definition takes over and the response of the customer thereafter accommodates the restructured role in her subsequent interactions, both verbal and otherwise.

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[1] this can also result in creative redefinition of roles.

Our perceptions, expectations, and evaluation of the urban environment, as an active crucible for our actions, is rendered by notions of role conformity, conflict, and creativity. Those components which in some combination make up our surroundings are, like the shopkeeper in the previous example, physically mute and deaf. Yet we are constantly shaping our experience through a never ending series of role expectations and evaluations. Conflict, and creativity, are as much a part of this interaction as any other.

An interesting instance is the case of the naïve young village lad, who was on his first visit to the city, in the early days of the tramcar. His urban companion, while showing him around the city, decided to amuse himself at the expense of his villager friend. As they reached the main road they saw a tramcar approaching. The words "High Court", was clearly marked out indicating the tramcar's destination. The rural friend was highly intrigued by this strange vehicle, and on questioning his urban friend was told that this was the highest hall of justice in the city. The village bumpkin, who had been to the village school, knew how to read and had no difficulty in accepting this rationale. As an example of creative role redefinition, this is exemplary. Every time the boy saw the tramcar pass by, he embellished and rearticulated his existing notions of what the High Court 'should be' and 'should do', with what he understood the tramcar to do differently. Along with role-redefinition, there was also role-definition since there were some aspects of tramcar operation which he could not interpret meaningfully in association with the functioning of the High Court, which, in turn, he did not understand altogether either. These he merely added on to his role-expectations of the High Court. The village lad's creativity was finally put to its greatest test when he got a job in another city, where another friend, more sympathetic than the earlier one, introduced him to the High Court building in that city, immobile, the classical courthouse.
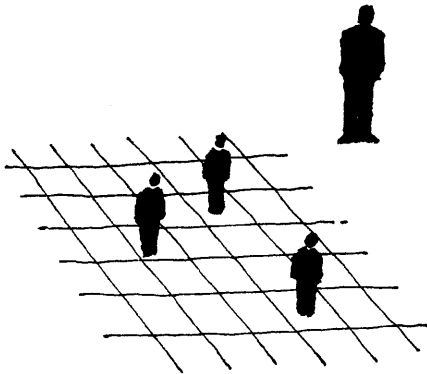
Task is a consequence of role. In order to conform, conflict, alter, or create role expectations, either for oneself or for another, tasks have to be undertaken. Tasks may not eventually support initial role confirmations that were expected of them. In the context of interpreting urban vernaculars, and processes which either form part of, or act upon the vernacular, two very different sets of roles must be recognized and evaluated. The first is that of the participant and the second that of the organizer. The organizer provides the rules, the framework, and the referees who must monitor the game or the participatory process. I find the specialists situation commensurate with this role. The participants must play the game, or merely participate with an intention to remain within the framework set up, conforming with rules. Once the game or the process gets under way, the organizers have limited control over the proceedings. There are some interesting dynamics at play, the organizers have certain expectations of themselves and that of the participants, the participants have similar expectations. The organizers are naturally the ones who have greater control over the rules and the framework. The participants have greater control of the game once the game gets under way. The organizers can only call a foul when rules have been disregarded or flouted, they have no control over the performance of each participant operating within the legal boundaries. Sometimes they are also unable to spot irregularities as the game progresses. The rules of the game must accommodate the interests of the participants, otherwise rules are bound to be flouted, and anomalies set up. Eventually the organizers have to recast their framework and their rules, and consequently roles and/or tasks are redefined. Castells illustrates this when he writes of,

> . . . the institutionalization of socially dominant interests, (because of which) major innovations in the city's role, meaning, structure tend to be the outcome of grassroots mobilization (one set of participants) and demands.[1]

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[1] Castells, London 1983; paranthesis are mine.

Both the participants and the organizers are limited in their respective roles. Sometime they work towards different ends, sometimes they misinterpret each other, sometimes they even refuse to acknowledge the existence of the other group. Castells writes of new frameworks and rules emerging from among the ranks of the participants as they play. Comparing political systems with social movements, he writes,

> Therefore, to some extent it (the political system) institutionalizes some forms of social domination and accepts the rules of bargaining within such forms. At the other end of the scale, social movements exist, develop, and relate to civil society, and are not necessarily limited to, or bound by, the rules of the game and the institutionalization of dominant values and norms.[1]

This outlines the broad structure within which roles are defined and carried out through tasks. Over time, this process either maintains or initiates change in the urban vernacular.

2.7   FORM AND PLACE

From the province that generally remains the privilege of sociologists, i.e. of attitude, lifestyle, control and role in human society, it seems appropriate at this point, to approach the realm of forms and places. The architecture of forms and places, of an urban physicality, of the city[2] is the cummulative outcome of semi, and non-physical realities. These include technological processes and economic factors, but above all, as Manuel Castell points out, these factors and the physicality of the city is determined largely by,

> . . . the social process through which humankind appropriates space and time and constructs a social organization, relentlessly challenged by the production of new values and the emergence of new social interest.[3]

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[1] Castells, London 1983.

[2] I am using the phrase 'architecture of the city' as Rossi defines it 'in a positive and pragmatic sense, as a creation inseparable from civilized life and the society in which it is manifested'; Rossi, Cambridge MA 1986.

[3] Castells, London 1983.

The conception of an urban vernacular is the documentation of this social process in all its perceivable forms. The vernacular grows out of an interpretation of an analytical and dynamic record which traces the story of the numerical 'majority' in human society. It absorbs every sphere of human influence, indeed it has to; for in such a story, inter relationships are too delicate to separate altogether. As Lynch writes, definability is a greater tool than is definition,

> We do not seek an absolute one-to-one correspondance between form and society; we don't want to live in a goldfish bowl. . . We want definable elements rather than defined ones, complex connections, regions remaining to be explored, and some freedom to camouflage.[1]

From the perspective of this study too, I shall attempt to deal with some of these inter relationships, however my orientation will favor a concern with the physical elements that constitute the urban environment. The statics and dynamics of forms and place will be evaluated as an outcome of vernacular sentiment, as reflected by convention.

Fig.2.7.1   *Even in these indistinguished prefabricated factory built housing projects in Moscow, it is difficult to divorce the container from the content.*

[1] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985.

Form can be described in many ways, from a dimensional characteristic to a relationship of elements[1] or even as a question of 'how' versus 'what', or of form as a way of containing the content,[2] or is it the contained? However, the dichotomy between the container and the contained is dubious, since the container often determines what the contents are.[3] The form of a particular coffee bean may tell us a great deal about its content, which would include its composition, its taste, its history, its origins (a remote coffee plantation in Brazil?), the delicate blends that come from it, its price etc. . Change the coffee bean to a Cuban variety, and the cognoscenti will see an entirely different content.

> They (form and content) are inseparable. Form is formulation - the turning of content into a material entity, rendering a content accessible to others. . . Form is the very shape of content.[4]

Form is integrated with the content through meaning. Meaning, in essence, enables form to be one with content. It is also important to note at this point that meaning evolves, as we have discussed earlier, from associations and use; not from the isolated physical manifestation.
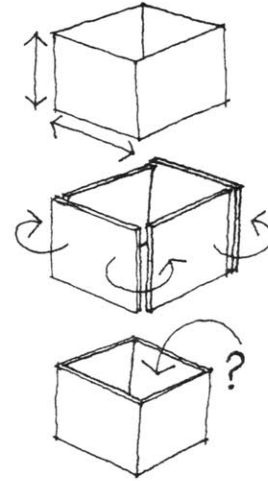
Fig.2.7.2   Fig.2.7.3   Fig.2.7.4
How do we ascribe meaning to each of these three objects/settings?

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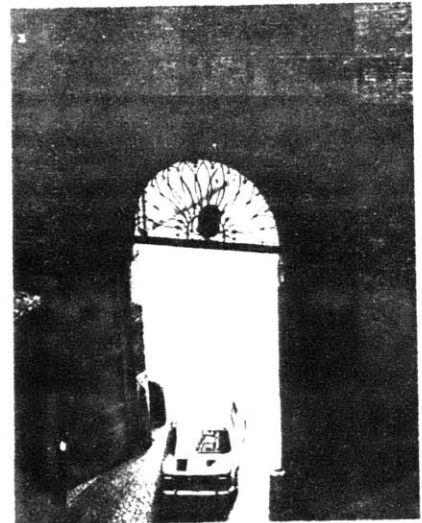
[1] Habraken, Cambridge MA 1983.
[2] Goodman mentions this definition of form, although he does not endorse it; Goodman, Indianapolis IN 1978.
[3] also refer to the discussion of style, under 'lifestyle'; *ibid.* pp.
[4] Shahn, Cambridge MA 1957.

Under the fond illusion that meaning resides in the object, (specialists, architects etc.) play an esoteric game.[1]

Meaning does appear to reside in the object for the selected few who have developed a rich vocabulary of associations with exclusive object forms. Considering the rather simplistic example cited above, it is not difficult to perceive that form, in fact, becomes a part of the figurative content. Consequently, they begin to say something of each other, i.e. form of content and inversely content of form. The consummation of this mutual dialogue results in meaning.

A city is rather a complicated version of this two way osmosis. What is the content of the city, what is its form, and what is the meaning that is the result of this communion? The moment we attempt to answer the question we find ourselves in grave difficulty. The distinction is at best nebulous and dependent upon the frame of reference we set for ourselves. Lynch refers to the separation of physical form and cultural content as *non sequitur*,

> City forms, their actual function, and the ideas and values that people attach to them make up a single phenomenon. Therefore the history of city form cannot be written just by tracing the diffusion of the rectangular street grid pattern. Peking and Chicago are not even superficially alike.[2]

Form cannot be seen isolated from the daily experiences of people, their values and attitudes, their goals and objectives, their expectations and aspirations, as well as the dynamics of economics, politics and society. Form perceived for form's sake, can only be an elitist preoccupation, embellished by encoding those forms as symbols, legible to only to the members of the cliqué. When considering form, should we ignore the people and the way they endow meaning to the environment? When considering content, can we exclude the arrangement of

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[1] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985.
[2] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985.

physical objects in space? Lynch echoes this uncertainty in the following lines,

> The fundamental problem is to decide what the form of a settlement consists of: solely the inert physical things? or the living organisms too? the actions people engage in? the social structure? the ecological system?the control of space and its meaning?. . . [1]

He mentions earlier, that the 'physical environment' is taken to be the common reference to settlement form. Indeed it is. However, in support of Lynch's later argument, the scope of this word must be enlarged to encompass much more than the 'spatial pattern of the large inert, permanent, physical objects in a a city.'[2] Form (in reference to a physical setting), considering it absorbs both the way we do things and the result of the work, is essentially a commentary on the making of place.

The earlier sections in this chapter may appear to approach the realm of strict sociological discourses; they are however integral to a formal understanding of place. Meaning gives rise to place. Among the multitudinous senses in which the word 'place' is used, we find in the dictionary one that illustrates place as 'to identify by connecting with the proper circumstances.'[3] Form represents the mechanics and the relationships that goes into the development of place. For instance, in describing and analyzing the form of Trafalgar Square in London, one could well speak of it in terms of its physical appearance, its use, its historical development, its cultural setting, the economics and the politics that are associated with it. All of this, in terms of the Square itself, as well as in relation to its larger setting. The same could be said for the city form of London. Essentially a task that involves the construction of a whole from numerous fragmented parts, and a subsequent reconstruction of the parts from an understanding of the whole. Form is, in a sense, the objectification of human

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[1] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985.
[2] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985.
[3] Random House Dictionary, New York 1980.

action. Form is also perceived subjectively, as in 'Ah! what a wondrous form', but the reference remains entrapped within the relatively objectified oeuvre of subjective action, in this case maybe a building, a painting, a dance. . . In short, any object or attribute thereof, phenomenon or practise that can be identified and expressed has form. One can understand form in many ways, as in a sunrise, in the movement of a gazelle, in the administration of a business, in the works of Botticelli, Liszt, Eliot as also in the ideologies of DeGaulle and Kennedy. Poetry has form, so does chemistry.

'Place', on the other hand, symbolizes the total experience of a physical setting. It includes sensations of real-perception and memory. Every setting is a different 'place' for every individual, since each person's perception is colored by the different meanings he, or she, attaches to these locations. Place is made in the minds of people. There is both agreement and disagreement about the sense of each place, some of these are explicit, others implicit. The hope cannot be entertained that this notion of place making can be comprehended comprehensively since it includes a lot of the stuff that makes each of us unique. That does not however, preclude an understanding that enables us to respect this individuality while at the same time appreciating the collective dynamics. Place, in a communal sense, is the way humans collectively conceptualize a physical setting as a meaningful part of life. It reflects the values, attitudes, and lifestyles that people share among them as a common denominator, a framework to rest their respective individualities on. It should inform the development of form, more often than not, it does, but in a manner that is inadequate and piecemeal.
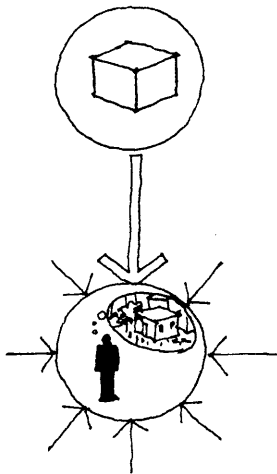
How can these elements that contribute to a definition of urban vernaculars, be articulated through the study of types? Prior discussions in this text, have forwarded the 'type' as a format which could be adopted to study the ideas presented in this

chapter. Contemporary cities boasts of parallel vernaculars, which are distinct enough to be read as independent entities, yet woven together like a patchwork quilt, in a fashion that renders it a part of the same urban fabric. In such a situation type offers a valuable methodological tool to understand basic variations.

The selection of types could be based on various kinds of criteria, and this is the most significant consideration that must be tackled at the outset. In dealing with the urban vernacular, we could use one of numerous prescriptions to create types, e.g.buildings, people, activities, streets etc., or any combination of these. Further, each of these approaches can be tackled from entirely different standpoints. For example, if buildings are considered, one could look at utility/usage, condition, size, construction technique, details, style and numerous other attributes which characterize buildings as of being one type versus another. It is indeed difficult to determine a suitable criteria for the determination of types, one which presents a critical picture of urban life and brings into relief the essential differences that articulate these parallel vernaculars.

The urban vernacular may appear to be an arcane notion, wrapped up in these mysterious folds of attitudes and values. Yet beneath the muddy surface lies a skeletal framework, one which runs deep into the ethos of a people and a place and forms the grid by which life is read, understood, and ordered. A great many of these vernacular values lie implicit, while a majority of those that do not, have become fragmented and appropriated by different specializations with no common meeting ground. This is not a treatise on the perpetuation of archaic notions of right and wrong. It is essentially an attempt at understanding society as one would a human body prior to major surgery; the limits of tolerance can be appreciated, the complexities of tissue matching can be understood, the effects of mutation can be anticipated. Our urban environments cannot be administered within a 'value-free' or non evaluative framework, in fact both

better understood.[1] Vernacular attitudes, lifestyles, control-relationships, roles and tasks, must all inform the way in which place making is articulated. The synthesis of these orders of understanding forms the genesis of a mutually dependent association between urban man and the city. The earlier discussion, of selecting a suitable criteria for determining types that would be pellucid in providing insight into an urban vernacular can be picked up again. The purpose of the 'types' would be to expose the nuances of how urban people articulate their lives in urban environments. The criteria adopted for selecting the types must support this purpose and will differ from city to city.

The meaning of a vernacular for the city lies in the assimilation of a pluralistic sensibility that is shared by the majority. It is essential to comprehend the inherent relationships, irrespective of whether we are to conform in our actions, or ride in on a wave of revolutions. Problem solving too, involves a complex process, there is the quantitative and qualitative dichotomy which is sometimes amplified in this process, as either an emphasis on one or the other. The perception of a problem as a combined quantitative and qualitative dilemma may enlighten the way housing is provided in Tunisia, squatters are dealt with in Bombay, or megadevelopments handled in Manhattan. A consideration of urban vernaculars will not directly provide the answers, however it will enable a relatively greater comprehension of the problems that are faced and the solutions offered. In many ways the virtues of appreciating this vernacular as well as the essential gap in our understanding of it, are brought to focus in the following passage by John Berger,

> It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we *see* the sun set. We *know* that the earth is turning away

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[1] for a more comprehensive debate on this subject refer to "On Making Values Explicit"; Wirth, Chicago 1964.

from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight.[1]

We abound in knowledge, yet more often than not we do not 'see', at least as well as we ought to. The lack of resolution between what we see and what we know colors much of what we do. This is more so when as architects, planners, economists and politicians, we are required to impose what we know on those whose worlds we do not see. The exploration of urban vernaculars could provide us the eyes through which to embark upon an understanding which would resolve this disparity.

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[1] Berger, London 1987.

CHAPTER III

CHANGE, VERNACULAR AND REGULATION

THE PROCESS OF URBANIZATION

3.1 CHANGE

> The World's a scene of changes, and to be Constant, in Nature
> were inconstancy.
>
> Abraham Cowley
> *Inconstancy, 1647*[1]

Cowley echoes what two millenia before his time Heraclitus had pronounced, 'all is flux and nothing stays still.'[2] Except the notion of flux, that is. Cowley's seventeenth century erudition on change can be embroidered with a footnote which highlights the most striking feature of change today, it's pace. Nehru spoke of it, Wordsworth wrote of it before it's time, Dylan sang about it.[3]

> . . . the world is born again each day in a light that is always new.[4]

Never has Camus' innocent phrase assumed such startling proportions. The spirit of his words remain as resolute as it ever was, it does however ring true today in a pseudo-literal sense almost as much as it does figuratively. In fact, the inherent optimism buried in his poetic lines also underlines the somewhat popular and misleading impression that change is, *ipso facto*, good for mankind.[5] The imperturbable Chinese fortune cookie says,'There are big changes for you, but you will be happy'; counter balancing this assumption that all which falls under the rubric of change is genial. The human race has snowballed the process we knew as progress, and races on undaunted, leaving

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[1] Taylor, ed., New York 1984.

[2] Heraclitus (c.540-475 B.C.), from Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Book IX; Taylor, New York 1984.

[3] Nehru, Jawaharlal. "Credo" (New York Times; Sept.7, 1958); William Wordsworth. *Ode to Duty* (1807); Bob Dylan. *For the times they are a-changin'.*(1963)

[4] Camus, Albert. The Myth of Sisyphus (1942); in Taylor, New York 1984.

[5] Shugarman, Toronto 1974.

in its wake rapid and indelible change. 'Coping' has suddenly gained pride of place in the vocabulary of our minds. This labored subsistence is similar in many ways to the paradoxical image of a man running wearing his coat-tails. He is running after the very outfit he dons, the coat-tails. After watching him for a moment we realize his surrealistic and ridiculous plight, his speed and predicament denudes him in mind, while in body he remains comfortably attired. Although he is fully robed, his mind is seized by the drama of the pursuit and his only thought is to clothe his already clothed frame. Material change is speeding past our intellectual capabilities to size up and steer this frenetic energy in a manner truly profitable. There is an yearning for. .

. . the messianic brashness of novelty and advance. .[1]

. . that permeates our very existence and overshadows the competing yen for the ways of times 'ere gone.

This alacrity for change has distorted our traditional notion of time and has infiltrated our cultural makeup. The realm of the 'urban' epitomizes what appears to be this newfound freedom. We seem to be ever leaning forward in anticipation, expecting change as an everyday occurence, waiting for the sensational in the
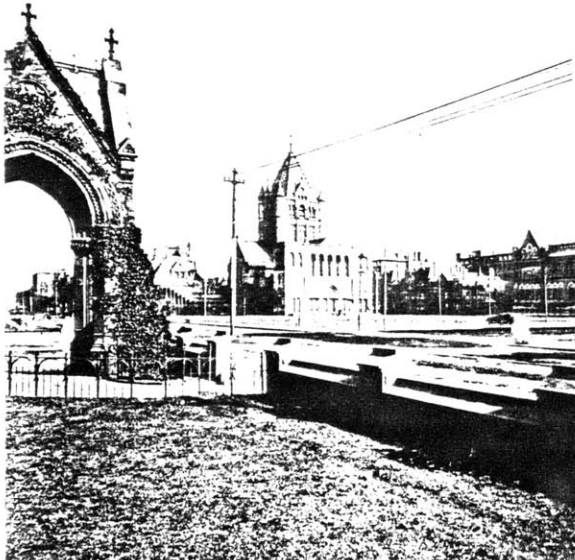
Fig.3.1.1   Copley Square, Boston in 1896.
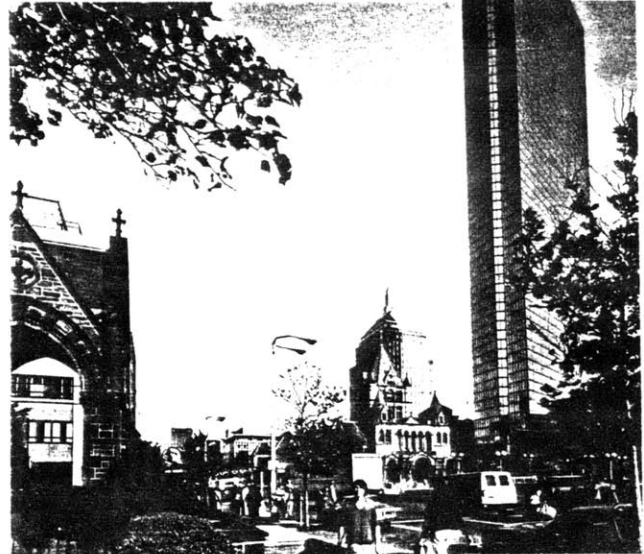
Fig.3.1.2   Copley Square, Boston in 1979.

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[1] Smith, London 1976.
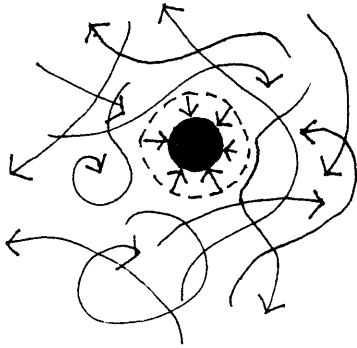
morning news, the startling in technological wizardry, and the transient in everything else. It is only when we focus on our little worlds that we welcome the established order and a strong sense of continuity.

> Change may today be a dominant concern of many people, but social conservatism remains a powerful force. People continue to cling to their conceptions and modes of behavior, even when the conditions which fostered them have long since disappeared.[1]

From within our protected citadels we like to watch the world transform before our eyes, selectively condemning and applauding this startling metamorphosis. This hermitage under the shelter of stability protects us from the apprehensions of various threats inherent in change.[2] The substantive predominance of change over stability, it can be argued, is a phenomenon that largely syncopates modern society. As Smith concludes, we cannot assume that the present near-ubiquitous change is typical of all times,

> . . . we may not infer the historical ubiquity of change from its present striking predominance.[3]

The stage upon which these forces of change preponderate has always been, and still remains, that institution which many will argue is mankinds most complex invention, the city. It is in fact one, over which he has relatively little conscious or premediated control. Yet, aside from the vagaries of the climes, it is man alone who conducts the urban symphony (or cacophony as some might like to consider it) through action. The city is considered to be a rather powerful locomotive of change. Nowhere is the disparity between what our feet does on the accelerator and our hand does on the steering wheel of change, perceived more keenly. The rate (speed) and control (steering) of change forms

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[1] Smith, London 1976.
[2] commentary on *Beyond the Stable State*, Donald A. Schon (Penguin: Harmondsworth England; 1971); from Strasser & Randall, London/Boston 1981.
[3] Smith, London 1976.

the central relationship in this case. A zealous disposition towards change is engaged by the sensation of speed, often a heady temptation especially so if the underlying engine has the capacity for it. Lynch writes,

> There is an excitement in impermanence; evanescence is a moving thing.[1]

So much so that we may even run the risk of future shock.[2] However, the notion of speed and steering are critically interwoven, the treatment of one without a feeling for the other is utterly meaningless. Any action on the accelerator defines the nature of the steering even if the drivers are endowed with different skill levels; the faster we go the greater the dexterity required to stay on course. Conversely, our steering ability determines how fast we can go. If mobility is indeed so important for mankind, there are two reasonable alternatives which may be adopted to render the journey safe and pleasant. Either we learn how to steer better, or we step gingerly on the accelerator. Even better, a little of both in different dosage, based on the situation at hand, could work wonders. Henry George issues a caution in support of some sort of a balance between brake, accelerator and steering wheel; between continuity, change and progress.

> There is great danger in reckless change, but there is greater danger in blind conservatism.[3]

The driver's understanding of himself, his vehicle, as well as the road are critical factors in establishing this balance.

Attention can only be devoted to piloting change, if impermanence is located within a matrix of relatively stable conceptions. Change, therefore, is cocooned within a cortex of constancy. Shugarman illustrates this notion when he writes,

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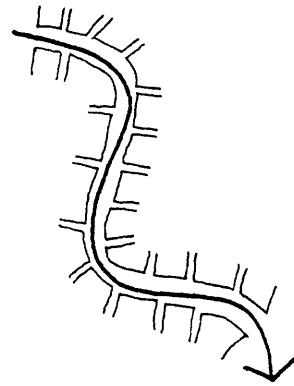
[1] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985.

[2] a social disease inflicted upon people who are unable to cope with the strain of permanent novelty in times when traditional patterns of behavior are too often inappropriate or disfunctional; Toffler, New York 1970

[3] George, Henry. Social Problems (1883); in Taylor, New York 1984.

Fig.3.1.3 *View of Manhattan from a dump in Queens. What is change and what is perceived as constancy, depends largely on our frames of reference. Does the Chrysler building and the United Nations Headquarters represent change, or constancy, in an ever changing skyline?*

What appears at first glance to be a radical change in life-styles are, on reflection, examples of the way in which established norms, in the sense of overriding values and habits, subsume, redirect, and co-opt unconventional(ity). . [1]

The ability to distinguish changeable elements from those that are relatively changeless, is based on a metaphysical perception of reality. This is true of both change which is orchestrated by rhythmic repitition, as in heartbeats, breathing, the seasons etc., or that which is progressive and irreversible, as in growth and decay.[2] Change can also be conceptualized and differentiated as that which takes place *within* a given structure, framework or pattern, and that which is *of* the structure itself.[3] Structures and sub-structures are determined essentially by our frames of reference. A *coup de grace* that overthrows a reigning democratic power, certainly changes the prevalent national

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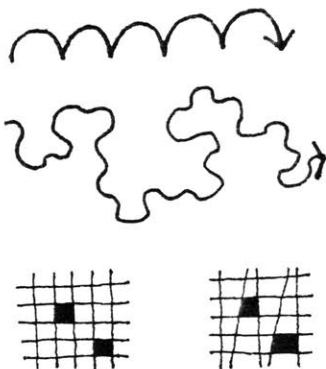
[1] Shugarman, Toronto 1974.
[2] refer Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985 for a discourse at greater length.
[3] Shugarman, Toronto 1974.

political structure, yet it takes an upheaval of greater proportion to upset a cartel of nations, which forms a larger order structure. in any discourse on change, these distinctions act as flexible markers more than as statements of empirical truth, to outline the frame of reference which delineates the dividing line between permanence and change.

As much as anything else, the city is caught up in establishing a fabric which brings into relief both permanence and change. The template of change and relative stability is concurrent at various levels of perception and time-consciousnesses. Change in the city is essentially a process of diverse and multiple dynamics which operate within a matrix of synchronous flux. Whether we view the past month, year, decade, century, or millenia, we shall always find elements that change and those that don't.
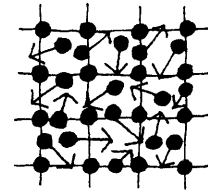
Everything that changes is not always sensed as change. The complete renovation and reuse of the interior of an office building without any accompanying changes to the exterior will not be perceived as change by the average person viewing the building. Nor is all that we see essentially included in the realm of our changing world. We absorb less than we see, and remember even less than we absorb. We structure our world much 'like the contents of a catch-all drawer in great grandmother's house'[1], putting together fragments to construct and capture the œuvré of our times. Change is perceived and consequently ordered by the framework with which we discern reality. Since memory is the most important device in building this framework, it is evident that the perception of change is a selective process, subject to the vagaries of our mnemonic abilities. Informing this selection is the schemata, both individual and social, which is made up of values, attitudes, and lifestyles, as well as the syntax of control, roles, and places. For example, the prevalent notion of the role of the media in society can be instrumental in prioritizing certain issues

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[1] Goetzmann, *National Geographic,* January 1988.

Fig.3.1.4   Stanley, the only major town in Falklands.   Fig.3.1.5   Kowloon in Hong Kong.

Two essentially different worlds, both urban, yet half way across the globe. Could the perception of change and continuity be the same in each of these two places?

in the perception of change. Sometimes, it is change itself that, in turn, alters our perception of the world. The advent of the television, for instance, altered the way in which we would subsequently conceive of communication and perceive the role of the media.

Change is viewed much in the same way as the past and the future, that is, from the standpoint of the present . . .

> . . .a present of things past, a present of things present, a present of things future.[1]

The experiences of the past, and the aspirations for the future are expressed in any given present through the operating body of social perceptions. These perceptions articulate the degree of order in changing worlds and consequently the extent of change in the ordered world. Lynch expresses the relationship adequately in the following quote,

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[1] Saint Augustine, trans. R S Pine-Coffin, Harmondsworth 1961.

The past, present, and future, then, are created together and influence one another. Their span and content are affected by external factors such as the stability and 'success' of the past experience, the symbolic security of the perceived environment, the pressures of the present, or the reasonableness of the future expectations but also by internal habits of mind, by symbolic activities, by the sense of self, and by the strength of motivation.[1]

The perception of the city must be enlightened by this notion of change. A summation of a kinetic present, embodying the received wisdom of the past, to inform the vision of the future is the primary purpose of the urban vernacular. How can change be conceptualized empirically from a standpoint of this temporally dynamic present? It is clear that a precise defintion is questionable considering the vast and varied phenomenon that is change. However, a workable definition would facilitate our task and aid in establishing a tangible ground for study. The process of change can be articulated only if it is perceptible either through observation or analysis. From this understanding we can discern three salient characteristics of change. First, change is orchestrated around *events*, even though events themselves do not necessarily constitute change. Oftentimes a single perceivable change is analyzed as the outcome of an entire series of events. Sometimes this concatenation resists analytical dissection prior to the actual occurence of the entire narrative. This multiple event change is different in nature from the one-time, single event change that is perceivable on its own merits. Second, change is often defined by the perception of *difference* over time that cannot be attributed to an identifiable sequence or any single event. The difference can be discerned largely as a result of a change in patterns or units. As Smith writes,

> . . . the motion of patterns in time and space has resulted in another pattern, or at any rate another form of that pattern.[2]

Some form of subliminal process is the key here, distinct from socially significant events. For example in the case of rural-urban migration, each person's decision to move to the city

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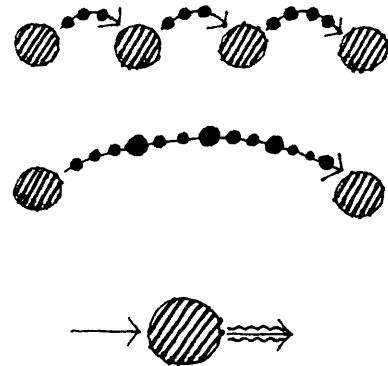
[1] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985
[2] Smith, London 1976.

connstitutes a personal event of tremendous import to the individual, yet, when accounted collectively migration suddenly appears to have been a process, in many ways larger than life. This scattered, incoherent and unorganized mass exodus is registered as an outcome of social process rather than something directly woven around a chain of events. In retrospective analysis, such changes can be attributed to collective phenomena and causal factors but not articulated singularly as a sequence of linear events. Of course no change is purely a result of a string of events, nor is any change exclusively the outcomes of social processes stimulated by undifferentiable causes. The third quality of change, is its *temporal* character. Differences, articulated as simple variation between coexisting elements or patterns, as between a car and a bus, do not describe change. Nor does comparison between different, unrelated, phenomenon located in different centuries constitute change. Establishment of temporal continuity is essential in the study of change. A final word on the study of change is that it is largely historical in nature. Change is concerned with sequences, with events, and with processes in a conceptual, spatial, and temporal continuum, therefore it has to rely on and synthesize relevant historical experience.

For the purpose of this study change can be tentatively defined as events, either singular or in succession, and processes which produce over time, perceivable modification of particular patterns or units, or a replacement of these by other novel patterns and units.

The introduction of vernacular sensibilities call to attention a specific viewpoint in the study of change. In light of all that has been discussed in the earlier chapters, it brings into focus the perception of change as it informs a specific sentience shared by a limited plurality. What would this study of change, as it pertains to the vernacular, tell us about society and its relationship with the environment? Using the earlier metaphor of journey, if

change were motion, an understanding of the vernacular environment would provide us with a knowledge of the vehicle required to traverse the route; it would define the limits of performance, the maximum speed, fuel consumption, engine efficiency of the mechanism; it would inform us of handling, the way the accelerator, the brake and the steering wheel responds to ministrations; it would report the present condition of the vehicle to facilitate judgement; it would afford us vision of the road ahead, enabling direction, route selection, safety and manoeuvre; it would provide us with the benefit of hindsight, in terms of history we would know the chronic problems that could surface under special conditions, the engine freezing, overheating, the loose, rear door coming ajar under excessive jolting; it would enable us, up to a point, to indicate to others our intentions, so as to avoid conflict or collision. Beyond this, the vernacular would also enable us to construct the portfolio of the driver. Who is the driver and who the passenger? How does her skills and experiences equip her to conduct the journey? How does she deal with crises? Do different drivers negotiate different routes or different parts of the journey? The deconstruction of such a peregrination is the task that we are up against. It is only with a working knowledge of this complex relationship that we can begin to use an understanding of the vernacular to deal
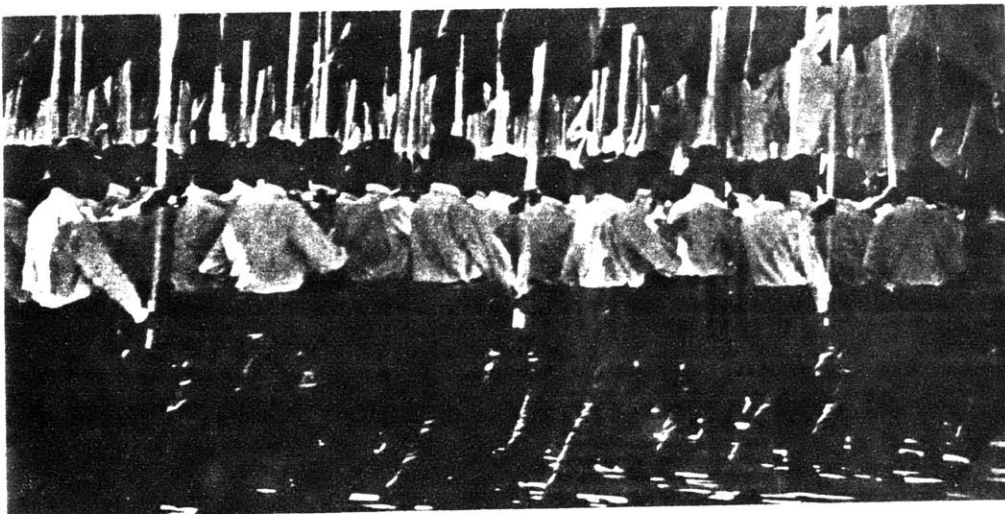
Fig.3.1.6 China's masses, drivers or passengers in the saga of change?

effectively with change as also the manner in which change, in turn, assists in the evolution of what we understand as the urban vernacular.

3.2 CHANGE AND URBAN VERNACULARS

We must keep in mind that this particular study establishes the built environment as the vantage point for analysis. It however perceives the contemporary urban environment through eyes that wear socio-economic, political and cultural lenses and looks across the temporal spectrum of the past, present, and future. Every city is unique in the circumstances and the characteristic mechanisms which propel it across time. Change follow very different patterns and expresses itself uniquely in each city.[1] Discounting the enormity of the task involved in developing a vernacular model for a city, one has to acknowledge that each city may have diverse physiological, psychological, and even pathological profiles.

The analog-model of an urban vernacular developed in the preceeding section may be a rather simplistic metaphorical analysis, yet it conveys the essential components and relationships which must be explored and developed. There are three major actors who play a part in shaping change. The first is the driver, or the propogator, who is often the active initiator of change. The social activist, the politician, the administrator may frequently find themselves in this role. Sometimes, however, those who appear to be the traditional initiators, may only channelise and focus efforts to initiate change by responding to some other force which may be the true, yet invisible initiator. The local leader, spurned to action by the exhortations of his constituency, formalizes a somewhat scattered yet enthusiastic

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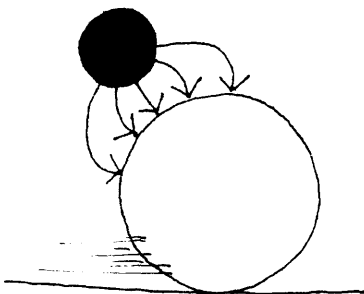
[1] for a discussion refer to Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985; his treatment of urban change in London, Bath, Stoke-on-Trent, Ciudad Guyana and Havana emphasizes the point.

cry for change, claiming the role of the initiator by default. He is the initiator of change, as it is represented within the institutional process; his constituency takes on the role of the actual initiator. The second actor is the passenger, the passive endurer. Traditionally, the peasant, the factory worker, and the middle class clerk, have but little choice to play out this role. Occasionally these groups shed their traditional ennui and take up the mantle of change, more often than not, as radical initiators. The third actor is the vehicle itself, the medium upon which the forces of change act. The medium incorporates the various orders that manifest themselves as vernaculars in cities, i.e., attitudes, lifestyles, control, roles, tasks, forms and places. In my description these three actors may appear to be mutually exclusive, on the contrary, the initiator, the endurer, and the medium are interlinked, they could be said to represent different ingredients in a single cake. Purely for academic interest, let us segregate these three and deal briefly with each of them. We must also remember that the scale of change can be a variable, ranging from the graffiti painted by the six year old on his bathroom wall, to the development of massive master-plan communities. The discussion here will try and address changes that affect and address the interests of collective pluralities.

I shall begin with the initiator, the propogator of change. Although change can be initiated by the slightest of displacements, often sufficiently subtle to evade the analyst's microscope, I shall restrict my pursuit of change upto that point where their causes and effects simply appear to dissipate into apparently disconnected phenomenon. The traditional role of the initiator has always been assigned to some form of authority or dominance. Individuals, groups, institutions, governments, the media, economic classes, could all be, in one way or another, typical progenitors of change. The ability to initiate change is essentially a function of power. It is also dependent on a motive or a desire to alter the existing in some form, as Lynch writes,
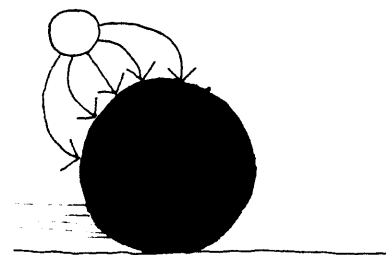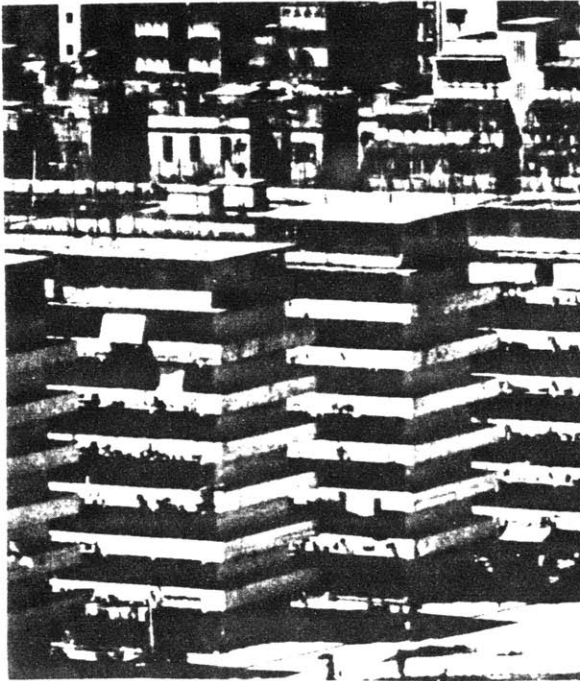
Fig.3.2.1   Resettlement colony in Kowloon, Hong
Kong, a case of change in the phyiscal
environment brought about by ttraditional
initiators, the government.
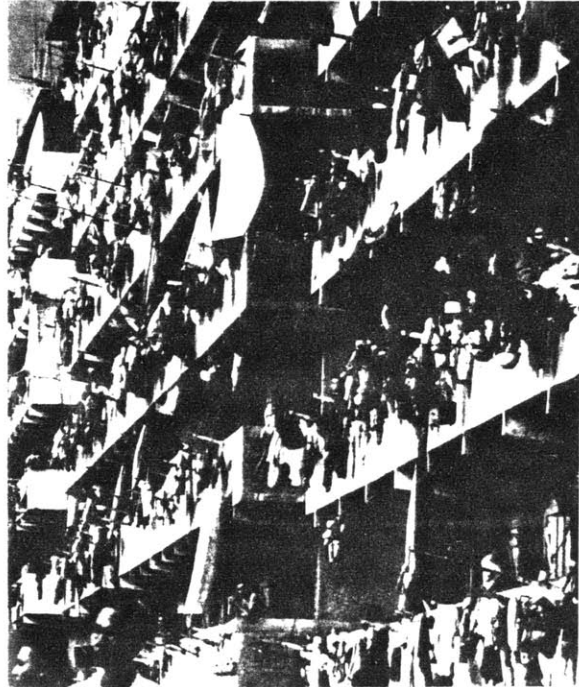
Fig.3.2.2   Low income housing blocks in Hong Kong.
Change of a different order in the physical
environment, one that has been spawned
by those who are normally the endurers in
society.

> . . a man who believes in his ability to change events is more
> likely to be able to exert some personal control.[1]

Consequently, it is not always that the traditional initiators, those
in control, that initiate change. From Castells description of the
three kinds of actors in history,

> . . the dominant elite, the creators of a new social order, and
> the rentiers of any social organization. . .[2]

we can discern the traditional initiator (the dominant elité), the
deviant form of the initiator (the creators; in contemporary social
theory they are not necessarily considered 'deviant'), and the
rentiers who indulge in the *free-rider*[3] dilemma. Each group has a

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[1] Lynch, Cambridge MA 1985.

[2] Castells, London 1983.

[3] The free-rider is explained by Olson as, "The individual member of the
typical large organization. . . : his own efforts will not have a noticeable
effect on the situation of his organization, and he can enjoy any
improvements brought about by others whether or not he has worked in
support of his organization."
Olson, Cambridge MA 1965.

certain potential to initiate change by the conventional exercise of dominant will, by challenging the status quo through social innovation and militant extremism, or by active or passive forms of social protest, respectively. Conflict is not a necessary precondition of change. Often changes move into place gracefully without evoking strong responses from anyone. The creation of a New Delhi, or a strategic gentrification of the Italian neighborhood in Boston are examples of socio-physical change ushered in at the bequest of the dominant elité. Certain kinds of movements spawned by groups which are not really representative of either the dominated nor the dominant class also herald change, as in the case of the Sikh extremist movement in Punjab, the Contra effort in Nicaragua etc. . They act, more often than not, in their own interests. These interests often originate from the discontent of the masses, yet somewhere along the line, circumstances divorce them from their initial goal. The dominated classes can also change the status quo as is evident from the *satyagraha*[1] movement spearheaded under Gandhi's leadership in pre-independent India, the Palestinian protests in the Gaza Strip, the revolution that started with the storming of the Bastillés, as well as movements which may not be as far reaching as these in their impact, but may enjoy an equally committed endorsement from the masses. Therefore, based on the situation at hand, representatives of each group could occupy the position of the initiator. The dynamics involved in the occupancy of the initiators's position is often rather complicated. As Castells illustrates the classic situation where the initiator and the endurer meet across opposite sides of the fence,

> The political system is aimed at the state, is dependent upon the state, and is a part of the state. Therefore to some extent it institutionalizes some form of social domination and accepts the rules of bargaaining within such forms. At the other end of the scale, social movements exist, develop, and relate to civil society, and are not necessarily limited to, or bound by, the

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[1] the popular Indian word that represents the non violence movement.

rules of the game and the institutionalization of dominant values and norms.[1]

Bargaining between the established status quo and the proponents of social innovation leads us to envisage a situation where the initiator of change through social movements may not necessarily occupy the driver's seat, and the traditional driver/initiator (in this case, political authority) may essentially adopt the stance of the administrator, partial arbiter of judgement, and negotiating partner. The notion of back seat driving adopts a quaint aproppriateness in this situation. Change is initiated by the deviants, and administered by the traditional initiators. The process is characterized by constant negotiation between the two parties. Later, in Chapter VI, we shall see this model of change operating in the unauthorized colonies in Delhi. We can also envisage a situation where authority acts as surrogate, adopting the role of a chauffer in the analog, merely carrying out the wishes of the master who becomes in essence the one who drives the initiator. The Soviet hegemony in Afghanistan and the consequent establishment of a puppet regimé, is a good example. So is the role of authority in a 'perfect' democracy. Therefore, restating the case, all three groups mentioned above have varying degrees of access, direct or indirect, to the driver's seat depending on a number of factors. These factors are predetermined to some extent in each city by the stage of social evolution and the overall political framework. These broad categories, of initiator and/or administrator, and free-rider, could describe society as a whole or with respect to specific scenarios and activities. A specific individual or group may occupy different positions at different times under different circumstances. They may find solidarity on specific issues only when aligned in an unconventional manner, as may be the case when the dominant elité chooses to be a back seat driver in order to accomplish certain ends. The initiator is a significant subject for study in the scrutiny of urban vernaculars.

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[1] Castells, London 1983.

The case of the enduring passenger is more interesting than may appear at first glance. What appears to be a free-ride, is often a very expensive ticket in the sense that there is a price to pay. It may be a case of the wrong driver at the helm, or a journey proceeding along an undesirable route, we may even find the so called 'free rider' involved in the unequal task of pushing the vehicle along as the driver attempts to steer. For all that it is worth, the endurer, as long as he remains in his sedentary position, is often resigned to being the passive recipient of the actions taken by the initiator. The individual's mute resignation does not necessarily translate to a voiceless plurality, nor a gross incapacity to affect the course of the sojourn. Lisa Peattie presents the force of this reticence in her book *Planning: Rethinking Ciudad Guyana*,

> . . . (representing) the city as it appeared from the bottom, and
> as a process of historic social change in which the basic force
> at work was the self transforming energy of persons.[1]

Grassroot protests and other social movements are expressions of an audible echo, in response to multitudes of silent cries. In addition, the endurer often inducts change into the system through subtle ministrations which alter established relationships. Squatters, potential vote banks for politicians, often make their presence felt and some of their needs addressed, through social activists and grassroot leaders, without indulging in serious arm-twisting tactics. Each urban scenario offers a different array of endurer types and distribution, as also unique dynamics in the way this body interacts with the reinsman in control.

As we spiral up from the street, to the neighborhood, all the way up to the city the composition of the initiator and the endurer changes. Even the role of individuals, groups and organizations vary with the frame of reference. For instance, the foreman at the

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[1] Peattie, Ann Arbor MI 1987.

factory may be a 'free rider' in the neighborhood where he lives. At his place of work, however, he assumes the role of an initiator, relative to his charge. Laterally too, as we focus on the various spheres of human interest within each zone, initiators often succumb to the role of endurer and vice versa. This horizontal and vertical relationship is further complicated by a temporal flux which periodically alters the previously established structure. Individuals, groups, institutions, governments, economic classes, each carry out different roles in their various societal predispositions. Indeed to establish a theory, or even a methodology that permits investigations across this labyrinthine complexity is a Herculean task. The objective at this point is to do no more than merely mark the ground for excavation.

The third actor in the analog is the vehicle, which is the medium upon which change leaves its mark. The vehicle essentially represents the matrix which is the present, the cummulative accretion of historical processes that is the past, and the aspirations that point to possible futures. It is a conceptual crucible within which the initiators and the endurers interacts. In Manuel Castells interpretation, this medium is the city itself, the definition of 'urban', it is

> . . a structured, conflictive reality in which social classes oppose each other over the basic rules of social organization according to their own social interests. . . It is not a mental representation of a spatial form, but the assignment of a structural task to this form in accordance with the conflictive social dynamics of history.[1]

Further, in his words, this medium also encapsulates. .

> . . the conflict over the assignment of certain goals to certain spatial forms,. . one of the fundamental mechanisms of the domination and counter-domination in the social structure (dialogue between the initiator and the endurer).[2]

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[1] Castells, London 1983.
[2] Castells, London 1983.

It represents the visible, as well as the invisible world; the real city and the image city of the mind.[1] Even basic values are perceived as images of what is right or wrong. The real and the imaginary, in my opinion, cannot be separated, yet they cannot be said to exhibit perfect correspondance either. This is true irrespective of whether our palette of change is restricted to the realm of a single street, a neighborhood, a group, a community, or an entire city. The physical, social, economic and political infrastructures, the stuff that fills the interstices within these infrastructures, as well as the complex interface between them, provides the initiator with a world he can steer and the endurer with a world he can ride in. The basis for communication between the initiator and the endurer is established within the terms of reference of their world, as determined by the historical definition of this intercourse. Yet, the dimensions and the characteristics of this world we struggle to comprehend, does not lend itself to simplistic explanation. What form does this medium take, is there a consensus on what its capabilities are? Can it be explained and understood?

Let me deal with some of the inherent difficulties. The medium, or that portion of our world that is amenable to change, takes the form that our collective consciousnesses allow it to take. Our worlds are constructed of images. They are the bricks and mortar of perceived reality. We constantly transpose image onto the external reality that exists independent of perception, to render our world with meaning. Out of this transposition comes new images, and consequently new meanings. Goodman relishes in outlining for us the absurdity of a notion of absolute truth,

> Truth, far from being a solemn and severe master, is a docile and obedient servant. . . for not only do truths differ for different worlds but the nature of agreement between a version and a world apart from it is notoriously nebulous. For the man-in-the-street, most versions (of reality) from science, art and perception depart in some ways from the familiar serviceable world he has jerry-built from fragments of scientific and artistic tradition and from his own struggle for survival. This world,

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[1] Rodwin, ed., New York 1984.

indeed, is the most often taken as real; for reality in a world, . . is largely a matter of habit.[1]

The notion that 'The sun always moves' and 'The sun never moves', Goodman quotes, although equally true, are at odds with each other. Our frame of reference determines the truth that best fits our understanding. Knowledge informs image as does perception, stimulii and information. Yet, there are generic images, those that are shared, as well as specific ones. For example, the skyscraper makes a f mal and symbolic statement to the architect, to the developer it appears to be the result of economic, legal and regulatory manipulations, and to the community activist it symbolizes a victory for intrusive capitalism. The definition of the vehicle in the analog, the medium of change, seems to be progressively slipping away, as we find ourselves entangled in the thick of an intellectual jungle. There appears to be as many realities as people, as many truths as there are intellects, as many irreconcilable worlds as there are frames of reference. Yet, as in the case of the skyscraper, there remains something in what is perceived, that is common across the varying perspective, the three protagonists share as much as they do not. Varying though the sensibilities may be, all three perceive in the edifice of the skyscraper certain attributes of what they understand as building. This forms a thread of unity that enables communication among them, however minimal that may sometimes be.
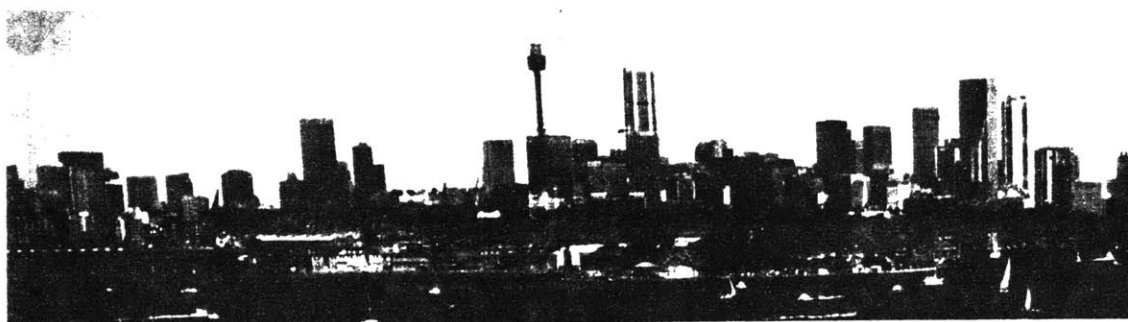
Fig.3.2.3   If the conception of a building among different specialists is such an unclear proposition, how do we reach any consensus on what is a city?

[1] Goodman, Indianapolis IN 1978.

The urban vernacular has to be sieved out, distinct from the uniqueness that characterize individual worlds. Within the contemporary urban realm it may be necessary to use sieves of different gauge to assimilate worlds that are sufficiently divergent to be unyielding to a single sieve. Diverse collective interpretations often share certain images, while at the same time differing sufficiently from other collective interpretations to justify a return to the notion of 'types'. In this context, the 'type' corresponds to people and their worlds. Each type can be explored through the format of 'themes' which could correspond to urban systems, i.e., physical, demographic, political, economic etc. To stratify into types does not imply the creation of box-like compartments, wherein a particular type is divorced entirely from others. The types themselves form an intricate web in which each one retains something of an identity but falls short of being a pristine, unadulterated, model. Therefore, although the study of a type or types, provide us with a certain insight into the nature of an urban vernacular, it is only when we can read the web of interrelationship and interdependence between all the significant types that a somewhat holistic understanding will begin to emerge. To interpret a vernacular scenario from the viewpoint of each of these dissimilar 'types', and, to establish a relationship between them, while at the same time, exploring thematic manifestations within and across 'types', involves a degree of complexity and depth of investigation that appears to be too daunting a task with respect to the scope of this study. All the same, it provides us with a kick-off point from which to build upon such an endeavor.

Thus, the medium in which change takes place, the so called worlds that provide the mold (that has been cast by a accretive historic process), can be best understood when abstracted to represent a set of people who have more in common among themselves than they do with others. Action upon these worlds by forces, both human and natural, result in the precipitation of
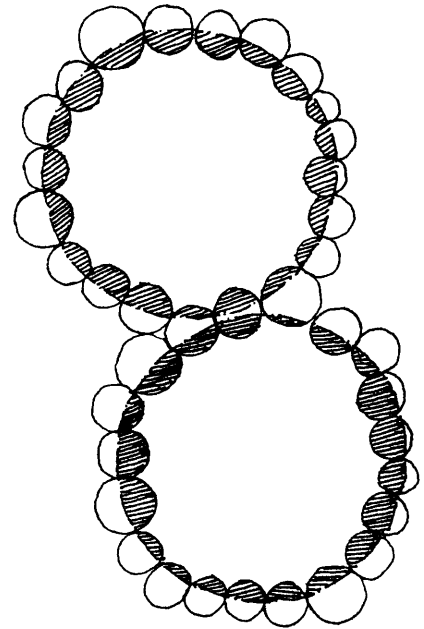
change. The relationship of change and urban vernaculars have been outlined in this section through the three inter-related analog-parts, the driver, the passenger and the vehicle (the initiator, the endurer and the medium). An analysis of this relationship through the use of vernacular types has been proposed. How does this organization of 'type', as a tool for understanding urban vernaculars, relate to earlier references to 'type' in the previous chapter?[1] Prior references to type described the development of parallel paradigms encompassing issues of attitudes, lifestyles, control, roles, tasks, forms and places. These orders were treated with a temporal torpidity that denuded them of their inherent propensities to, and behavior under, change. They were treated as static concepts in urban sociology, more like anatomical parts, described rather stiffly as in medical text-books. In this chapter, the notion of change has been introduced to stir up a somewhat inert model, and highlight a fluid dynamism that characterizes every aspect. Although no explicit references were drawn in this section to the attributes discussed earlier (attitudes, lifestyles. . .), the notion of the initiator and the endurer implicitly assimilates those attributes. We certainly cannot think of a model of urban change without acknowledging issues of control, lifestyle, roles etc. ., as playing a significant part in delineating the appropriate worlds pertaining to each type, as well as the mutual osmosis that takes place across these typological boundaries. Nor can we think of these various attributes of type, i.e. attitudes, lifestyle etc. ., within an urban vernacular, without conceiving their role in relation to the changing urban scenario.

3.3   VERNACULAR, REGULATION AND AUTHORITY

Ciites have been with us for over ten thousand years, from the days of Jericho and Catal Hüyük, right to the present. The story of civilization can be outlined as the story of cities if we can accept

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[1] *ibid.* pp.67; The Meaning of a Vernacular for the City.

Redfield and Singer's[1] interpretation of cities as the predominant symbols and carriers of human culture. The growth and development of the city has been a process of gradual evolution. Although numerous cities have perished, and others have materialized in a flash, the meaning of 'urban' in a certain community has evolved over time through trials, tribulations and triumphs. This evolution has been pivoted around relationships established through production and power. Castells perceives experience, which he defines as 'the action of human subjects on themselves. .', to be equally significant, he writes,

> .. all human processes seem to be determined by relationships of production, experience and power. Therefore history and society are formed by an articulation of (these three). . experience is basically structured around sexual gender relationships; production is organized in class relationships; and power is founded upon the state.[2]

Freud (sexual gender realtionships), Marx and Engels (production and class relationships), and Weber (power and the role of the state in structuring society), have been represented, succintly and atrfully, in the respective forces of urban evolution that Castells considers significant. What he calls human experience, or sexual gender relationships, characterized by male domination over women, appears to me to be essentially a function of the other two, i.e. production and power, in one form or the other. In fact, the so called social emancipation of the woman, in whatever limited sense we have achieved that state, essentially followed her advent into the workplace as a productive equal of her erstwhile dominant partner. This is further borne out by the realization that male domination reigns supreme in societies where women have little influence over the forces of production and power.

In the eventual analysis it is the relationships of power and production that dominates the evolution of urban meaning. Even

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[1] Redfield & Singer, Boston1973.
[2] Castells, London 1983.   .

Töennies, Durkheim, and Redfield's[1] respective polarizations of society are based on the social response to the dynamics of power and production. I will go so far as to call changes in these arenas to be the fundamental genesis of urbanization. The manner in which society interprets these changes, especially in light of historical circumstance, result in phenomenon that is understood as social change. Consequently, power and production also play a major role in shaping what we perceive as the urban vernacular. In other words, the urban vernacular attempts to synthesize, as a body of knowledge and study, the accepted tenets of collective experience and meaning as they have been shaped over time, buffeted to a large extent by the exigencies of production and power.

The contemporary city is humanity's temple of expedience and utilitarianism. Weber illustrates this point in his discussions of the city as a market and as a politico-administrative entity.[2] With socio-economic heterogeneity, which gradually became a characteristic feature of cities, the introduction of complex, explicit systems of regulation could not have been very far behind. In emphasizing the notion of a city as more than an economic organization, Weber points to the existence of a city, exclusively by virtue of its politico-administrative organization. He also points out that this bureaucratic city may not qualify as urban according to the economic definition of a city. Weber goes on to cite examples of 'cities' in the Middle Ages which had an agricultural economic base. The modern day economic agglomerations which form such connurbations as Greater Boston or Metropolitan New York City, are also subdivided into smaller cities distinguished from the collective identity of these connurbations by virtue of its politico-administrative status. Thus Cambridge and Brooklyn display symptoms of latent schizophrenia, seemingly merging one

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[1] *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*: Töennies, New York 1963; mechanic and organic: Durkheim, New York 1964; moral and technical: Redfield, Ithaca NY 1971.
[2] Weber, Reading MA 1976.

moment into their larger identities as metropolitan sprawl, and in the next, standing out in sharp silhouette[1] as distinct urban centers. The fact is that the interests of business, the larger economy, and politics have become increasingly and thoroughly interdependent. This relationship has pervaded urbanity for some time now as Von Martin points out,

> Business methods served political ends, political means served economic ends. Political and economic credit were inseparable.[2]

The development of the city, and its consequent labyrinthine complexity, has resulted in the pre-eminence of the role of constituted regulation in playing a large part in the ordering of urban life. Regulation is, in some ways, also responsible for some of the greatest imbroglios of contemporary cities, the squatter phenomenon and slums which have sprouted like wildflower in our cities is one of the oft quoted examples. Besides, regulation, coupled with education, is potentially the most effective tool that we have, in order to respond sensitively to the dramatic and variable rates of change that are synchronously altering our cities. The various regulatory forces in a contemporary city attempt to hem the citizen into a pattern of desirable conduct and expectations, restricting personal choice and bringing some degree of homogeneity into a predominantly heterogenous mass. It has taken over some of the traditional responsibilities and fetters that were once carried out and enforced by tacit social agreement. Taxation, building codes, safety codes, pricing and price control, traffic rules, legal codes for social conduct, quality control regulations, institutional rules, organizational rules, are some of the diverse forms of regulation that are designed and imposed on society to nurture a modicum of conformity amidst an urban world that is progressively fighting all forms of mute

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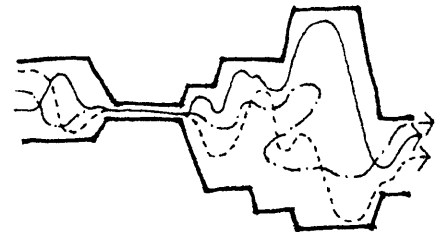
[1] a casual glance at any map of the Boston area will make a strong impression on a person who is marginally informed. However, to someone who is new to the city, and uninformed, the other face of the schizophrenic is all she can perceive, it takes a while before one can conceptualize the distinctly different cities that make up the whole.

[2] Von Martin, Boston 1973.

obsequiosness. It is both a tool of power, and a powerful tool in delineating the popular consciousness of the normative. Regulation, in whatever form we may come across it is an expression of a desire to exercise some power. It can be disabling and repressive, or enabling and creative. The manner in which power is actually exercised to enforce regulation is authority.
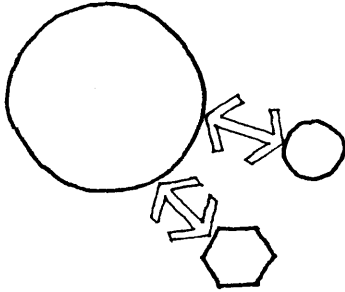
In an effort to better understand the question of regulation and enforcement, let me briefly digress to the question of authority. Sennett describes authority very succintly as,

Authority is a bond between people who are unequal.[1]

Subsequently, he goes on to outline a study of contrasts between the different styles of authority expressed by conductors Monteaux and Toscanini. Facing the orchestra, Toscanini inspired terror by making no secret of his wrath, while Monteaux imposed his will very effectively in an avuncular fashion. Both commanded authority through their. .

assurance, superior judgement, the ability to impose discipline, the capacity to inspire fear. [2]

It is evident that Toscanini inspired a different kind of fear, as he stamped his feet and threw his baton at his players, from Monteaux, who castigated his players by stopping the orchestra and looking at the responsible person in total silence.
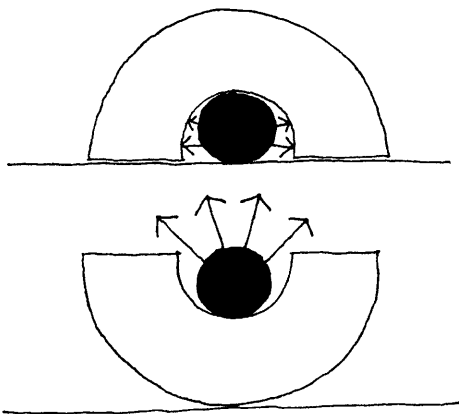
Authority comes from the root word 'author', the connotation suggesting that authority is productive. In Sennett's study of the two conductors we can perceive that one form of authority sustains itself by dominating through terror, while the other is focused at nurturing some kind of higher ideal in the subject. Authority is expressed in every sphere of our lives, and through authority we have the means to exercise power as also to

[1] Sennett, New York 1981.
[2] Sennett, New York 1981.

dominate. The interpretation of power forms the focal purpose of authority. The next question is whether authority is instituted in the various positions of power, or is authority something that lies in the eye of the beholder, based on what the subject sees and feels about a particular interpretation of power?

Weber outlines three broad ideological forms of authority, viz., traditional authority, legal-rational authority, and charismatic authority. The first is established authority which has been time tested and has risen to be above questioning. The second is authority based on the legal jurisdiction of the position of authority. The third is creative authority, which rests upon faith in what the subjects believe the authority figure stands for and expresses. Like some of the other categorizations of social phenomenon I have discussed earlier, the three forms of authority described by Weber are not mutually exclusive. There is also the question of legitimacy with respect to each of these forms of authority mentioned above.

Therefore, as much as regulation is the definition of power, authority is its interpretation. Urban vernaculars are influenced a great deal more profoundly by authority than it is by regulation. I do not however, mean to demean the significance of regulation. We have discussed earlier that vernaculars are derivatives of conformity.[1] With this realization let us investigate the role that regulation and authority, each play in molding a vernacular sensibility. We all realize that our worlds and frames of references, our values and our attitudinal dispositions, even our actions, are influenced profoundly by the extent of control imposed on our lives. By control, I include both the tacit, unquestioned dominance of the collective over the individual, as well as the socially and politically ordained code of explicit regulation, that sets out spouting egalitarianism but rarely lives up to its doctrinal ideology. Although there is a text which sets out in

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[1] *ibid.* pp.6.

letter almost every form of constituted regulation, interpretation and practise are entirely different phenomena. Regulation sets up the bounds of this control, the legitimate limits and the manner in which explicit control may be exercised, it defines power. Authority interprets the regulations and enforces conformity in ways it sees fit, it practices power. Along with the framing of the rules, we must contend with authority: the individuals, groups, governments and other institutional structures and hierarchies which enforce, perpetuate and, when necessary amend the regulatory framework.

The regulatory framework is not something that lies entirely outside the realm of implicit rules and controls. This framework however, often reinforces existing time tested standards, while at the same time introducing new standards and controls based on technological, economic and political exigencies. Each society has inbuilt levels of tolerance and a deeper notion of social justice by which it evaluates and judges the realpolitik's efforts to redefine the existing framework, specially in terms of its handling of authority. Of course should the changes be unsavoury, the possible avenues for recourse to protest also vary from place to place. Donald Black outlines five modes of settlement behavior used to sanction conformity by authorities, unwittingly or otherwise.[1] The same five modes are also used by society, or sections of it, to express protest or discontent to changes in the way their lives are regulated.

In a society that exhibits a reasonable degree of political stability, we can assume that a regulatory base has been established that is acceptable to the masses as well as to the realpolitik. This is not necessarily a commentary on the appropriateness of this

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[1] The five modes of settlement behavior are - friendly pacification, mediation, arbitration, adjudication, and repressive pacification. The severity of the mode used in settlement behavior, depends on the intimacy or relational distance between the parties;Black, Orlando 1984. I would like to add that the selection of a mode of settlement behavior is also a function of the extent of deviation perceived by the respective parties for which the settlement is necessary.

regulatory base, merely that it represents a state of balance in which conflicts are not perceived strongly enough to provoke protest calling for a redefinition of the base. As long as this foundation is not disturbed, far reaching violent upheavals and protests are not likely to dominate efforts by authorities in either their definition or interpretation of power. However, a varying amount of dialogue, negotiation, and conflict will take place depending on the channels for communication and the apparatus within the system to deal with this dialogue. The ensuing change, which is normally an unequal compromise often favoring the establishment, is gradually absorbed by the affected masses. Among other things, changes in the regulatory framework and in authority, and their consequent assimilation into society over time changes the shape of that sensibility which I have attempted to define as vernacular. What is unique about both authority and regulation, in this respect, is the fact that it is an explicit, willfull, form of control, and can be utilized purposefully to either enable, or disable the wholesome development of the city and its people. The argument presented here is that what is 'wholesome' in development can only emerge out of an understanding of the people and the image of the vernacular in the city. The implication here is not that development should be subservient to the vernacular. On the contrary, the suggestion is that critical judgement in balancing conformity with change come from an understanding of deep rooted convictions that society has nurtured over time. An understanding of the vernacular enables us to comprehend and re-evaluate the purpose of regulation, as also to envision the question of appropriateness as it pertains to the form, content and practise of regulation in the city.

CHAPTER IV
AN INTRODUCTION TO DELHI
A HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL OVERVIEW

4.1 THE QUINTESSENTIAL DELHI

I asked my soul, what is Delhi?
She replied: The world is the body and Delhi its soul
_ Asadullah Khan Ghalib
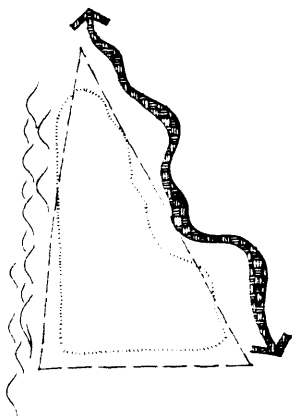
To begin with, Delhi is arguably one of the oldest cities in the world. Archaeological finds, of baked earthenware and grey pottery unearthed from this region, would date it back to 1000 B.C. Between then and now epochs have passed; dynasties, kings, emperors, even numerous cities have trodden the triangular piece of land, 'formed by the river Yamuna on the east, a series of jagged ridges on the west and a pancake flat plain to the south'.[1] While Delhi today has transcended these physical delimitations and has become a sprawling metropolis, in its physical form, the city is layered in history, from the ancient to the modern. History is, at the same time both sharp in contrast and mellow in its ripe blend with the contemporary city. This contrast can be seen exemplified both in form and in content, if you were to choose to have a game of golf in the Delhi Golf Club. As you casually saunter along the manicured expanse with the caddy, you come across a couple of derelict, yet beautiful monuments from the past. The caddy might just as well double up as a guide. It is not only contrasts across time that characterize Delhi,

The tempo of life is also marked with contrast. . . the lowing water buffalo behind the building housing a humming computer. . . the somnolent sacred cow and the throaty roar of the diesel truck. . . the softest Divali candle and the coarsest neon marquee.[2]

Besides the places of historic significance, and those other

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1 Singh, Delhi 1983.
2 Breese, Princeton 1974.

monuments that are simply 'protected', 'there are unmarked tombs, mosques, *baolis*, remains of palaces and fortifications wherever you go.'[1] At the other end of the scale is the living history, the mellow blend of past and present.

> The walled city. . .Small, dilapidated doors open into courtyards heavy with the entrapped odours of jasmine, moulsari and rose; in the middle may be a well or a pigeon loft loud with the guttural cooings of strutting powter pigeons. . .Some lanes have craftsmen whose forefathers were engaged in the same craft three centuries ago. Such are the kite makers and the men and women who beat pellets of silver and gold into gossamer thinness to cover Indian delicacies. There are rows of sweetmeat vendors' shops claiming descent from caterers to the Mughal kings. Pervading all these are the smells of the bazaar- a fetid odour of sunless streets mixed with urine, asafoetida and other spices.[2]

The buildings, the people, the lifestyle, even the aroma of the place cannot be classified as either modem or traditional. It is just the way it is, one face of the quintessential Delhi.

New Delhi represents another face. It is the ever changing presence of a new city claiming eminence over the old[3]. As Narain puts it,

> There always have been 'old' and 'new' Delhis providing more than one profile of the city.[4]

Along the way there have been anywhere from seven to seventeen cities, the number varies in different accounts although it is generally either seven, sixteen or seventeen. A majority of these cities have borne different names, yet the area has been always known as Delhi. Even as far back as the fourteenth century, from the accounts of an Arab traveller,

> Delhi is composed of many towns. Every one is known by its own name. Delhi, being one of them, has given its name to all forty miles. . . At present, Delhi consists of twenty one towns.[5]

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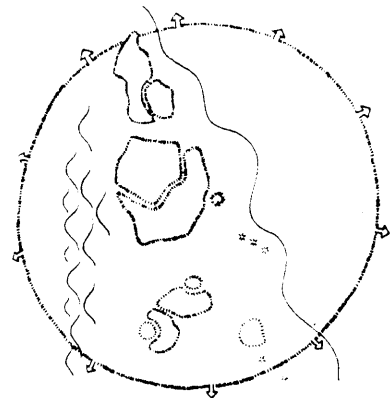
[1] Singh, Delhi 1983.

[2] Singh, Delhi 1983.

[3] Chandra, Delhi 1969.

[4] Narain, A.K. "On the Proto-History of Delhi and its Environs", in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

[5] Siddiqui, Aligarh 1971.

The names of the prominent cities which were located in this area are numerous; Indraprastha, Suraj Kund, Anangpur, Lal Kot, Qila Rai Pithora, Tughlaqabad, Jahanpanah, Mubarakabad, Shahajahanabad, and many others. The sources of almost all these names are historically verifiable. Curiously, the origins of the name Delhi itself (pronounced *Dehlee* by the literati, *Dilli* by the laity), has seen considerable speculation.

> Some say it is derived from the Persian *Dehleez* or Hindi *Dehali* - threshold, because it was the gateway to the Gangetic plains. Ptolemy, the Alexandrian geographer, refers to it as *Daidalas*. Farishta, the Persian historian, traces it to *Dhillika*, the capital of one Raja Dhelu of whom nothing is known besides his name.[1]

Why has this triangular tract of land proved to be so attractive to the succession of rulers of India, who chose this site above others to be the seat of their Government? There have been numerous invasions and conquests. However,

> . . there has always been a Delhi rising, Phoenix like, from the onslaughts and the remains left in their wake.[2]
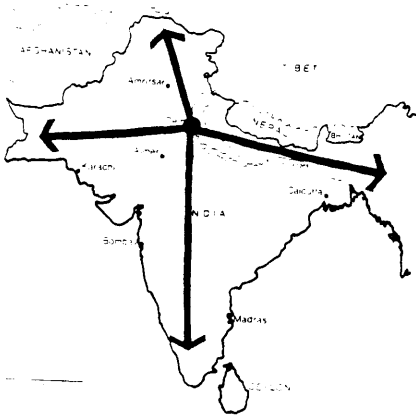
The control over the Indo-Gangetic plains, on the one hand, and the distance from the passes in the Hindukush and Sulaiman mountain ranges (960kms.), on the other, gave Delhi at the same time a sense of security and invincibility. This was further reinforced by the illusion of having in the Ridge, a western battlement, and in the river Yamuna, an eastern moat. Delhi was also located at a point which provided a crucial fulcrum between the eastern and the western stretches of the land it has been known to pilot.[3] 'The illusion of invulnerability was shattered many times'.[4] By the time Delhi's locational disadvantages were recognized, it had acquired some sort of sanctity, and had also developed into a symbol as the centre or 'seat' of empire.

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[1] Singh, Delhi 1983.

[2] Breese, Princeton 1974.

[3] Frykenburg, R.E. "Analytical and Historiographic Introduction", in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

[4] Singh, Delhi 1983.

> Once a tradition of continued strength and success became long associated with Delhi, it began to gather a kind of hallowed reputation, an aura quite beyond all reality. . . and intrinsically identified with imperial sway.[1]

As time rolled by, each capital city left visible -many of them till today- marks on the landscape which spoke to subsequent occupants of preceeding eras of power, glory, and splendour or conversely of death, destruction, and defeat. The city as a symbol of status, to this day, represents another attribute that is quintessentially Delhi. Of course, there are certain characteristics which surface only briefly after long intervals, and are quickly forgotten. These are the periodic bloodbaths the city has witnessed; from Timur Lame, Nadir Shah and Shah Alam's cruel rampage, to the Mutiny of 1857, its bloody aftermath, and recently, the bloodbath which followed Mrs.Gandhi's assassination in 1984.

The climate of Delhi, typical of northern India, is another characteristic feature of the city, one which intimately touches the lives of the *Delhiwallahs* (the people of Delhi). There is the sharp, dry, cold of the winter months, the only time of the year that the sun is befriended. After a brief but pleasant interlude of spring, the sun turns on its turbines. The summer months are typified by the scorching sun, hot, dust laden winds, and the dry air. The skin burns, the throat gets parched, and being out on the road after noon is a curse few would tempt. The rains come between July and August, if they come at all. Like most of India, Delhi too is susceptible to the vagaries of the monsoons. You either have the nimbus clouds with cascades, or the bright blue skies and a silent prayer for showers. Autumn again is a brief but pleasant interlude before winter sets in. Air conditioning is alien to a majority of the city. The lifestyles of the people change, the use of space changes, even the pulse, the vigor, and the energy of

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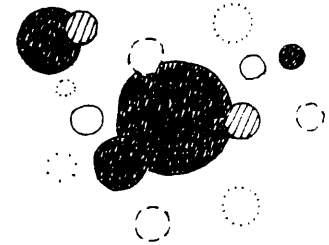
[1] Frykenburg, R.E. "Analytical and Historiographic Introduction", in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

the city changes, from the lethargic summer afternoons to the brisk winter ones. The climate therefore, exerts a tremendous influence on how life in the city chimes.

1947

1960

What of modern Delhi? With a population of 7.5 million today, a tenfold increase over 1947, Delhi is linked to history tenuously through parts of its physical setting and as a

crucible where hopes of the present blend with the traditions of the past.[1]

As Jawaharlal Nehru said, 'the cobble-stones of this great city whisper the glory of past centuries.' The whisper, as it ricochets off 7.5 million heartbeats -and growing by the minute- is barely audible, and only to a few eager listeners. Though outwardly still quite resplendent in its reflected glory, Delhi has other problems which give a better account of the contemporary city, more so
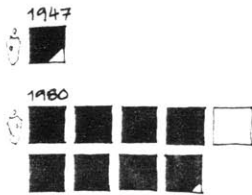
Fig. 4.1.1   Landing at Delhi's Palam Airport: the jet age co-exists with rural India.

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[1] Georges Pompidou, former President of France on a visit to Delhi in 1965.

than memories and images of its hallowed past. In many ways, these problems are common to most Third World cities. Therefore, it may seem that they cannot be the quintessence of this particular city; however, the manner in which some of these problems manifest themselves remain quintessential to Delhi. I shall be focusing on these issues and concerns in the chapters following this historical introduction.

4.2   FROM INDRAPRASTHA TO SHAHJAHANABAD

As Khushwant Singh, the notable journalist and political commentator comments, 'Delhi is history. Delhi is monuments.'[1] Although the temporal context of this study is but a small segment in the life of Delhi, it is interesting, and in some ways insightful, to briefly trace the significant periods in history. As I mentioned before, Delhi has provided a site for many cities.

> Some have lasted just a handful of years; ruins of others have survived for centuries until today. Very rarely have two of these successive cities occupied the same site. All have received a measure of 'planning' affecting areas ranging from merely the royal precinct to the entire city.[2]

All the cities however have been located on the right bank of the river Yamuna. This is possibly to take advantage of the strategic sandwich between the ridge and the river. It is only metropolitan Delhi which, by virtue of its seemingly unlimited growth after independence, has had to cross the river and establish a settlement on the left bank. Delhi's early history is essentially fact, intertwined closely with myth and legend; peering through the mists of antiquity it is impossible to separate the two.[3] The river Yamuna itself, for example, has been sanctified through legend.

> She was Kalindi or Sarjuga, daughter of the Sun. She was also the sister of Yama, King of Death. She was attractive enough

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[1] Singh, Delhi 1983.

[2] Breese, Princeton 1974.

[3] for a more detailed account refer to Gordon Hearn's *The Seven Cities of Delhi* or Percival Spear's *Delhi: A Historical Sketch*.

Fig.4.2.1   The Yamuna : sanctified and abused in the same breath. A
morning scene near the boat-bridge

for Krishna's brother Balaram to desire her. When she rejected his
overtures, he grabbed her by the hair, dragged her zig-zag across
the plains and dumped her into the (river) Ganga.[1]

Similarly, the inception of the fabled city of Indraprastha[2],
considered to be the first major settlement on this site, as also its
abandonement by the patron ruler *Yuddhishtir*, is shrouded in
legend. It is said, that once when the Yamuna was in spate, the
sacred *Shastras*[3] were thrown up on the right bank of the river.
The bank was named *Nigambodh* (sacred knowledge) and on
this site rose *Indraprastha* (1, refer Fig.4.1.1) _ the abode of
Indra, lord of the firmament.[4] Legend also has it that King
Yuddhishtir abandoned the city after he uncovered a dish of food
and found a fly already there, this being interpreted as an ill
omen. As Gerald Breese puts it,

whatever the truth of the insect's impertinence, little more is
known about the settlement.[5]

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[1] Singh, Delhi 1983.
[2] It has not been documented by archaeologists and historians.
However references in the famous epic *Mahabharata* link the Pandavas
to this site about 1400 B.C.
[3] the scriptures of Hinduism.
[4] Singh, Delhi 1983.
[5] Breese, Princeton 1974.

The Delhi triangle was initially dominated by the Hindus. The first
recorded city was *Lal Kot* (2), erected in 1050 A.D. by Raja
Anangpal, a Rajput King of the Tomar dynasty. The next Rajput
dynasty to rule, the Chauhans under Rai Pithora or Prithviraj,
enlarged Lal Kot and it came to be known as *Qila Pai Pithora* (3).
Even upto this time fact and legend were intricately interwoven in
all accounts of the time. It was only when the Muslims, under
Mohammad of Ghori, defeated Prithviraj Chauhan in 1191 A.D.,
that recorded narrative replaced this tradition of folklore.
Mohammed Ghori sent his Turkish slave general, Qutubuddin
Aibak, to rule Delhi on his behalf. Ghori died a few years later
(1206 A.D.) and Qutubuddin proclaimed himself as the first
Sultan of Delhi.

> With the advent of the Delhi Sultanate (1206 to 1526), rule
> (Islamic) by non indigenous peoples prevailed through the
> Slave or Mamluk dynasty (1206-1290), Khalji dynasty (1290-
> 1321), Tughluq dynasty(1321-1414), Sayyid dynasty (1414-
> 1444) and Lodi dynasty (1451-1526). These were followed by
> the Surs and the Mughals (1526-1857).[1]

Each period mentioned above, is associated with changes in the
urban morphology. One or more new settlements which added,
and sometimes subtracted, from the complex of previous
settlements. *Siri* (1303) (4), *Tughlaqabad* (1321) (5),
Jahanpanah (1327) (6) and *Ferozabad* (1354) (7) were four new
settlements, established over a very short period of time.

Taimur Lang invaded India in 1398, charting a deathly path of
destruction and devastation. He levelled Delhi in fifteen days
leaving nothing except anarchy, pestilence and famine, and
reduced the significance of the city to a deathly provincial town,

> a local capital often hardly controlling the country more than a
> dozen miles around it.[2]

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[1] Breese, Princeton 1974.
[2] Spear, London 1937.
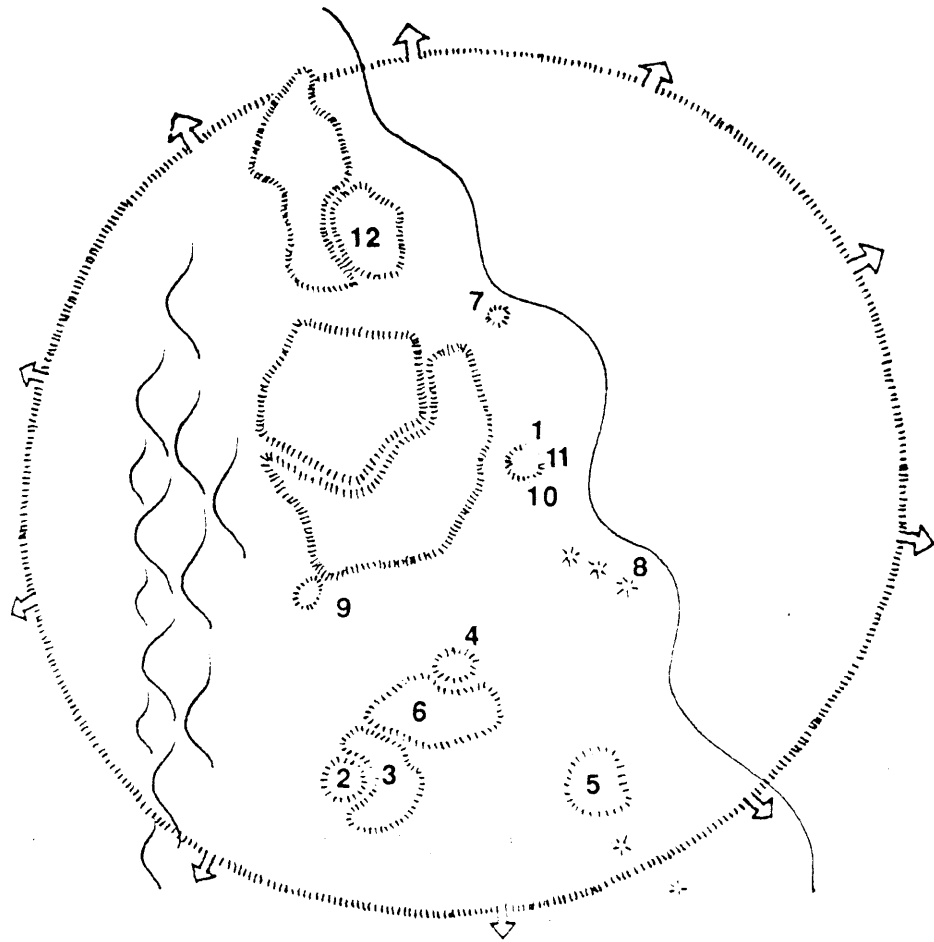
Fig. 4.2.2 The location of some cities of Delhi.

Fortuitously, it would be his descendents, the Mughals who would eventually rebuild and reinstate the status that Taimur robbed off Delhi. Taimurs visit was followed by the uncertain rule of the Sayyid and the Lodi dynasty. *Khirabad* (8), and *Kotla Mubarakpur* (9), were the two new settlements of this period.

It was with the advent of the Mughals in 1526 that Delhi regained its lost importance. In fact, it was the Mughals who 'greatly embellished and increased the city's role as India's supreme

capital.'[1] This period in Delhi's history with the Surs and the Mughals at the helm inspired many memorable civic ventures.

> These rulers included Babur (1526-1530), the Sur dynasty (1538-1555) during which (the settlements) *Dinpanah* and *Sher Shah* were built, Humayun (1530-1538 and 1555-56), Akbar (1556-1605), Shahjahan (1628-1658) who built what is presently known as Old Delhi (*Shahjahanabad*), and Aurangzeb (1658-1707), to mention a few.[2]

The two marks on the cityscape which are still visible from this period are mentioned in the passage above; Dinpanah (**10**) and Sher Shah (**11**) form a visible relic called the *Purana Qila* (Old Fort). Shahjahanabad (**12**), the old walled city of today, brings us to the earliest piece placed in the puzzle that has come to be known as the contemporary Delhi. Founded in 1638 A.D., by Emperor Shahjahan, probably one of the most prodigious builders of all times, the glory of this new city has been immortalized in the following stanza borrowed from Amir Khusrau,

> *Gar Firdaus bar roo-e-zameen ast*
> *Hameenast-o-hameenast-o-hameenast*
>
> If on earth there is a place of bliss
> It is this, it is this, it is this.[3]

Based on the location of the various historical cities of Delhi, we can perceive three distinct locii which form 'zones of habitation' in which settlement took place repeatedly. The first of these, was the site of the ancient Hindu city Indraprastha, where three cities (**1, 10, 11**) are located on almost the same piece of ground. Second, the area towards the base of the triangle where clustered in close proximity we find four cities which are chronologically almost sequential (**2, 3, 4, 6**). The third is the location of the last city we have discussed so far, Shahjahanabad as also the first major British settlement, the Civil Lines (**12, 13**). These numerous cities have always been treated in literature as

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[1] Frykenburg, R.E. "Analytical and Historiographic Introduction", in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.
[2] Breese, Princeton 1974.
[3] Singh, Delhi 1983.

distinct urban entities with no temporal continuity from one to the other. It is indeed provocative to forward the speculation, that apart from the odd city that took the form of a military encampment, the saga of Delhi was enacted across three urban sites (mentioned earlier) which alternately shared the glory across time.[1] The last two Delhi's, perceptually almost indistinguishable, are the Imperial capital designed by Edwin Lutyens and the post independence sprawl (**14, 15**). Together these two encompass and stretch beyond the limits circumscribed by all the earlier cities of Delhi as also the natural boundaries that had restricted these earlier cities.

Since I shall refer to Shahjahanabad later in the text, a brief outline of the socio-physical organization of the seventeenth century city is in order. In some ways it exemplified the dualities and contrasts that are very much a part of the contemporary Delhi. The co-existence of the planned and the unplanned, is probably the most striking resemblence, although the scale is altogether different today. In 1638, when Shahjahan decided to move his capital from Agra to Delhi -for reasons that are debated in different texts without any consensus- he planned, what the British did after 1911, in a very different manner, an Imperial Capital. The city form was borrowed from the ancient Hindu texts on architecture, the *vastu shastras* (rules for architecture), a major point of departure from the approach taken by the Britishers, in the design of their Imperial Capital.

> The *Mansara*, a vastu shastra, listed a semi elliptical design called *karmuka* (bow) as one of the shapes a settlement might take . Such a plan was especially appropriate for a site fronting a river or sea shore.[2]

This seems to have guided, to some extent, the planning of the city. The bow shaped city had two major axes, one could be read

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[1] developed in discussion with Ronald Lewcock.

[2] Z. Malik, *The Reign of Muhammad Shah, 1729-48.* (Bombay, 1977), from Stephen P. Blake, "Cityscape of an Imperial Capital, Shahjahanabad in 1739.", in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

as the arm of the archer, or alternatively as the arrow, and the other axes could be read as the bow string. The bow string lay parallel to the river Yamuna. The city wall itself formed the curved shaft of the bow, which was roughly four miles long and was punctuated strategically with *Darwaza*s, or gates . *Chandni Chowk*, the street which ran east-west, from the *Lahori* Gate of the fort, to the *Lahori* Gate of the city, formed the archers arm. The north-south street, that connected the *Akbarbadi*, and the *Kashmiri* gates, represented the bow string. At the juncture of these two axes was the palace-fortress of the Emperor, the *Lal Qila* (Red Fort). The planned section of the city included the various imperial and public buildings, gardens designed by the members of the nobility, and the *Nahr-i-Bihisht* (Canal of Paradise), the canal which brought water supply to the city from a point seventy five miles upstream on the Yamuna river. This canal ran along the entire length of the Chandni Chowk and formed an integral part of the cityscape. Topographically, the city included two hillocks, the more prominent of the two Bhujalal *Pahari* (Bhujalal Hill), occupied a spot near the Red Fort between the two axes. This was to become the site for the great Friday mosque, the *Jama Masjid*[1].

Definitely a pre industrial city, fuelled by animate forms of energy, Shahjahanabad could be seen as a hierarchical organization reflecting a complex feudal society, with the Emperor at the top of the social pyramid. The palace-fortress, the palatial residences of members of the imperial family, the *havelis* [2], the houses of the laity placed the owners squarely in their appropriate spot in the social pyramid.

> The large walled mansions of princes and great *amirs* (Commanders, chieftains, an imperial officer or ruler) contained gardens, watercourses, and beautiful apartments. Lower ranking amirs and rich merchants had smaller houses with walls of stone, brick or clay and roofs of straw. Ordinary

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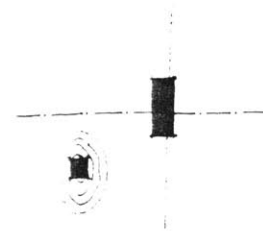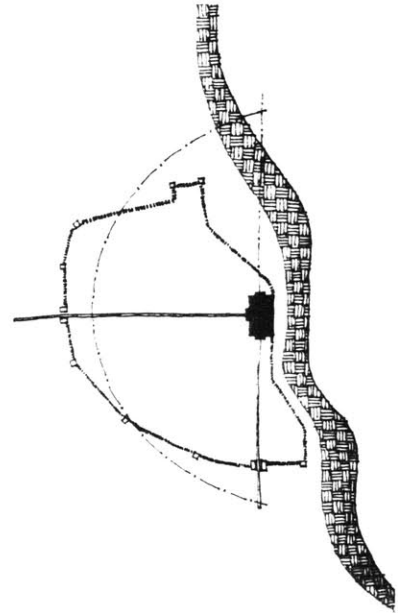
[1] Stephen P. Blake, "Cityscape of an Imperial Capital, Shahjahanabad in 1739.", in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.
[2] mansions with a central courtyard, normally belonging to nobility.

merchants lived in quarters behind their shops. Soldiers, servants, craftsmen, small traders, and others lived in straw thatched mud huts. [1]

The densification of Shahjahanabad occured rapidly as the land around the havelis and palaces were filled up by people whose livelihood centred in these mansions. This gave rise to neighborhoods, or *mohallas* as they were locally known, which were defined by their cores and spines, not by their boundaries which were often nebulous[2]. Over time, some amount of gentrification must have occured as populations increased, and some of the thatched buildings were converted into brick and
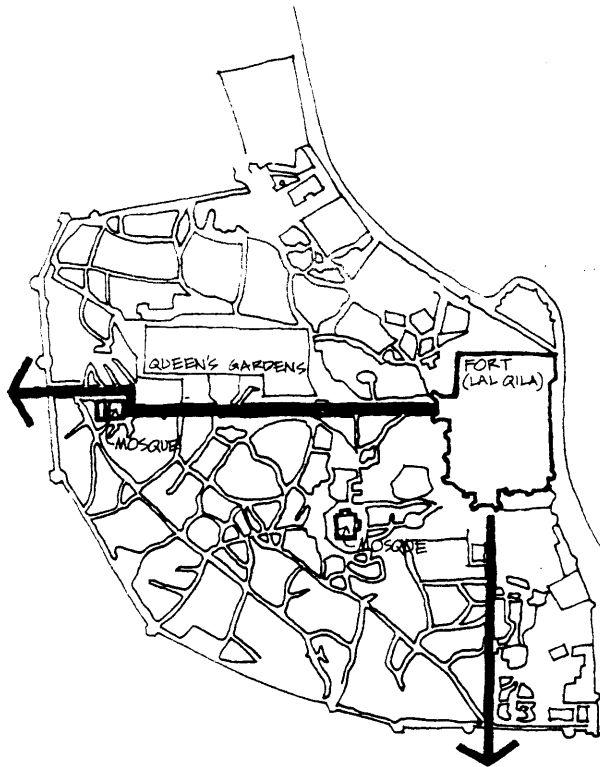
Fig. 4.1.3   The walled city of Shahjahanabad.

[1] Stephen P. Blake, in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

[2] King, London 1976;Phookan, Cambridge 1987; Badshah, Cambridge 1983.

stone, as we now see it.

The socio-physical organization of the city was not limited to the neighborhoods alone; gardens, mosques, *bazaars*, and streets,
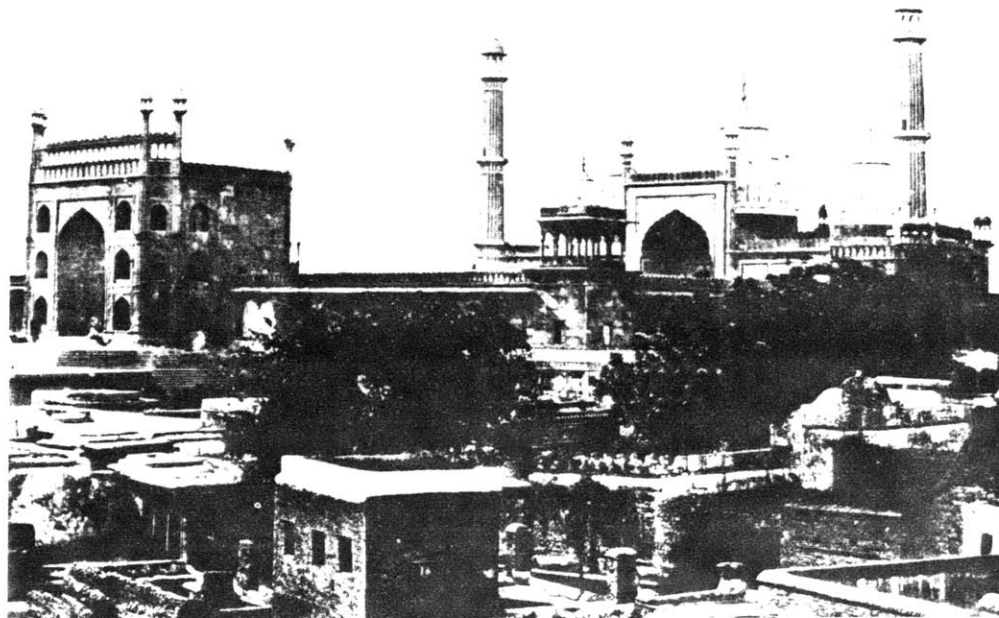
4.2.4   *The Jama Masjid, Shahjahanabad.*
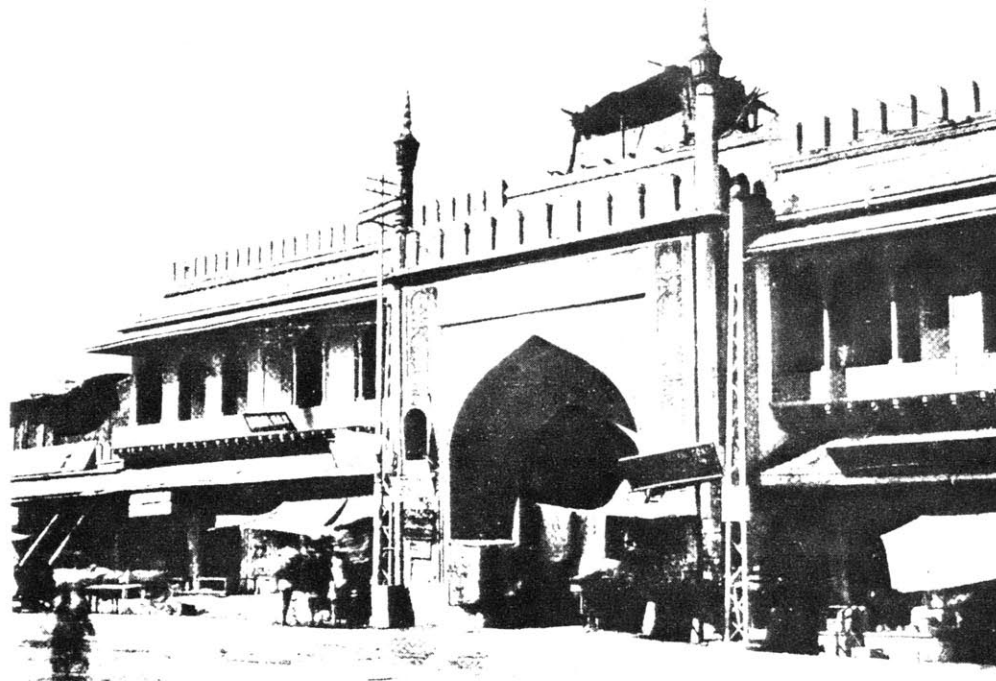
Fig. 4.2.5   *The Fatehpuri Mosque, a smaller, yet significant Mosque, in Shahjahanabad.*
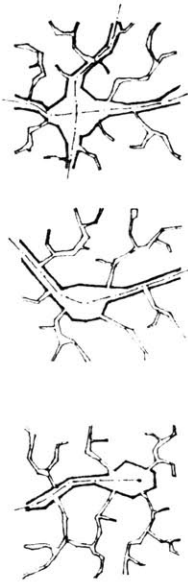
formed distinct 'types', each of which were both prominent and numerous. The more significant of these were located appropriately by central authority, while others sprung up where there was the space and the need. Another typical feature of the city were the *chowks* or squares. These were essentiallya widening of the street, often the main street within a *mohalla*, as it turned a corner, terminated, or intersected other streets. These spaces were, and remain to this day, active, bustling, nodes of activity. *Chowks*, it could be argued, were inspired from the formal typology that prevailed in the region, that of the courtyard. Courtyards, climatically and socially, were felt to be the ideal form of settlement. By some degree of subconscious association, or by conscious decision, places of activity seemed to have been placed in courtyards.This is true of the Imperial Palace, the Jama Masjid, as well as the *chowks* I have just mentioned. Of course, the courtyard also prevailed in most residences,

Fig.4.2.6   The articualtion of facades on the main thoroughfare, Chandni Chowk. The ornate design, the awnings shading merchandise and people on the sidewalks, and the pavement life.

except probably in the case of the poorest people, housed in thatched huts. It would not be too far fetched, considering what is known of their lifestyles, sense of privacy, and the status of women, to surmise that these impoverished settlements were also clustered around ill defined communal courtyards. The only major exception to this typology was the *bazaar*, which was essentially linear in its organization since movement was central to its function. However, in so much as *bazaars* were organized along streets there were *chowks*. Here too, these so called 'squares' formed nodal points where some of the more prominent places of trade were located.

From the Mughals, the initial founders and rulers, Delhi passed into the hands of the Marathas, people from the West of India, in the late eighteenth cnetury. Finally in 1803, after almost a century of uncertainty, plunder and devastation, Delhi, battered but not ruined,

> uncertain of its fate but with enough sense of kinship and a cultural and social tradition.[1]

was wrested from the Marathas by the British forces under Lord Lake, after the Battle of Delhi.

4.3   BRITISH DELHI AND THE COLONIAL STATEMENT - NEW DELHI

Delhi and its citizens at that time, still recovering from numerous attacks from ruthless, bestial invaders, developed an attitude which can be best described as a kind of insular self-contained, yet polished, urbanity or *aadmiyat*.[2] It is best described in Mujeeb's words,

> The culture of the time was obstinately, narrow mindedly urban, seeking protection within the city walls against a surrounding barbarism. The desire to be closer to nature would not take a

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[1] Gupta, Delhi 1981.
[2] Haq, Karachi 1962.

man outside the city, because it was believed that nature fulfilled itself in the gardens. . . . and the breezes of the city.[1]

The British entered Delhi in this atmosphere, dominated by a spirit characterized by an indulgence in Islamic mysticism, frenetic gaiety and the salons of courtesans[2]; possibly a form of escapism from the political insecurity of the times. The early years of British rule, in sharp contrast to later years after the 1857 mutiny, were characterized by an easy conviviality between prominent Indians and British officials. The Delhi Club, for example, which was located just outside the southern walls of the Imperial Palace, within the city walls, was moved out to Ludlow Castle, in the Civil Lines after the Mutiny. It was essentially a cultural center, and saw a vigorous flowering of Urdu literature. Western civilization was not regarded as superior, but as one from which much that was useful could be learnt.[3] Two parallel authorities administered the city, one was the local Kotwal (chief of police) while the other was the Magistrate who was a Britisher. Although the Magistrate was the ultimate authority, sections of the population would play off one against the other leading to trouble and confusion.

In 1857 there was the Sepoy Mutiny, a rebellion, in which the city was captured by those loyal to the old, ailing Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah. The British later recaptured the city after a siege. Things were never to be the same again. The wrath of the British soldiers seeking vengeance wiped out a large portion of the population while most of the remaining inhabitants were banished from the city. There was a debate on whether the city should be retained or destroyed. It was at this time that the earliest suggestions of a new city surfaced, although not as yet adorned in the garb of an Imperial capital of Promethean proportions. Suggestions included the building of a Fort Victoria

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[1] Mujeeb, Delhi 1972.
[2] Gupta, Delhi 1981.
[3] Gupta, Delhi 1981.

in place of the Imperial Palace[1], and the erection of a cathedral in place of the Jama Masjid in Shahjahanabad. The city was finally allowed to survive albeit in a state not akin to paralysis. It was included in the Punjab and relegated, yet again, to the status of a provincial town. The poverty, both material and cultural, prompted Lt.Governor Montgomery to call Delhi 'a city on which there seems to be a curse' and one which had not 'sufficient wealth and respectability' to hold a *Durbar* (an important gathering where some member of the Royal family held audience with their subjects).[2]

From the hub of trade and culture, Delhi it was decreed, would be converted into a no-nonsense military establishment. The major discussion was whether Delhi would be better defended from within or from without.

> . . . this was tied up with the question of whether the danger to be feared was external or from within the city. . . (in) one sweep the face of the city, so lovingly built by Shahjahan, was transformed.[3]

Buildings were destroyed indiscriminately within the city to accommodate the military establishment. Fifty years later, Lord Curzon was to bemoan of

> the horrors that have been perpetrated in the interests of regimental barracks, and messes and canteens in the fairy-like pavillions and courts and gardens of Shahjahan.[4]

> When the dust of the demolitions had settled, the people of Delhi rubbed their tired eyes and looked in vain for familiar landmarks, but could not find them. Moaned Ghalib (the poet), 'Where is Delhi? By God, it is not a city now. It is a camp. It is a cantonment. . .'[5]

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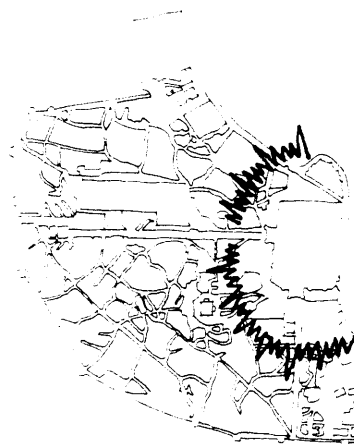
[1] Lahore Chronicle, 26 March 1859; H. Trevelyan, The India We Left; from Gupta, Delhi 1981.

[2] Lt.Governor, Punjab to Viceroy, 27 September 1859 (I.O.R., Canning Papers, 23/6); from Gupta, Delhi 1981.

[3] Gupta, Delhi 1981.

[4] Curzon speeches, (Calcutta 1900), Vol.I; from Gupta, Delhi 1981.

[5] Khutoot-e-Ghalib (ed. Meher, Lahore), Vol. I; from Gupta, Delhi 1981.
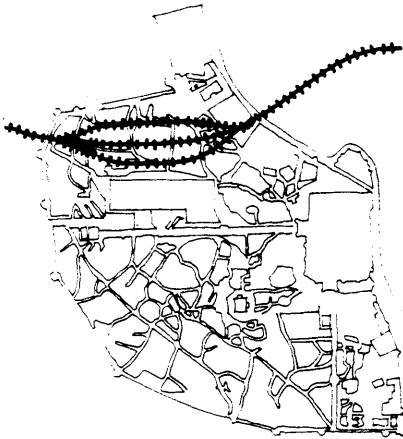
However, during the next decade, Delhi underwent a period of gradual consolidation. The primary impetus for this was the increase of trade, commerce and industry, an outcome of the Punjab-Calcutta railway, which was introduced in 1867. The railway line rudely distorted the tranquility of the city as it cut a swath through the urban fabric, dislodging hundreds of people and distorting the concentric pattern of Shahjahanabad. The surrounding area was developed as a colonial copy of the standardized 'centre' of cities in Victorian Britain, and formed the beginnings of what became the Civil Lines.[1] With the advent of the Civil Lines, the racial polarization of the city became more marked as this area became an exclusive European settlement. Growth, in and of the city, continued, fueled by the development of mechanized industry, better transportation links most notably by rail[2], and the advent of electricity. The population, which had deflated as a consequence of the Mutiny of 1857, reconsolidated as a result of the rejuvenated economics of the city, and due to the massive rural-urban migrations during the periodic famines which wracked the region. This additional population did nothing to alleviate Delhi's 'unhealthy living quarters, appalling disease, and high mortality rates'[3]. Over the years, towards the end of the nineteenth century, the status of Delhi expanded from that of a frontier town with a rich history, to one of an industrial centre, a junction of five major railways, and a commercial entrépot.

An experiment of local self government was introduced in Delhi, with special consideration shown to the Muslims; quite typical of 'British Liberal free-trade imperialism'[4]. These special favors that were afforded the Muslims led to religious partisanship, which was the cause of petty skirmishes between Hindus and Muslims

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[1] Gupta, Delhi 1981.
[2] so much so that Delhi became the major railway junction in North India by the early years of this century. (Gupta, Delhi 1981)
[3] Irving, New Haven/London 1981.
[4] Gupta, Delhi 1981.

on numerous occasions. The cohabitation of Muslims and Hindus on the one hand, and their respective sensitivities and religious sentiments on the other, called for a strong bipartisan authority which could impose strict regulations to accommodate both these religious communities. For instance, the proximity of Ram Lila[1] and Id[2], both celebrated partially in the form of a great procession, often resulted in clashes when the celebrations came in each others way. This religious dichotomy was further complicated by a vertical social stratification- the strong class distinctions that prevailed often caused the formation of strange alliances across religious differences[3]. Evidently as an experiment, the success of local self government was thwarted by the religious prejudices of various participants, who either took a very strong partisan stand, or shied away entirely from their responsibilities. This I suppose suited the British, who had, as Forster describes in *A Passage to India,* a paranoia of a coalition against 'constituted authority'.

All through this period, from the time of the Mutiny till the decision was made to shift the capital to a new Delhi, the walled city remained the physical core of the city. Apart from the European communities, improvements in health facilities, water supply, sanitation, and the introduction of electricity, were directed primarily to benefit the residents of this area. All these ventures were funded by the Municipality which was constantly under some form of financial strain. Its revenues were primarily generated through taxes, which were not always socially equitable, private philanthropy, and some meagre and reluctant assistance from the Government. Building byelaws were framed and enforced by the Municipality but were not very effective due to oversight, leniency, individual prejudices involved in the

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[1] an annual festival, celebrated by the Hindus.

[2] an annual festival, celebrated by the Muslims.

[3] an example is the 1901 incident when Muslim and Christian *chamars* united against Muslim shoe merchants who were supported by Hindu money lenders!
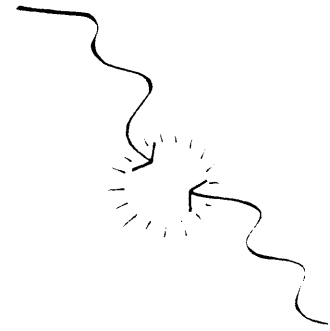
decision to take action, as well as the density and the complexity of the urban fabric. Enforcement was a dilemma, a result of too many conflicting interests, and too many actors in the drama. The city expanded rapidly during this period, extending west, north west, and north. By the turn of the century, the portion of the city outside the walls of Shahjahanabad, exceeded the portion enclosed by it.

> By 1908 the sprawl of the city was large enough for the Chaplain to put in a request for conveyance allowance, because of the distance he had to cover - nearly six miles.[1]
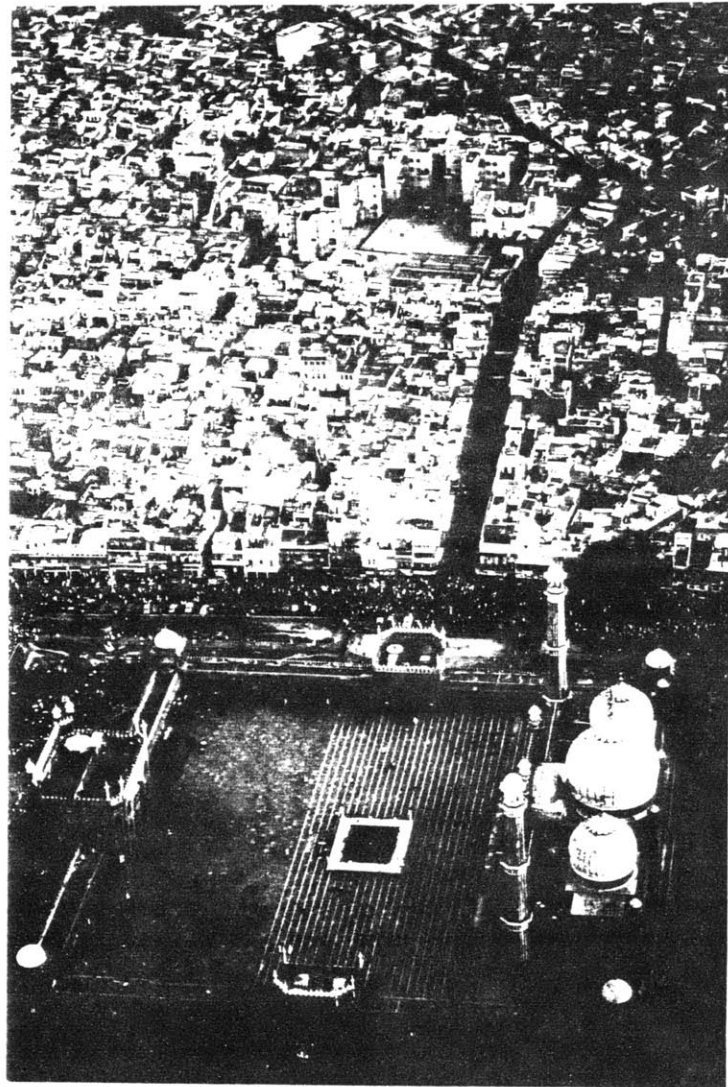
Fig. 4.3.1   The congestion of the walled city; the Jama Masjid in the foreground.

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[1] Gupta, Delhi 1981.

Living in Delhi at that time, one must have had to accustom oneself with the existence of a small yet stable core surrounded by a large periphery which was constantly changing the larger form and perception of the city itself; a perception not altogether different from the Delhi of the eighties. Exactly how much the consciousness of the city was colored by this perception of a large peripherial development is unclear, however it would be quite safe to surmise that it was the walled city which provided the strongest cognition of a coherent image of the city. At this time, it must have been inconceivable that things would change so drastically over the next fifty years. The first hint, a portent of things to come, were the preparations for the Delhi Durbars of 1903 and 1911. The significance of these Durbars or gatherings were primarily political. In the first Durbar held in 1887, a small affair compared to the later ones, Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India. The 1903 Durbar, called to mark the accession of Edward VII, was the first to invoke images of Delhi's proud heritage. The 1911 Durbar was by far the most significant. The occasion was the visit of King George V and Queen Mary. Since it's purpose was to honor the crowning of the new King, it was aptly called the Coronation Durbar. The magnitude of these events could be gauged by the fact that 173,000 people descended upon the city to witness the1903 Durbar; the 1911 Durbar with the presence of King and the Queen presented an even more spectacular pageant, Delhi hosted 750,000 visitors! But the unexpected moment came later on that great Durbar day, when standing beneath the crimson canopy of the*shamiana*[1], the King delivered an ukase which changed the course of history for this city.

> We are pleased to announce to Our People that on the advice of Our Ministers tendered after consultations with Our Governor General in the Council, We have decided upon the transfer of the seat of Government of India from Calcutta to the ancient Capital of Delhi. . . It is our earnest desire that these changes may conduce to the better administration of

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[1] tent like temporary structure used primarily for ceremonies.
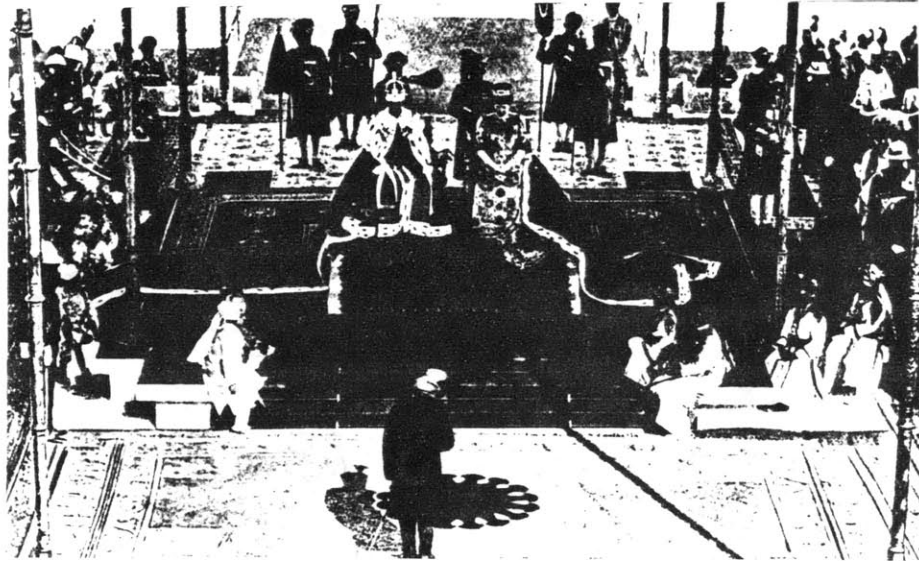
Fig. 4.3.2   The Coronation Durbar, December 12, 1911. King George V and Queen Mary at the Royal Pavillion.

India and the greater prosperity and hapiness of Our People.[1]

In one stroke, the ignominity of having been consigned to provincial status was removed, Delhi was once again the capital of the subcontinent. John Lawrence and Charles Trevelyan, senior officials in the British civil establishment, had suggested in the 1860s that Delhi should be made the capital of British India.[2] At that time such a shift would indeed have been very much simpler than in the early twentieth century. Yet, it took fifty years of debate and discussion, and finally King George's personal committment to the strategic and symbolic significance of the city, to foster realization of the transfer. The royal 'push' was enough to counter the various disadvantages of Delhi that were being bandied about at that time.

The stage was set for yet another new Delhi, the seventeenth in a long succession of city building efforts. Here was a situation that was not unique as far as Delhi was concerned, a city to be laid

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[1] PP, "Announcements by and on behalf of His Majesty the King-Emperor"; from Irving, New Haven 1981.
[2] Hardinge, *My Indian Years.* (London 1948); from Gupta, Delhi 1981.
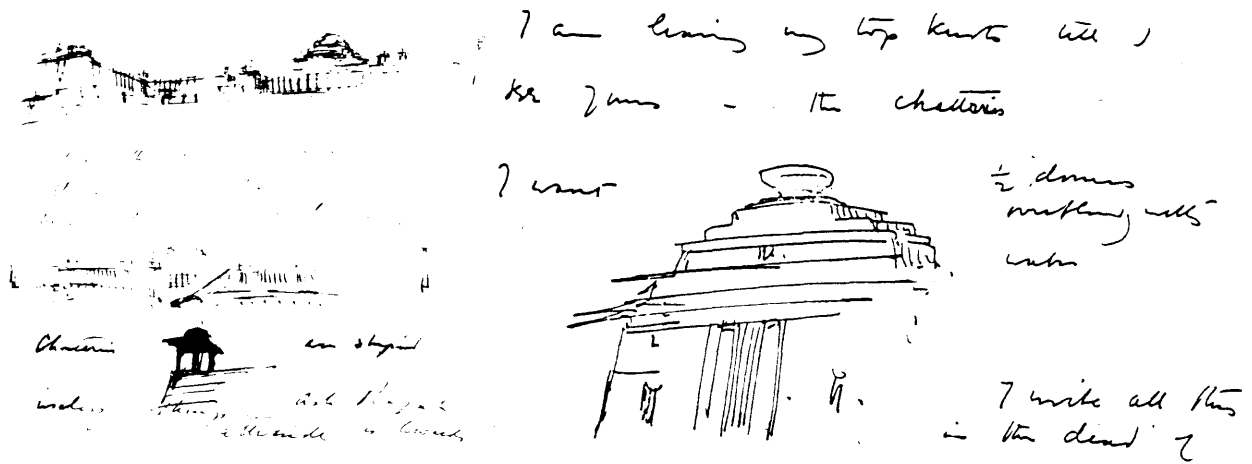
Fig. 4.3.3   Ink sketches of Viceroy's House by Edwin Lutyens,
including a detail sketch of a chattri, and inscribed,
"Chattris are stupid useless things."
September 16, 1913

out by an alien colonist power with an attempt, at least in the form
of stated intention, to render it place and culture specific. It was
however, unique in one special way. Earlier cities and citadels
built upon this site did not abut a 'densely populated urban area
with a sense of community and a high level of commercial
development'[1], they were therefore free of any responsibility to
mold the new development to accommodate, in some
considered fashion, an existing town or settlement. If there were
settlements which were consolidated upon to build one of the
earlier Delhi's, they were nowhere near as advanced an urban
settlement as was Shahjahanabad. The concern to
accommodate the local flavor was however not a serious
consideration in the mind of the British planners, in spite of
references to the contrary[2]. In the early stages of design,
Lutyens himself had expressed an open disdain for any and all
the local architectural traditions. There could be no alternative to

[1] Gupta, Delhi 1981.

[2] as in the "Final Report of the Delhi Town Planning Committee
Regarding the Selected Site, with Plan and Two Maps," vol.20 (East
India: Reports of Commisioners), Cd.6889, 1913.
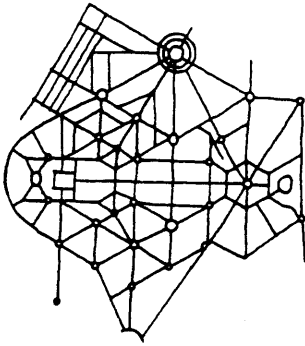
the classical tradition, since in his words, it was 'better, wiser, saner, and more gentlemanlike'[1], than the 'Mogulese and Hindoo contraptions', as he liked to refer to most of what represented the rich vernacular. It was obvious from his plan that he did not think much of the planning traditions either. Symmetry, geometry, and order; these were the three fundamentals close to the heart of the Mughals. In 'Indian Summer', Irving's commentary reminds us of these very same qualities inherent in the new plan, what he misses out in his eulogies, are issues of scale and accommodation. Lutyens plan would make an excellent, oversized Mughal garden, it had very little to do with the notion of an Indian city. Breese reconfirms this aspect of the plan, he says

> It is a perfect example of a Western 'transplant' that bears little or no relation to the cultural environment in which it was placed; a more nearly un-Indian plan could scarcely be imagined. . . . New Delhi was designed for foreign consumption.[2]

Well, not exactly a 'Western transplant', the plan for New Delhi was more a pristine synthesis of the 'colonial culture'[3], there is as little of London, Paris, or New York, in what was to become New Delhi, as there is of Shahjahanabad, Lucknow or Calcutta. No doubt, it drew its strength almost exclusively from western planning perceptions of the time, primarily some of the notions inherent in the 'garden city' idea. The formal goals of the new city were to symbolize and aggrandize the glory of the British Empire to the exclusion of almost all local values. The large proportion of spaces which are visually grandiose, ceremonially majestic, and symbolically imperial, bear this out in no uncertain terms. What better way to achieve this than to set it apart from that which was commonplace and familiar? In fact, what better way than to set it apart, in style, scale, and grandeur, from that which was considered, till then, a symbol of Imperial might in the city, the

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[1] Irving, New Haven/London 1981.
[2] Breese, 1974.
[3] King, London 1976.

Imperial Palace of Shahjahan? Naturally, for a project of this scale
and import, prolonged deliberations and numerous changes
formed a part of the enti~ ~rocess, right from the selection of the
architect to the finalization of the plans. This took its time. During
this period of debate and decision, the walled city was cut off
from the Civil Lines, which, with the addition of 500 acres was
maintained as a Temporary Capital. The transfer of the capital
resulted very swiftly in the politicization of Delhi.

As I have mentioned earlier, the city of Delhi was essentially
insular, the people were primarily preoccupied with what went on
within the city, as opposed to regional or even national concerns.
With the capital came the influence of major nationalist leaders
and consequently the nationalist movement. Nationalist political
organizations were rousing enthusiasm in the city, fuelled in part
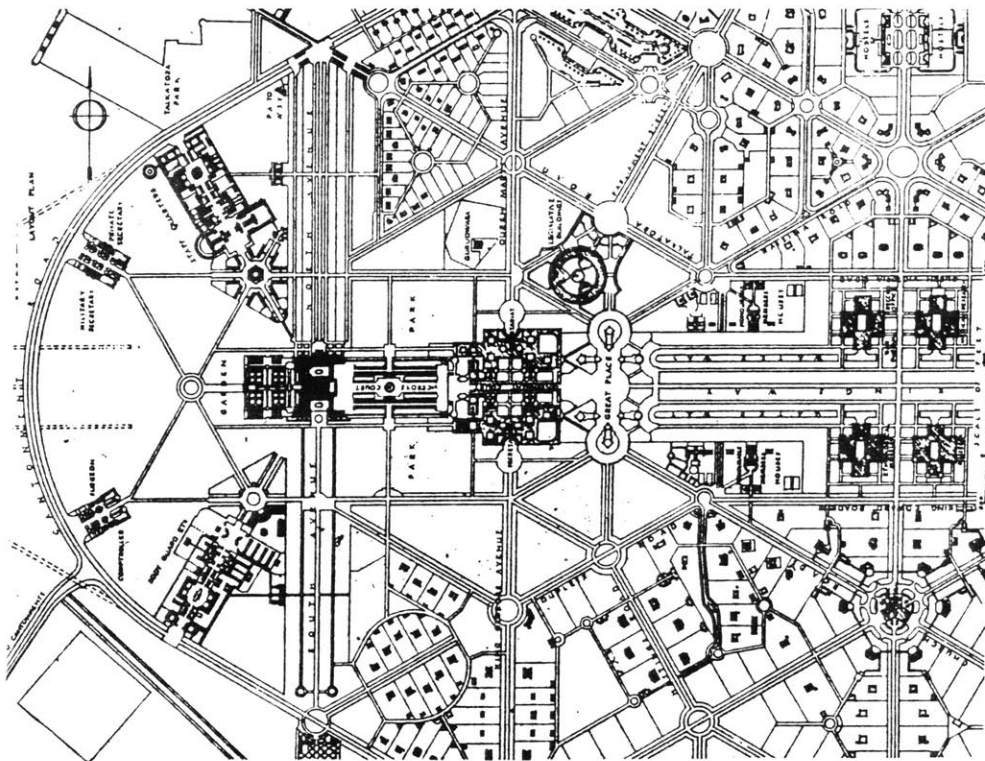
Fig. 4.3.4   Edwin Lutyen's plan for New Delhi.
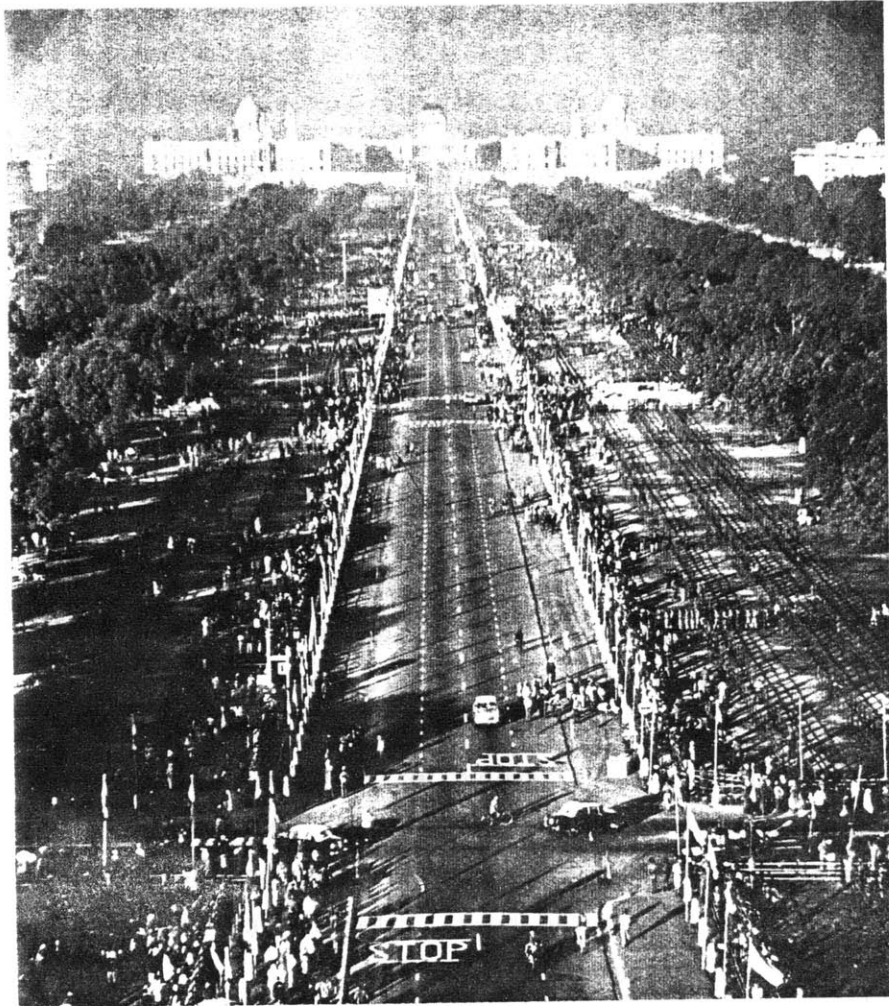
Fig. 4.3.5   *The center-piece of New Delhi; on a hill in the distance, Rashtrapati Bhavan (The President's Residence, earlier the Viceregal home), flanked by the Central Secretariat.*

among other things like increased prices and taxation, by the strict enforcement of municipal building bye-laws.

The plan for New Delhi was a combination of geometric forms, pure as well as mutated, numerous axes connecting points of interest, wide avenues, and double rows of trees. The central point in the plan was the Government House and the Secretariat on Raisina Hill, a raised hillock just east of the Delhi Ridge. Connaught Circus, a circular commercial complex, which was located between New Delhi and the old city, became the central

business district of the city. This was the area where, to some extent, the Europeans and the natives interacted on an everyday basis. The important officials and local kings and princes had their dwellings in close proximity to the central zone, near or along the Central Vista. The further one got from the center, the lower the rank of the residents, such that in effect, the poorest had to travel the farthest to work. The city was characterized by wide open spaces, sparsely located buildings, and a very low density, flouting all traditional and climatic norms for an effective urban form. Planned for a maximum population of 65,000, Delhi has a population today which is over a hundred times that figure, and has become a sprawling metropolis, a consequence of the dispersive nature of Lutyen's plan. In 1923, the entire policy of the Government towards Delhi was reviewed and revised. It was decided, at a time when New Delhi was almost complete, that the intention had not been to create a new city, but merely a new quarter of Greater Delhi, 'devoted to the purposes of Government.'[1] The Committee had finally recognized the mistake of alienating the new city from its older, and less glamorous neighbors. However, they too failed to include the walled city within the terms of their recommendations. New Delhi finally became officially operational in 1931, a self conscious, elegant, behemoth, sitting in stark contrast, and in many ways, mocking its impoverished neighbors. Shahjahanabad was an urban island in a rural sea; New Delhi was to become somewhat of an urban island within an urban sea. The island grew untiringly, until eventually, it had swallowed up the sea.

The city of Delhi had experienced some very significant changes since the advent of the British. These changes, inter-related though they were, could be broadly categorized under the following,

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[1] Delhi Development Committee, *1939 Report.* (Government of India Press: New Delhi; 1939); from Breese, Princeton 1974.

* The perception by the authorities, of Muslims and Hindus as stereotypical and essentially segregated communities. This was quite different from the perspective of the Mughal rulers who had viewed them with a greater degree of homogeneity and compatibility. The British perception naturally affected their attitude towards regulation, the nature of which must have fostered and abetted a greater degree of segregation between these two communities than had existed earlier.

* The period of British occupation was also characterized by an obsessive over-reaction on the part of the authorities to expressions of any kind of social or political discontent. The British had a phobia for any kind of large gathering or crowds. In India, this kind of congregation does not necessarily imply violence. The fear of consolidated opposition made the rulers unduly alarmist in the face of all kinds of harmless fracas.

* The changes that occured in the physical fabric and form of the city as an outcome of the mutiny of 1857 were the introduction of the railway, a service infrastructure, and rigid municipal codes. The various extensions fuelled as much by the prosperity of the city as by rural-urban migration and congestion, rapidly changed the form of the city from one contained by circumvallation, to one that spread quite extensively outside of the city walls, culminating in the establishment of a new capital.

* Another change which was to leave a strong impact on later day Delhi was the introduction of the 'barrack' and the 'bungalow' type of buildings. This was naturally accompanied by some changes in the prevalent methods of construction. These two types, in concert

with Lutyen's expansive plan, changed the entire fabric
of the contemporary city.

* Many British systems and concepts of urban life were
introduced, which although 'unfavourably contrasted
with earlier institutions'[1] remained, and in fact uprooted
the traditional systems. Gupta mentions some of these
opposing systems as the police system versus the
chowkidari or watchman system, western medical
facilities versus Delhi's eminent hakims[2], the new
sewerage system consisting of open drains versus the
Shahjahani drains, the piped water supply versus the
Nahar-i-Bihisht canal, western missionary schools versus
colleges and the local madarsas, or schools attached to
mosques. Of course, the greatest of these was the new
capital. This is not to say that some of these systems
were inappropriate, or would not have independently
caught up with Delhites, in time. It is indeed likely that the
modus operandi of these new systems, as well as their
relationship with traditional methods, would certainly
have been quite different.

* Although segregation, with an intent to minimise
contact[3], was a conscious purpose in the planning of
New Delhi, it created a suitable urban crucible which
supported a contact situation at that time, however
tenuous, between two cultures. This somewhat slender
contact was to become reinforced greatly after
independence, ironically as it were, in the absence of
any form of physical presence in the part of the dominant
culture, in this case, what Anthony King calls the

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[1] Gupta, Delhi 1981.
[2] physicians practising one of the Muslim systems of medicine
[3] Balandier, G. " The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach"; in
Wallerstein, New York 1966.

'metropolitan society'[1]. The contact took place at different levels of economic, social, technological and political spheres. Eventually, the outcome of this contact was a third culture which was distinctly identifiable from its cultural 'progenitors'.

4.4   THE LAST DAYS OF THE COLONIAL CAPITAL

The monumental effort to construct an edifice sanctifying the might and the wealth of the British Empire was, in a strange way, an augury of independence for India. It was as if a grand memorial was rising on the Raisina Hill, one which would tell the sons and daughters of India, and the world, of the glorious years that had been. The inauguration ceremonies for New Delhi took place in February 1931. It was but a 'requeim for that dream of abiding dominion'[2] as the sepulcher of an empire was commissioned into active use. Ironically, during the same week, the first Round Table Conference concluded in London, having initiated the discussion towards Indian self-rule. These concurrent incidences as well as the drama of independence which was played out in the following sixteen years must have ameliorated any resentment to New Delhi's message as a symbol of dominion. So much so that it slipped into its hetherto unforeseen role, that of a seat of government for free India, without much ado. Gandhi's response to the new capital is interesting

> (It was) a waste of money on architectural piles. (The buildings) were in conflict with the best interests of the nation.[3]

He felt they did not represent India's millions, especially those with neither place to sleep nor bread to eat.

The advent of World War II slowed things down tremendously. This period in the history of India as much as of Delhi was one of

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[1] King, London 1976.

[2] Irving, New Haven/London 1981.

[3] Irving, New Haven/London 1981.

turmoil and restlessness. Building and development almost came to a standstill. Violence was commonplace, in sporadic burst of rioting and protests, as the nationalist movement became more and more vociferous in their claims for independence. The heightened presence of the army and a large number of other security personnel was plain for all to see. As Gerald Breese puts it, 'then, suddenly, it was 1947.'[1]

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[1] Breese, Princeton 1974.

CHAPTER V
THE PRESENT SCENARIO
PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT

5.1 INDEPENDENCE

In a single sweeping motion, the shroud of oppression that had
hovered over the city for centuries was lifted off its heavy
shoulders. Freedom has that exhilarating feeling, specially when
it has been long denied, yet it has a staggering weight of its own.
A function of independence, and the changing times, the city
has since been undergoing a transformation that has been both
dramatic and violent. Especially so in the earliest decades of the
new-born nation, the fifties, sixties, and seventies. The eighties
ushered in a period of some stability, only in that patterns had
been established, roles had been determined, new attitudes and
lifestyles were beginning to find expression within a traditional
mold, where there had been an uncertainty, a status quo was in
the process of becoming entrenched. It is sometime during this
period that the city almost inadvertently changed gears. From a
twenty miles an hour city, it progressively changed into an eighty
miles an hour city. There was a need for a new engine, a new
aerodynamic styling for the body, a more fuel efficient operation
and better brakes. It had to also have a familiarity and handling
that was reminiscent of the slower vehicle. However, all that was
not altogether forthcoming, the older model was being driven far
beyond the edge of its tether.

> The basic fact about Indian urbanization is the sheer
> magnitude of urban population growth in a situation of chronic
> poverty. The basic problem is the assembly of resources, and
> above all, the organization of executive action to deal
> effectively with urban population on this immense case.[1]

The first part of this statement is probably true of Delhi, even
though the situation probably does not bear out the

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[1] Rosser, International Urbanization Survey 1972.

phrase with as much conviction as does Calcutta or Bombay. The second part of the quote, paraphrased above, only represents a certain perspective that the author feels contributes significantly to the situation in the city. The following section provides a sketch of this accelerating urban growth, and the constant search for a better framework with which to respond to the rapid, incremental, payload.

Urban vernaculars are essentially peoples' responses to external circumstances, blended, over time, into a specific cultural flavor. It is necessary to know the circumstances, as much as it is necessary to know the people, in order to comment upon the vernacular. Briefly, this chapter introduces the larger circumstances that marked time in independent Delhi.

5.2 THE FIRST TEN YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE : (1947-57)

Jana Gana Mana Adhinayaka Jaya Hey
Bharata Bhagya Vidhata
-Rabindranath Tagore[1]

At midnight on August 15, 1947, the tricolored flag of independent India replaced the Union Jack atop the historic Red Fort (also the Imperial Palace of Shahjahan). The price of freedom was indeed monumental; what had been British India, a region distinguished by an unified identity and a dogged determination to send the Britishers packing, was parcelled into two independent nations, an Islamic Pakistan, and a Hindu dominated secular India. In Prime Minister Nehru's words,

> A moment comes which comes rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends and when the soul of a nation long supressed finds utterance.

This utterance must have borne an incomprehensible and garbled message to many members of the new nation in those first days after partition. All of a sudden, what had been home for generations had to be abandoned, and there was no place to go

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[1] the national anthem

other than to run in the same direction that millions of others were running, Muslims towards Pakistan, and Hindus towards India. Tales of gory violence, murder, bloodbath and other atrocities on both sides continue to shock and grieve us to this day. Words are grossly inadequate to convey the pathos and ruin that this exodus represented to countless families. Delhi, as the capital of free India, was a major destination for much of this tidal wave of migration. The ensuing panic, chaos and disorder brought a sharp and painful end to the robust festivities that had followed the declaration of independence. The dreams, the joys, and the nightmarish realities of freedom, all congealed into a sort of surrealist existence.

The numbers of those who migrated into India from Pakistan during this period is astronomical, a figure close to five million people. Of these, roughly five hundred thousand came to Delhi. There were 91 displaced persons who came to Delhi in 1940; 468,562 persons in 1947; 26,222 persons in 1948; 400 persons in 1949 and only 166 persons in 1950.[1] Delhi, during this period was the most rapidly growing city in the history of the country.[2] The majority of those who arrived were the Punjabis, i.e. residents of the state of Punjab, the part that had been locked into Pakistan. This was a phenomenon familiar to Delhi. As Datta says,

> Many times in history, the city has become the home of emigrants. Descending upon it in blind rage, uprooted and deprived newcomers have found or generated new life, insomuch that the city became more energetic, more inventive, and more spirited.[3]

It had happened twice before in the near past, of course under totally different circumstances and involving relatively fewer numbers. The first was between 1857 and 1860 after the mutiny

[1] *Census of India*, 1951, vol.VIII, Part I-A.
[2] Rosser, International Urbanization Survey 1972.
[3] Datta, V.N. "Punjabi Refugees and the Urban Development of Greater Delhi", in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

and later in 1921 when the capital shifted from Calcutta. A refugee component which is 28.4% of the entire city population, as it was in 1951, leaves us with a phenomenon which could not but have a major impact on the growth of the city. There was a doubling in the figures for average densities for Delhi in a single decade.[1] Some of the refugees rerouted their journey, first settling down temporarily in a neighboring state, and gradually filtering into Delhi over the next two decades. This delayed refugee migration was fuelled by a combination of the opportunities that the city offered as a capital and regional commercial center, safety, and the erstwhile presence of friends and relatives for support.

Initially there was total chaos as the refugees thronged in camps, schools, colleges, temples, squatted on railway platforms, streets, pavements and even put up shacks wherever they could. Houses abandoned by Muslim owners were occupied. For the Government, it was a nightmare in many ways. Apart from the human trauma and the problem of organizing the rudderless masses, it also faced the problem of eventually sorting out ownership, removing people from various kinds of slums, encroachments, and unauthorized colonies, that had been set up.

> No physical, economic, and administrative infrastructure existed to cope with it. No extra housing, water supply, sewage, or transport was available. The refugees were in such dire straits that unless something had been done immediately there might have been dangerous social and political consequences.[2]

The Government tackled the problem by swiftly setting up a ministry of rehabilitation. Apart from organizing, and setting up camps on a better footing than had been possible earlier, providing food, clothing, blankets etc., the ministry also allotted

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[1] 3,470 p/km in 1941 to 7,169 p/km in 1951; *Census of India*, 1961, vol.XIX, Part II-A

[2] Datta, V.N. in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

available, vacant property to displaced persons, and set into motion a massive construction operation to provide new shelter. The architectural character, as can be imagined, was nothing to write home about, but to many who occupied them, the bland, unfeeling, undifferentiated boxes must have meant more than a bucketful of gold. These 'box' environments sprang up like weeds in an overgrown garden, and by 1951, there were close to 20,000 new homes. New schools, shops and hospitals were set up, albeit in a minimalist, 'make-do' fashion. A large amount of financial assistance was made available, in the form of soft loans, and grants, to the displaced families. These funds were to be used for education, construction, and as seed capital for setting up some form of livelihood. With such a large amount of activity, it is but natural that some new settlements were established from scratch. These colonies consisted almost entirely of hastily erected, standard-order housing, as well as temporary constructions. The city expanded to the south (Malviya Nagar), the west (the two Rajendra Nagars, Old and New, the three Patel Nagars, East, West and South, Moti Nagar, Ramesh Nagar and
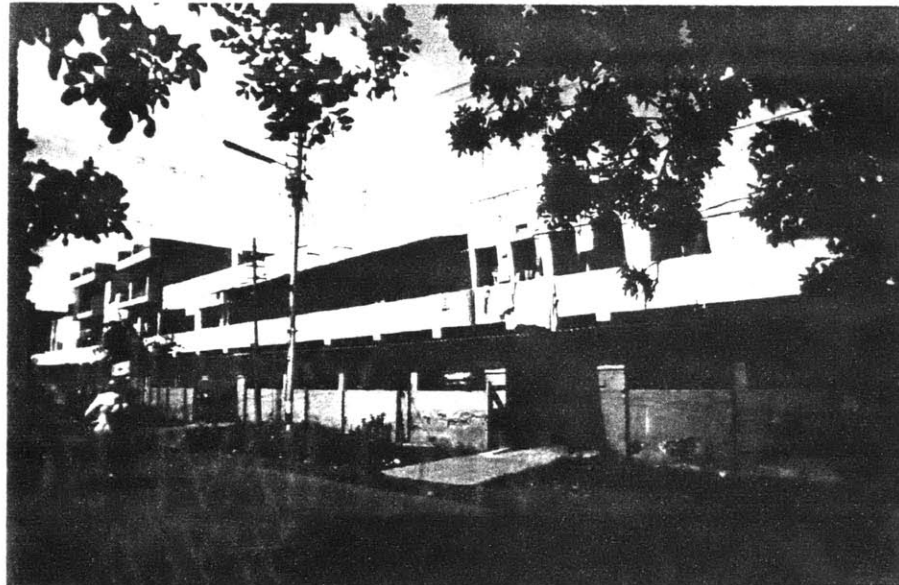
Fig.5.2.1 *Some of the housing put up as refugee housing in the fifties by the Ministry of Rehabilitation as it looks today. Layers of unplanned additions and user modifications characterize the evolution of a type.*

Tilak Nagar)and to the east (Gandhi Nagar). The urban area consisting of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi and Delhi Cantonment grew from a total of 198 sq.km in 1951 to 323 sq.km. by 1961.[1]

However, the government alone cannot take all the credit for the rehabilitation of the refugees. The Punjabis themselves, who formed a large majority of the population influx, are a sincere, aggressive, hard working, and enterprising lot. Besides, they were educated, by and large; in fact, their literacy rate was higher than that of the resident population of Delhi.[2] Another characteristic of the Punjabis which stood them in good stead, was their resilience in the face of adversity. They sprang back from the despondency that must have accompanied them all the way from their ravaged homes with surprising alacrity, and set about the task of building a new life for themselves with 'firmness and perseverence'[3]. It wasn't an easy task by any means since the kind of work the Delhi Muslims left in their wake was totally unsuitable to the skills and training of the immigrant, non Muslims. A change took place in the occupational pattern, apparently no simple substitution was possible, the new population took up jobs that were new to them, creating them where necessary.[4]

At this point, let us just step aside from these turbulent and tumultous events, and look at the scenario of public management, and the planning of urban development during this period. This is crucial from the point of view of later perceptions of the urban vernacular. During the period just prior to independence, the Delhi Improvement Trust (DIT) was

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[1] Datta, V.N. in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

[2] Delhi Census Handbook, VI; Datta, V.N. in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

[3] Datta, V.N. in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

[4] *Annual Report*, Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation, 6 Sept. 1947; Datta, V.N. in Frykenberg, Delhi 1986.

entrusted with the major task of reorganizing the uncoordinated and chaotic urban growth that prompted the preparation of the 'Hume Report', as it is known after its author. This Report, on Relief of Congestion in Delhi, produced in 1936, was instrumental in the institution of the DIT. It seems that the DIT did not live up to the expectations vested in it by the local government. A DIT Enquiry Committee formed in 1950 to look into the functioning of the trust, came out, in the Birla report,with damaging findings condemning the trust as a 'story of failure'[1]. At the same time, the report acknowledged the unprecedented responsibilities and the daunting obstacles that the trust had had to face in attempting to carry out its task within limited available resources. There were a number of other agencies and public institutions which shared the responsibilities pertaining to matters of urban development, during the same period that the trust was operational. Some of these were the Land and Development Department, the Central Public Works Department, Delhi Municipal Committee, New Delhi Municipal Committee, Notified Area Committee, Central Coordinating Committee for Greater Delhi etc..[2] It is evident from descriptions that there was no single authority which could suggest, direct, and control, critical issues of urban development. It was felt that Delhi was, at this time, really in need of a Master Plan which would help coordinate the development of the various distinct components of its overall urban structure.[3]

The end of the first decade of independence saw the completion of the *Interim General Plan for Greater Delhi*, the first document which came close to resembling a master plan. This was prepared under the auspices of the Town Planning Organization (estd.

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[1] Delhi Improvement Trust Enquiry Committee. *Report of the Delhi Improvement Trust Enquiry Committee*, Vol. I & II, Delhi: Govt. of India Press, 1951.;in Breese, Princeton 1974.

[2] Breese, Princeton 1974.

[3] These have been broadly identified as, i. the old city; ii. New Delhi(Lutyen); iii. Delhi as it has grown since 1947; iv. the cantonment; v. the urban fringe (King, London 1976)

1955) acting in an advisory capacity to the Delhi Development (Provisional) Authority[1]. It represented a take off point more than anything else, given the limiting circumstances of time and data that was available. It provided information and perspectives on,

> land classification, historical growth, existing landuse, residential areas, major work and commercial areas, redevelopment areas, educational institutions, parks and open spaces, historical monuments, community facilities, population density and trends, major circulation patterns, vehicular and cycle traffic and public transit.[2]

The model that was set up as a worthy example of progressive master planning was one borrowed from the west. It moved to impose western planning principles, developmental ideologies, and implementation strategies, onto an environment which was as different from the west as day from night. It was at this stage, that a number of principles were established upon which the bulwark of landuse planning in Delhi would rest. The more salient of these were the differentiation of functional areas or segregation of use, better standards and controls for achieving these, and a better integration and distribution of amenities. Over time, use segregation, initially a Lutyenesque concept, was to give rise to the perception of a city norm which was hitherto unknown. It was also the first time that the idea of a National Capital Area for planning purposes was mooted, an area that would extend beyond the Union Territory (or state) of Delhi. This
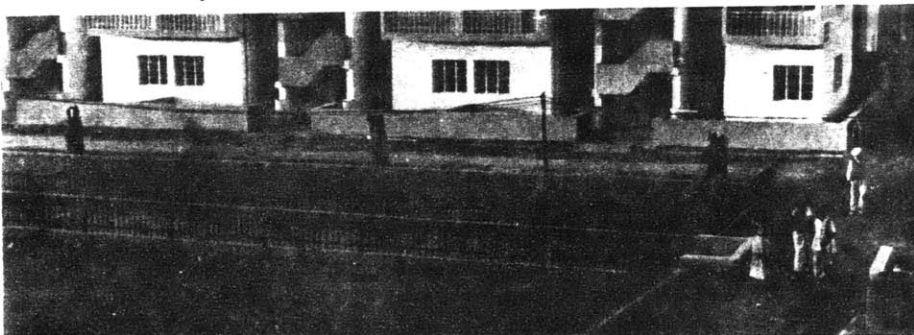
Fig.5.2.2   *The outcome of segregation, the new space ethic that calls for empty expanses and unloved associations.*

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[1] The Delhi Improvement Trust was converted into the Delhi Development Authority in 1957.
[2] Breese, Princeton 1974.
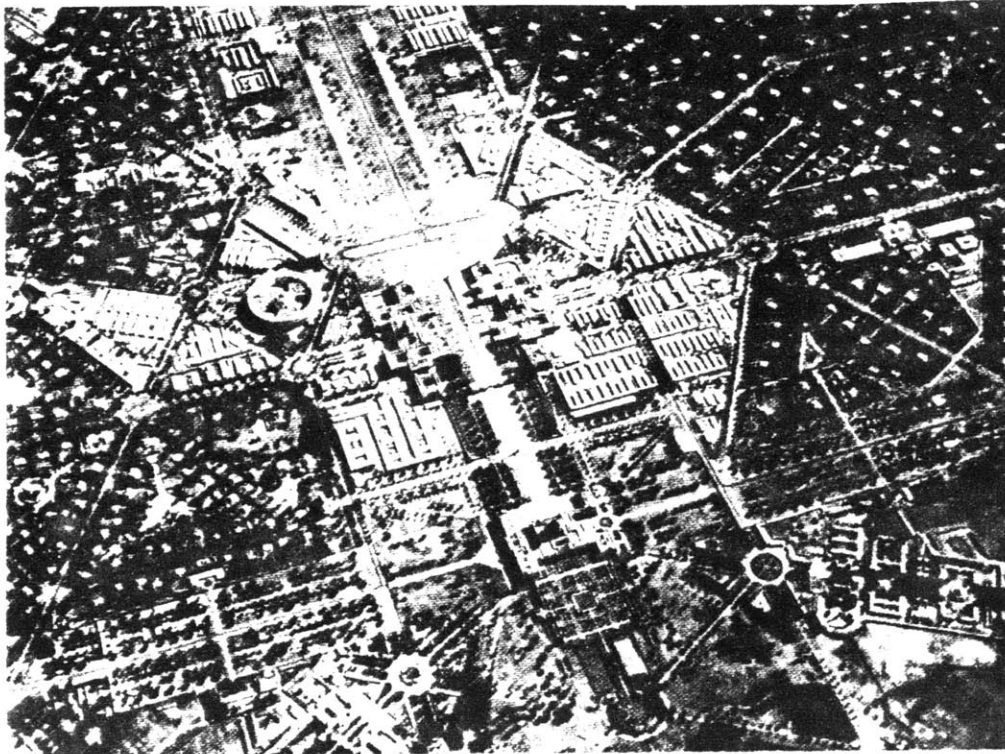
Fig.5.2.3   The post-Lutyenesque norm for the 'good' city. Segregated use, dispersed settlement character, wide avenues, shady trees, all part of the imported system of values.

planning effort, if not in form and grandeur, simply in scope and the scale of its responsibilities, belittled Lutyen's endeavour forty five years earlier. The period from 1951-56 was also the *First Five Year Plan* period.[1]   There was very little, in the first plan, on urbanization; probably a reflection of the central gevernment's perception of priorities, at that time. The task of adapting Delhi to the needs of a new democratic and socialist nation was finally underway.

Politically, Delhi was slated a Part C state in the First Schedule of the Constitution. This meant that the state came under the administration of the Presidentof the Union, through the office of a Chief Commisioner or a Lt. Governor. The 48 member Delhi Legislative Assembly, or the house of representatives, came into being in 1952.[2] In a form of representative government, Delhi

[1] The Five Year Plans were part of a format adopted for national planning, by the Government of India, through the auspices of the National Planning Commission.
[2] Chandra, Delhi 1969.

had itself a new political status. over the years, the dynamics of a dual presence, that of both city and national governments, played a critical role in urban development. 'The show-piece of the nation', a well quoted sobriquet for the city, represents the infiltration of concerns of national image building, as a guiding factor in city administration and development. The flowering of the all too numerous national and city sponsored institutions, civic bodies, and agencies, contributed to the layers of confusion which characterize, to this day, the management and the administration of the city.

The neglect of cities was a natural outcome of the anti-urban sentiments of leaders like Gandhi and Nehru.[1] This was probably due to three factors. First, the British rule was centered in the urban areas, as was much of their preference in terms of investment. Second, the condition of the rural sector was pathetic, and at the time of independence, rural India did merit greater concern. Third, the city was seen ideologically and emotionally as a necessary evil, Gandhi saw the city as a breeding ground for dishonesty and greed.[2] This disdain for the city

Fig.5.2.4 Nehru, Gandhi and Patel: The stalwarts that gave independent India a vision for the future.

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[1] Jacobson, Prakash, Urban Affairs Quarterly March 1967.
[2] refer to Töennies' Gesellschaft and Gemeinschaft; ibid., pp.

manifested itself in sufficient strength, not to merit so much as a mention, under the title of 'urban development', in any of the three lists (Union, State and Concurrent) in the Constitution. These lists delegated responsibilities between the Union and the States.[1] This attitude at the political helm, set the tone for urban development early in the life of the country.

In spite of the daunting task of nation building, which lay ahead, most people were optimistic. Freedom had been wrested, quite deservingly from the British, ending the centuries of foreign domination. A romantic idealism about the future pervaded the thinking of the times. A heady intoxication colored the public mood. Yet, there were doubts. Decisions had to be taken that would set a clear course for the newborn nation. However,

> Our notions were woolly because over the centuries of foreign rule we had almost lost the memory of rulership.[2]

A course had to be charted out for the city too. Efforts in this direction, betrayed an uncertainty born of inexperience, and an enthusiasm born out of a committment to the public good. The people were fired with passion, yet restrained by a habit of servitude and supressed creativity. At the end of a decade of independence, the success story was impressive, 'as India felt her new economic muscle'.[3] Hidden in the resultant optimism, not entirely speculative this time, lay a grave error, one that would extract a heavy price in the not so distant future. In Thapar's words,

> The whole development had taken a kind of middle class orientation. No social transformation at the base had been ordered.[4]

[1] Rosser, International Urbanization Survey 1972.

[2] Thapar, Space & Society June/August 1987.

[3] Thapar, Space & Society June/August 1987.

[4] Thapar, Space & Society June/August 1987.

This orientation was wedged into the provisions made for the city, with a naivete and innocence that is regrettable but at the same time difficult to condemn.

5.3   THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS; MASTER PLAN FOR DELHI-NEW DELHI (1957-77)

The neglect in national planning, to account for the urban areas, was gradually rectified over subsequent five year plans as the dismal plight of the cities became increasingly evident. The much needed national perspective on urban issues came in the form of concern revealed in the *Second Five Year Plan* (for 1956-61),

> It is necessary that from now on the future course of urban development should be viewed by public authority at the Centre, in the States, and in each region in its correct perspective.[1]

The *Third Five Year Plan* (for 1961-66) re-emphasized this concern for the development of organic planning schemes for large urban areas, and included a section titled 'Urban Planning and Land Policy', wherein it laid down the main ingredients of developmental policy.[2] The *Fourth Five Year Plan* (for 1966-72) 'placed greater emphasis on cities than ever before',[3] besides planning, it emphasized the importance of completing scheduled plan targets on time.

Against the backdrop of this national initiative, the draft master plan for Delhi was prepared during the second five year plan period, completed, and published in mid 1960. During this time urban problems continued to proliferate with a greater intensity. Delhi's significance as a center for employment burgeoned as a result of considerable expansions in the Government

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[1] India, Planning Commission. *Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961)* (Government of India Press: New Delhi; 1953)
[2] India, Planning Commission. *Third Five Year Plan (1961-66)* (Government of India Press: New Delhi; 1961)
[3] India, Planning Commission. *Fourth Five Year Plan (1966-71)* (Government of India Press: New Delhi; 1961)

establishment. These large numbers occupied in public employment would, over a period of time, over-bureaucratize, and consequently retard the effeciency of many aspects of everyday life in Delhi. The careful creation of officialized sinecures by individuals drew away a substantial chunk of the effort that could have contributed to nation building. Not that commerce and industry were by any means neglected, they were just relegated to second spot and were subjected to the excessive bureaucratization that I have just mentioned. The advantage of being close to the authorities, a boon for the sanctioning of licenses and permits, was sufficient for many businesses to counter this handicap. Almost every major industry felt the need to have a presence in the capital, even though their major operations may have been located elsewhere. The draft plan charted an ambitious course for the future of the city, in many ways it was farsighted and realistic in its assessment of the directions and trends for future growth. It did betray the remnants of the psyche that resulted from the combined effect of New Delhi, the British phobia of crowding, their love for wide-open spaces, and the 'over-reaction to the congestion of old Delhi'.[1] I refer here to the passion of chronic 'low density syndrome' that has characterized all but some of the latest planning strategies. However, some of the provisions and recommendations made by the Town Planning Organization in this document did not belie their ignorance of the complexities and contradictions that would characterize implementation and administration of the plan at every level,

> planned development has not taken place in a planned manner. . . ironically whatever implementation has taken place, has been mainly in response to the pressures developing from place to place and from time to time and not according to a defined time sequence or well conceived programme.[2]

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[1] Meier, New York 1980.
[2] TCPO, New Delhi 1973.

Its success in illuminating the ramifications of a continuance of urban trends which were prevalent at the time, could not buttress the inadequacies in the path it chose to pave for urban reconsolidation.

The *Master Plan for Delhi* was subsequently published and made statutory in 1962. This was followed by the development of the 'zonal development plans' for 136 zones into which the Delhi urban area was to be divided. All development henceforth would take place in strict conformity with zonal plans, of course deviation, engineered through bribes and grafts not forthcoming. The rigidity of these zonal plans only proved to encourage corruption since there was no official room for variance. Besides, the plan advocated an active and robust public participation as an essential part of the planning process. Full marks again for intent, zero for execution. Breese diagnoses this reticence on the part of the public as follows,

> . . . since the tradition of public participation in decision making has had little opportunity to appear through the centuries of external domination and, more recently, the urgencies of coping with problems incidental to Independence and Partition.[1]

Lack of sufficient initiative and imagination from the planning agencies to spark some enthusiasm, through, for example, a better orchestrated public campaign, cannot altogether absolve them of their responsibility in this matter.

Large scale public acquisition of all urbanisable land, under a progressive urban land policy, was envisaged in consort with the policy measures proposed in the Master Plan. The land acquired was to be developed and disposed of on a lease-hold basis in accordance to the landuse plan.[2] This was one of the policy

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[1] Breese, Princeton 1974.
[2] Shafi, New Delhi 1981.
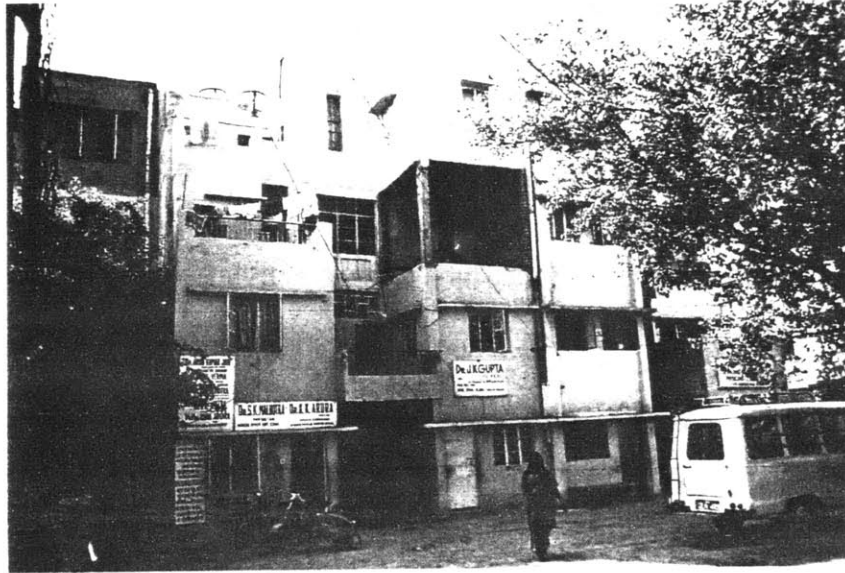
*Fg.5.3.1   Housing built on publicly acquired land; part of the limited ,
but growing formal process.*

initiatives of this period that was followed through with some
amount of rigor. By 1977, almost forty thousand acres had been
acquired, as against a projected target of over sixty thousand
acres.[1] However, having acquired the land, the Delhi
Development Authority went about developing and disposing of
it with its customary ineptness. Large tracts of undeveloped land,
frozen without any urban use, resulted in housing shortages,
encroachments on public land, insurgence of unauthorized
colonies, and the skyrocketing of land values, exactly what it was
cut out to prevent.[2] Distribution of the land itself, provides an
interesting sketch of the functioning of development processes
in Delhi. Of the land acquired by the DDA through the sixties,
almost fifty percent was allocated to the high income groups,
twenty five percent to the middle income group, and only twelve
percent to the low income groups.[3] One of the primary benefits
of a large scale acquisition program, to ensure control over land
distribution, and to stimulate some kind of equity in reservation
and allocation, was in spirit, and in letter, ignored. Consequently,

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[1] Verma, New Delhi 1981

[2] Misra, Habitat International 1986.

[3] Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983.

this resulted in escalating land prices and a housing deficit that grew by 250% from 1960 to 1970.   ʻ

There was yet another far reaching by-product of public land acquisition in Delhi. This was the evolution of the so called 'unauthorised colonies'. Agricultural land around Delhi was notified for acquisition and subsequent urbanisation. Due to the delay between the notification and the actual acquisition, and as a result of the low rates of compensation offered, the farmers/owners themselves illegaly subdivided the land and sold it illegally, at low rates, to those who could not afford to buy land in formal land markets. Considering the uncontrollable price rise in the formal market, few could, if at all, afford to purchase land, legally. Land tenure for these settlers have been relatively secure,'although the transaction is illegal, the property does pass from one ownership to another.'[1] The Urban Land Ceiling and Regulation Act of 1976 unintentionally provided a further impetus for this process of quasi-legal colonization of land, by imposing a ceiling on ownership of vacant land[2] in urban

Fig.5.3.2 *Unauthorized colonies. Developed on land to be acquired for the formal process, it represents the substantial, and growing extra-legal process.*

[1] Mukherjee, unpub. Cambridge 1987.
[2] land occupied by unauthorized settlements is considered 'vacant'

agglomerations, and sanctioning the public acquisition of land in excess of the ceiling.[1] The major objective was to alleviate 'land shortage by mopping up excess holdings and thus prevent speculation and profiteering.'[2] The act proved ineffective and confusing to both the lay person and the lawyer, only two acres of land were acquired in Delhi. Landlords divided excess land and sold it cheap to those who were willing to buy. The 'slumlords' thereafter ensured that nobody dared evict them.

The DDA, while dealing with the housing problem, put up numerous housing schemes on the land acquired by it over the years. As these projects, normally designed and executed by the DDA's in-house staff, proliferated in various parts of the city, an uncanny predictability was observed in their physical appearance. If you looked carefully with a discerning eye, low, middle, and high income groups, each had their associated trappings well camouflaged amidst the starch white oceans of building mass. As you travelled in a bus on a hot summer afternoon, you could see these endless rows of housing passing
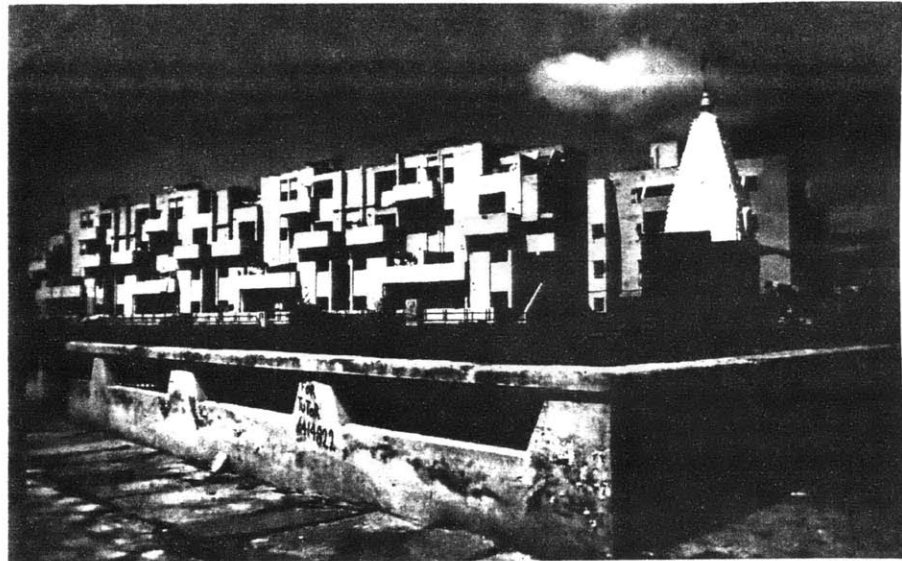
Fig.5.3.3   Examples of the now familiar DDA housing. A lack of choice, or an obsession with western models?

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[1] Krishna Rao, New Delhi 1981.
[2] Chengappa, India Today; Jan31, 1988

by in repititive rhythm, as if droning the same dismal song in a
monotone. Maybe hidden somewhere along these mass
housing contraptions, lie somebody's distorted vision of equity,
at least in appearance. Quantitatively, the units of housing that
were provided must have done wonders to the lives of the few
low and middle income families who were fortunate enough to
get one, supply has been running what seems to be a hopeless,
losing battle with demand. More significantly, for the average
citizen of Delhi it has gradually redefined the urban character to
some extent, undoubtedly for the worse.

A majority of the publicly acquired land was urbanized and resold
as individual plots. These were some standardized sizes, and a
diversity in character and location. The people who took up
residence in these colonies typically came from the more stable
sections of society, from the low-middle income person with a
steady job, to the successful businessman. Here was the other
extreme of the DDA mass housing experience. The measures
which imparted a semblance of conformity amidst wildly varying
architectural and aesthetic sensibilities, not to speak of the
people and their lives, were the plot sizes and the regulations
controlling setbacks, building mass and height. The result of this

Fig.5.3.4 *A typical neighborhood; plotted developments.*

concoction, the ensuing settlements, was at the same time fiercely invigorating, and immensely chaotic. The character of these neighborhoods also represents the ecclectique in a culturally diverse citizenry which is hard to match, you could not come across a Back Bay by mistake, leave alone a Beacon Hill, or an average street somewhere in Somerville. The conflict between the implicit bond of local traditions of millenia, and the glossy attractions of the transported, and packaged West, seems to have left everyone bewildered and at varying points between the two polarities. In as much as that represents the people, it is also representative of a spirited will. A will to be independent, vigorously, and with enthusiasm.

The major urban problems which currently plague the city are legacies of these two decades, the sixties and the seventies. The specifics and the extent of these problems may have changed, sometimes drastically, there may even have been some improvement in the rare case, however the nature of the problems remain essentially the same today as they were at this time. There was a rapid increase in the population, fuelled by rural-urban migration, and fanned by the natural growth of the captive population. The population of Delhi was 1.4 million in
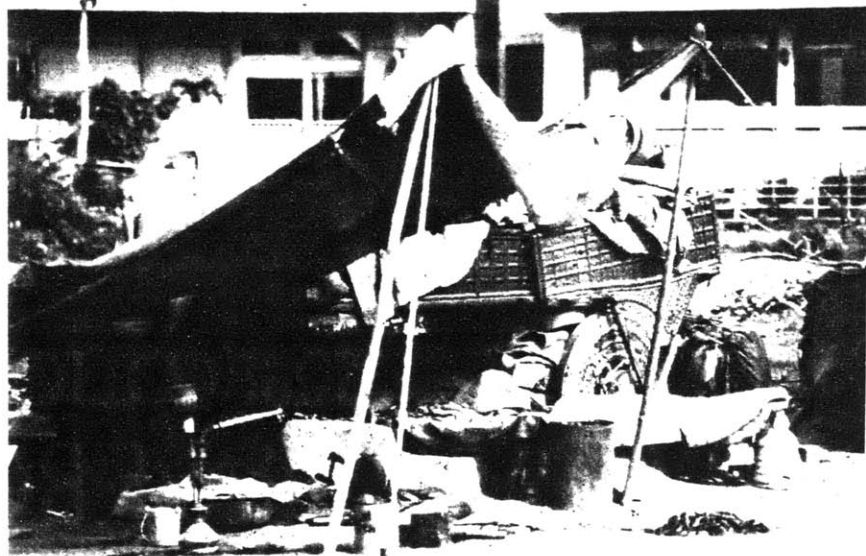
Fig.5.3.5 Some of the migrants, as in the case of these itinerant Rajasthani gypsies, occupy public land. Soon it becomes both residence and livelihood.

1951. By 1961 it had grown to 2.3 million, the growth as well as the acceleration continued unabated to 3.6 million in 1971 and 5.7 million in 1981.[1] It was very much a cosmopolitan population, there was the local Delhite; the Punjabi refugee; the large Bengali contingent which accompanied the shift of the capital from Calcutta, their traditional home-base; the immigrant both at the grass roots level and the transferred employee of either the public or the private sector organization, who came from all corners of the country; the diplomatic enclave; the tourists, all added to this diversity which far supercedes that of any other Indian city. The most visible and probably the most direct consequence of in-migration was the mushrooming of slums and squatter settlements across the city. Apart from the colorful names they are known by, these *bastis*, *jhopad-pattis*, and *jhuggi-jhopdis*, added little to the color of the city and to those who were condemned to them by the circumstances of their lives. According to a survey conducted by the Town and Coutry Planning Organization, by 1973 there were about 142,000 families squatting on both public and private land, excluding

Fig.5.3.6 *The squatters, the recondite city, grows in the invisible nooks and crannies, but never far from where the action is. This development is in Indraprastha Estate, right in the heart of the city.*

[1] Chengappa, India Today; Jan 31, 1988.

the50,000 odd families resettled under the Jhuggi Jhopdi Resettlement Scheme.[1] The 'show piece of the nation', in its attempts to live up to its pretentious epithet, had tried in vain to sweep these anomalies (in its image) discreetly under the carpet, but without much success. The slum population, relatively insignificant prior to the seventies and restricted somewhat to the old city, crossed the million mark late in the seventies and continued its matching race with population growth, into the eighties. As much as slums were the visible form of the malady, poverty was the disease itself.

Besides the problem of shelter, there was the problem of employment. Despite being an economically prosperous city it became difficult to accommodate the immense volume of immigrant labor within the formal employment structure of the capital. Consequently there was a 'proliferation of unorganized, sporadic occupations, characterized by low skill and capital investment, low productivity, and meagre income.'[2] Some of the

Fig.5.3.7   Garbage picking.
Informal sector activities.
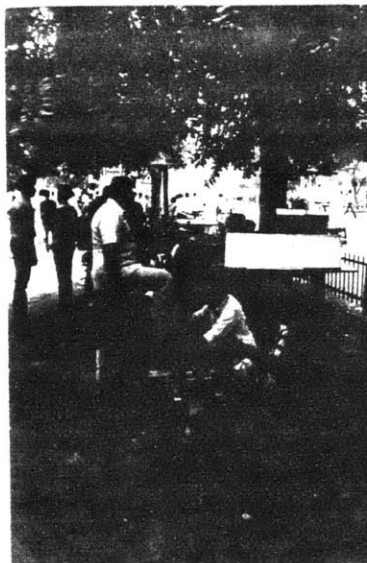
Fig.5.3.8   Shoe-shine.

Fig.5.3.9   Flower seller.

[1] Bhargava, New Delhi 1981.
[2] Birla Institute of Scientific Research, New Delhi 1980

activities include shoe shine boys, hawkers, shopkeepers, scooter and motorcycle mechanics, locksmiths, food and ice-cream vendors (all either located on strategic roadside locations or somewhat mobile), skilled and unskilled construction workers, rag pickers, *kabadiwallahs* (dealers in reusable junk), domestic help, rickshaw and taxi drivers,newspaper boys etc. There were certain economically efficient and oftentimes profitable occupations which mushroomed, away from the regulatory frameworks of the establishment. These included small manufacturing, retail, repair and service functions. Estimating the size of the informal sector is always a tricky proposition, approxiamte figures would put the informal sector at about 60% in 1961, and at 55%, a decade later.[1] This decrease is not greatly significant, except to some degree being an indicator of in-migration to the city. The percentage again crept back to 60% towards the end of the seventies. A significant point was the complex multi-level tie ups, initiated by the informal sector, with the formal sectors of the economy. These informal establishments, serving ancilliary and support functions, proved to be profitable for the larger organisations.

Fig.5.3.10   The transportation crunch hit every form and mode of transport. Here, in a thoroughfare in the walled city, cycle rickshaws proliferate.

[1] Birla Institute of Scientific Research, New Delhi 1980

Volumes of urban transportation exploded in Delhi during this period. By 1970 the number of automobiles had increased a staggering 730% over 1957, motor cycles and scooters increased by 1,870%, and bicycles by 325%.[1] Delhi could, in the late fifties, boast of one of the best organized and maintained circulation network in the country, yet that could not be expected to accommodate these phenomenal increases in traffic volumes. Besides, the public authorities had only partially completed the augmented circulation network. The system was somewhat lopsided, witnessing tremendous congestion in the old city, and in west Delhi, while wide expanses of asphalt in south and central Delhi awaited traffic loads anticipated in the '90s. Distances in Delhi developed an awesome reputation.

Politically, it was a period of stability, although occasionally there were mild tremors. These were felt in some measure, during the three national elections, which were always peaceful, and a few other instances, such as when the Congress party split up in the sixties, and in 1975 when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a state of internal emergency. It was at this time that her son, Sanjay Gandhi, and his cronies, unleashed a two year reign of terror upon the capital.[2] The Turkman Gate incident dates back from this period. This incident was a re-enactment of the British action after the mutiny of 1857, adapted to the times, and at a somewhat smaller scale. It was almost as vicious and brutal as the outrage of a century before, as thousands were rendered homeless and their houses torn down under the pretext of alleviating congestion and overcrowding. About a million people, primarily squatters and residents of unauthorized structures, were removed to the edge of the city, a place which was, given their limited resources and sphere of influence, not akin to the end of the world. In 1977 elections were declared and the

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[1] TCPO, New Delhi 1973.
[2] Dayal & Bose, Delhi 1977.

people announced their verdict, they elected the combined opposition coalition, and Delhi did not return a single of its seven Parliamentary candidates from the Congress party.

The strong middle and upper class orientation of policy continued to undermine the concepts of socially balanced urban development. The rural sector was pushed aside as industry and city surged ahead. This further fuelled massive influxes of migrants into the city,

> The villages remained largely where they were - back of beyond - and the landless farmer, a helot. Egalitarianism was sought to be legislated rather than inculcated.[1]

The middle class elité continued to expand, their productive base carefully maintained and perpetuated. This so called elité, naturally had a stronger voice in matters of policy, and entrenched themselves by influencing future patterns of planning and growth. Consequently, under a shroud of voiced democratic aspirations, society perpetuated, to some extent, its tradition of a hierarchical, distinctly stratified society. Planning systems were failing to absorb the base of the societal pyramid,

Fig.5.3.11   The burgeoning middle class; consumer power was beginning to edge out the marginal sectors.

[1] Thapar, Space & Society June/August 1987.

both urban and rural. Politicians refused to take the hard, unpopular decisions which were imperatives for a change in orientation. Over time, corruption raised its ugly head like an irepressible Hydra. Inflationary threats, political indifference and underhand dealings, an inefficient system of resource distribution, an unimaginative taxation system, a value system which implicitly codified self interest and the individual profit instinct above all else, was collectively responsible for this. The black market flourished along with a parallel economy, outside the formal systems of monitoring. Speculation puts this parallel economy as equal to, or possibly larger than, the regular one. The only factor which was keeping society buoyant were the somewhat eroded, but nevertheless strong, social ties of family and community inherited from the cummulative past. The urban laity emerged from this socio-political and economic reality, adapting swiftly to redress some of their major concerns.

In three decades, Delhi, the capital of independent India, was gradually coming of its own. It had survived infancy, and was striding into childhood with a fierce sense of individuality and confidence. It had problems, it also had the potential capacity to deal with them, sometimes at the cost of neglect to other urban centers in the country. There was economic prosperity and political stability in spite of the rather alarming rate of corruption, red-tapism, bureaucracy, and the early warnings of possible saturation of its physical limits. Delhi also strengthened its claims as India's 'window to the world', maintaining a 'monopoly on negotiations with foreigners and the allocation of the plums of foreign aid.'[1] It was still very much a national capital, but there were those that felt that time was ripe to stretch the horizons beyond national boundaries, Delhi could become a city of significant international stature.

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[1] Meier, New York 1980.

5.4   THE TEN YEARS OF INVETERATE TRENDS (1977-87)

The years from 1977 to the present have been largely characterized by the efforts of the city government, with the necessary initiative and support from the central government, to amplify Delhi's image as the 'showpiece of the nation.' Under the belief that a capital, dressed impeccably, can whisk away the reality of its brethren in rags, an immense amount of capital was ploughed into the city. The justification of this move is questionable from the national perspective, specially considering the 'criminal indifference to cities like Bombay and Calcutta'[1], but very few in Delhi had reason to complain. Viewed in light of the conditions in the other cities, the amount of fiscal and resource investment that has been sunk in dolling up Delhi, certainly seems to be lopsided and skewed. This, in spite of the argument often presented by the pro-lobby, that the national capital has to maintain a certain image of the 'new and dynamic India.' Their point is well taken considering that Delhi lends itself well to a confident mobilization of authority, the question that remains is how much distortion between the political front desk and the back room is reasonable? Of course even within the city, all areas are not treated with the same panaché. The unequal distribution of public resources, and the neglect that characterizes the national urban scenario, is typified within the city as slums
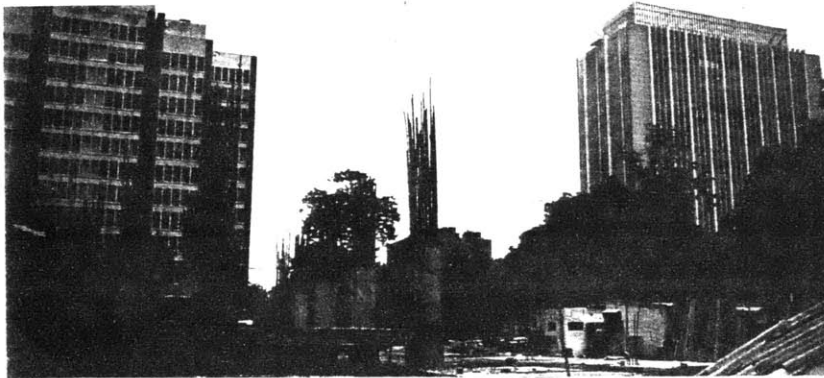
Fig.5.4.1   The burgeoning downtown, replete with all the trappings of a prosperous metropolis.

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[1] Correa, Bombay 1985.

proliferate within the creases of the prosperous urban garb[1]. Let us look at post '77 Delhi. The mold, in many ways had been set, and the city grew in somewhat predictable ways. Even that which is normally considered unpredictable, those processes that take place outside of the formal planning framework, held no major surprises. More people, automobiles, and buildings of all kinds, flooded the city, slums expanded and multiplied, industry, trade and commerce thrived. The DDA colonies matured from the bare essentials look to something a little richer as residents embellished the bland facades with their clumsy attempts at addition and renovation. So did some of the denser privately developed colonies. The urban sprawl assumed astonishing proportions as it became possible to travel forty kilometres from one destination to another and remain very much within the city during the entire journey.

The Ninth Asian Games, the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of State, the meeting of the Heads of the Non-Aligned nations, numerous regional and global trade fairs, were all used as excuses to build a massive infrastructure for the city, to keep it
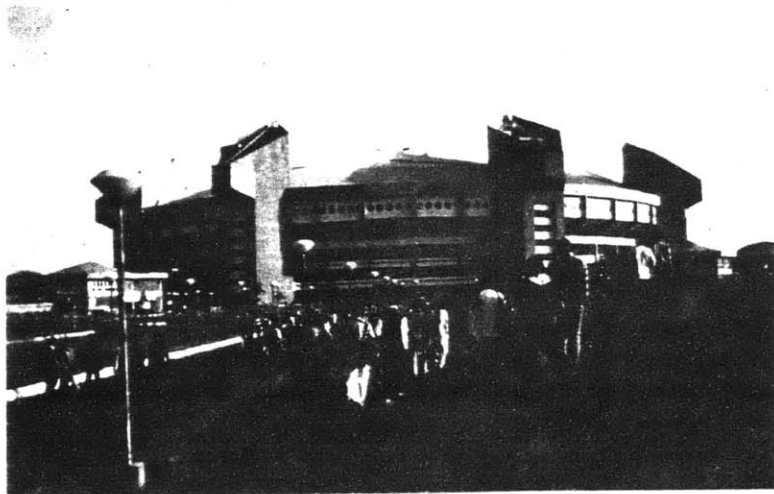
Fig.5.4.2   Indraprastha Indoor Stadium. The miracles of political will!

[1] a moving documentation of this phenomenon in Bombay has been filmed by Anand Patwardhan titled 'Our Bombay'. Slum demolition and the plight of the squatter has been used as the theme.

on the fast track of major global capitals. A bid was even made for the 1992 summer Olympics in Delhi, a proposal which was fortunately rejected. Six or seven sports stadia of international standards, an equal number of new traffic flyovers, a double digit addition to the five-star hotel industry in the city, which remains grossly underutilised even during peak season, new housing complexes, cultural centres, and other magnanimous gestures have come to dott the cityscape of the eighties. The slums remained, the lower 40% of the society still lived in a state close to abject poverty. It is not desirable that New Delhi, as the capital of the largest democracy in the world, should shy away from its role in international affairs, but surely some exercise of moderation and selectiveness would go down well with its treatment of other pressing concerns. The cost of Delhi's image may prove to be a very heavy price, both for the country, and for the capital itself.

With the eighties, the time had come for the new Master Plan for Delhi. Along with the new Master Plan, the dream of planners since 1956, that of a tangible step towards the establishment of the National Capital Region plan was realized. This came about as the enactment of the National Capital Region Planning Board Act of 1985.[1] The new master plan emphasized the establishment and stimulation of 'smaller yet dynamic' satellite towns to relieve the 'Core City' of excessive development pressures. Implementation continues to be sluggish.

As the population of the city swelled, so did the number of slums and unauthorized colonies. Conditions in the slums, tucked away in sections of the city which were largely invisible, were getting from bad to worse,

> Man and animal live alike as human excreta float around in clogged open drains, rats and ragpickers scurry around in

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[1] Delhi Vikas Varta, 1985.

reeking garbage piles, pigs roll in the slush, queues around public water taps stretch for a mile and, at night, people lie littered around in corners with torn tarpaulin as roofs and newspapers as blankets to beat the cold.[1]

Serving as vote banks at the time of elections, some of these people (the upper sections of the lower economic classes) realised a potential avenue for political leverage. Using this power brokering as a pivot, they engineered the regularization of the unauthorized colonies[2] in 1969, 1977 and again in 1978.[3] This happened recently again, in 1982, on the eve of legislation, enacting a new law, giving the Delhi Development Authority the right to demolish any unauthorised construction. That same day 507 out of 602 such colonies were granted tenure regularizations.[4] In essence, the confusion which typifies the control mechanism of the city reflects, in no uncertain terms, the chaos in the overall physical articulation of the city. There is the 'stick' which is laid out in letter as the regulatory framework of the
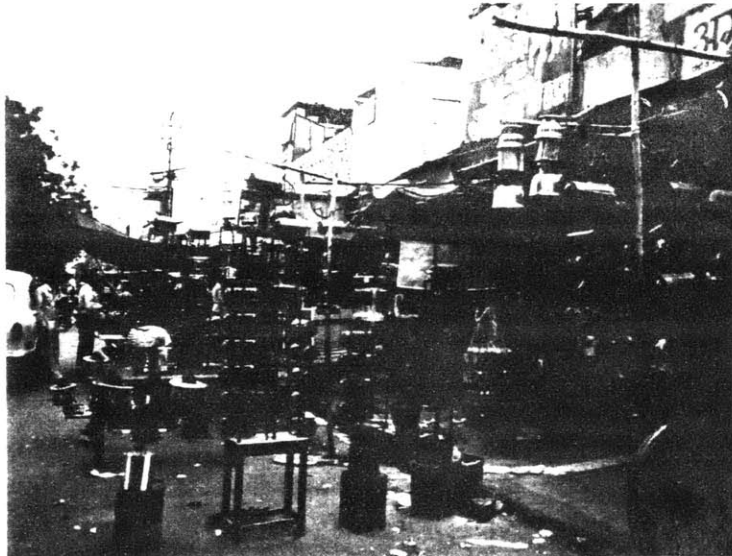
Fig.5.4.3   The informal sector flourishes in such unauthorized commercial developments. Their very presence bearswitness to a healthy popular acclaim.

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[1] Chengappa, India Today; Jan31, 1988.

[2] according to K. Bharati, 66% of the population falls largely outside the formal housing sectors of the city; Bharati, unpublished thesis 1986.

[3] Gupta, World Bank Staff Working Paper #730.

[4] Benjamin, unpublished paper 1987.

DDA and other municipal agencies. On the other hand there is
the 'carrot', similar in notion to the system of variance prevalent in
most US cities, yet distinct, in that it is entirely motivated by the
self interest of a few who manoeuvre themselves above both law
and public accountability (and get away with it in most cases).[1]
Those developments that are executed under the complete
jurisdiction of formal control, represent one end of the scale,
while those which fall entirely outside of it, represent the other. In
between there are various degrees of overlap (the semi-
regularized, "unauthorized" colonies being a classic example!),
such that a clear representation of the two extremes is not
encountered very often.

Politically, this represents the most turbulent period since
independence. The Janata coalition government which toppled
the Congress monopoly at the center was shortlived, as it fell
victim to disgraceful and undignified bickering at the top. In the
return elections, Indira Gandhi coasted to power once again at
the helm of the Congress. Careful and wary this time, she
attempted to maintain the status quo, concentrating her energies
on regional crises and secessionist movements till a hail of bullets
brought her down in 1984. Her son Rajiv Gandhi won the
subsequent election on a massive mandate which many have
dubbed the 'sympathy vote'. A well meaning and inexperienced
leader, without much of the strong will, savvy, and charisma, of
his predecessors, he inherited a host of problems. Though his
intentions apparently continue to be laudable, he is being unable
to live up to the legitimate expectations of the people. However,
he remains the most popular choice of the nation, in the face of
what the magazine *India Today* calls the TINA factor, an acronym
for 'There Is No Alternative'.[2] An 'uncomfortable quiet' has
descended over Delhi. Action needs to be taken on many fronts,

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[1] This so called Jackass Fallacy, is diagnozed and analysed
perceptively in Harry Levinson's, *The Great Jackass Fallacy* (Harvard
Univ. Press: Cambridge MA; 1973.
[2] INDIA TODAY, March 15, 1988.

yet nothing strategic of consequence seems to be emanating from the corridors of power, nor from the people; a proverbial lull, and the storm couldn't be very far behind.

The growing middle classes consolidated their hold over the economic processes. As Thapar observes,

> . . . it had the muscle, the capacities and the skills, for growth, but it had lost its social conscience. When at this juncture it could solve the problems of the poor, it refused to perform because such a restructuring of society would cut its own immediate and compulsive dream of a good life.[1]

The exploitation continues as the middle class make themselves comfortable on the shoulders of the stricken echelons of the poor. The chasm between the haves and the have-nots has widened, and deepened. However, the numbers are increasing in every rank, soon the rumblings of discontent may become loud enough to threaten the system itself. It would be prudent, even if it be in a spirit of self preservation, to call for a new orientation before it is too late.

A quiet period of unprecedented growth characterizes Delhi during this decade. Major steps were taken, in policy, to redress some of the problems of the city, yet the successes of implementation are yet to be perceived.

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[1] Thapar, Space & Society June/August 1987.

CHAPTER VI
VERNACULAR TYPES

6.1 THE STUDY OF TYPES

The prospect of studying vernaculars through the conceptualization of 'types', has been dealt with earlier in Part I. The principal question to be addressed at the outset must be the *raison d'être* for such a type. Previous discussions have attempted to illustrate that a type could be delineated along the lines of shared attitudes, lifestyles, control systems, roles, and the physical attributes of the environment.[1] Yet, does there exist such a pristine 'type' that combines all this under a single typological hood? Let me begin this discussion with a reference to Rossi's description of the historical significance of the architectural 'type',

> A particular type was associated with a form and a way of life, although its specific shape varied from society to society.[2]

The benefit of extensive study is not required to infer that types are normally rather imperfect and loosely framed. People sharing the same lifestyles could find homes in very different neighborhoods. People living in the same neighborhood, conversely, could adopt diverse attitudinal stances. A profound intellectual exercise can contribute little to the observation that as a collective entity, a type, defined by both a similarity in the socio-economic and physical form of housing, has less in common with other similarly defined types than it does with different examples found within its own typological boundaries. For instance a person living in a squatter settlement will share a great deal more with another squatter dweller in another part of the city than he will with a person whose home is in the unauthorized colonies or in public housing. Most sociological researchers who appropriate

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[1] *ibid.* pp.
[2] Rossi, Cambridge MA 1986.

the city in terms of socio-economic categories or political hierarchies, appear to use some form of this argument as an *a priori* theoretical construct.[1] This is not necessarily an infallible assumption, as the evidence from a study of a Mexican-American *barrio* in Dallas bears out,

> In contrast to some widely held assumptions of cultural homogeneity. . . among Mexican-Americans, these findings show that dynamic variation and ongoing culture change characterize the barrio. They clearly fail to support the belief that there is a 'typical' Mexican-American culture. . . (Barrio) residence serves its members in much more rich and diverse ways than many studies would lead us to suspect.[2]

The same study also highlights the differences in attitude among the different minority group that resided in the barrio, the *puros mejicanos*, the *anglo sados*, the *chicanos*, and the *pelados.*

Any typological formulation which attempts to homogenize, and at the same time establish broad distinctions across boundaries must be cautioned of the immense variations in urban situations which preclude an inflexible perspective of urban 'types'. Spates and Macionis highlight this concern in the following passage,

> Behind the overarching pattern of urban lifestyles, however, lies much more than a preference for living in a certain location. Economic and political factors, not to mention racial and ethnic prejudice, all play major roles.[3]

Therefore, a scrutiny of types must follow the most general criteria and evaluation, enabling a discernment of the range and nature of diversity that may be found within the realm of each 'type'.

> . . typology presents itself as the study of types of elements that cannot be further reduced, elements of a city as well as of an architecture. Type is thus a constant and manifests itself with a character of necessity; but even though it is predetermined, it reacts dialectically with technique, function,

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[1] Karl Marx, Max Weber, Emilé Durkheim, Ferdinand Töennies, the exponents of the Chicago school except Louis Wirth, Herbert Gans, Claude Fischer et al.

[2] Achor, Tucson AR 1978.

[3] Spates & Macionis, New York 1982.

and style, as well as with both the collective character and the individual moment.[1]

Unlike architectural or other forms of object types, a type which captures the people-place contiguity must be suited to accommodate complex sub-types and type variations, more so than Rossi would acquiesce for.

For the purpose of this study, I have articulated 'types' which are based on some over-riding distinctions in housing and neighborhood form, organized predominantly along socio-economic lines. Delhi has various such forms of residential, and combined work-residential-commercial environments, that can be physically identified as distinct from one another. In spite of their physical distinctions, there may be parallels and commonalities among and across these 'types', which characterize issues of attitude, lifestyle, control, and social and institutional role. Some of these are organized through extra-legal social and political procedures, others through formal institutional processes. A dissemination on this type-structure within the city, can only emerge as a retrospective analysis of a comprehensive study of a number of specific types. This study, limited by its scope and by the lack of opportunity for field research, focuses tentatively on only one 'type'. A second 'type' forms the focus of a somewhat different investigation. The types selected for discussion are the 'unauthorized colonies' and the public housing, colloquially called the 'DDA housing', after the Delhi Development Authority. Although this 'type' includes more than just the housing built by the DDA, it is identified under more or less the same nominal umbrella. Objectively, these case analyses can do little under the circumstances, except to illustrate the potential application, and the scope, of both the methodological perspective, and the ideological deliberations outlined in Part I of this disquisition.

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[1] Rossi, Cambridge MA 1986.

Due to a dirth of sociological information, surveys, or analyses, pertinent to these areas, I have been unable to develop a comprehensive scenario, specially from the resident's view-point. Instead, I have concentrated on those aspects which are either easily discernable, or are substantiated by evidence from previously documented studies. The public housing 'type' has been used to take the first shaky steps towards the development of a methodological approach for field study, in the search for urban vernaculars. The questions addressed in this section can essentially be synthesized as 'where do we begin once at the site?'

6.2   UNAUTHORIZED COLONIES

". . . Colony: Buy freehold land at throw away prices, Rs.2 to
Rs.18 per sq. yd. Residential colony within five minutes walk
from main road. Visit the site. Free transport provided."
Advertisement for unauthorized colony.[1]

Unauthorized colonies are just that, residential colonies formed through extra-legal processes, formally called Substandard Commercial Residential Subdivisions or SCRS.[2] Due to the nature of their formation, and their legal status, they function in ways that are more complex than the formal, legalized colonies in the city. I shall briefly outline the history of these colonies as well as describe the present scenario.

In the years after independence, as a result of the influx of refugees from what is now known as Pakistan, and the available employment opportunities, the city of Delhi became a prime target for migrants from across the country, specially from the surrounding regions.[3] The migrants varied from government employees, industrialists and entrepreneurs, and skilled craftsmen, to daily wage unskilled laborers. Considering the available infrastructure and housing that was available, and the

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[1] Bose, Delhi 1973.

[2] Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983.

[3] Gupta, Washington DC 1985.

Fig.6.2.1   A view of a typical unauthorized colony;

limited capacity of the then untried government to move swiftly in providing large quantities of additional housing or land upon which to build, it was not surprising that many families were left without a home within the legal residential arena of the city. At first, even prior to independence, these people decided to seek out land to settle on which was sheltered from the vigilant eye of the authorities. They pitched camp predominantly across the river Yamuna, an area then not slated for active development. So, it was right from the start that the residents of these settlements had developed an equation with the authorities which was founded upon evasion.

Capitalizing on this demand for land, supported by the reassuring fact that some of the migrants had the potential to pay for inexpensive land, illegal 'colonizers' in cohort with farmers decided to subdivide agricultural land and develop plots of land for sale at well below prevalent market prices. The land was sold prior to any infrastructural improvements, without the approval of the competent authorities. The land sale was legal,[1] the subsequent construction was not. Hence, prior to the days of the

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[1] under the Transfer of Property Act of 1882; Mukherji, Cambridge MA 1988.
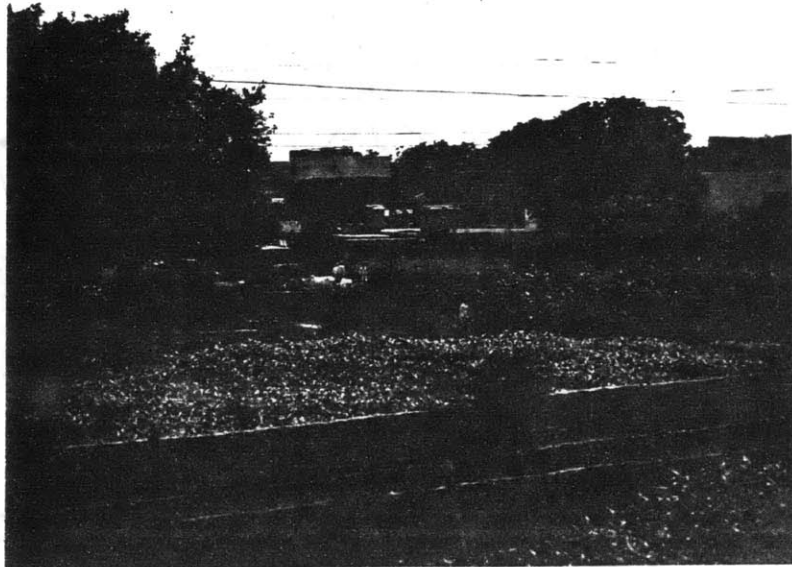
*Fig.6.2.2   Agricultural land in the midst of an unauthorized colony,
reserved for future development and   the hope for
speculative returns.*

Delhi Development Authority, at a time when the Delhi
Improvement Trust was the major institutional body, the
precedent had been set for these extra-legal settlements.

The Delhi Development Authority was set up, in the face of
adversity, to deal with dramatic increases in land prices and to co-
ordinate development of the city, like similar institutions in many
Western industrialized city. Subsequently, the Land Acquisition
Policy was announced, two years before legal notice was served
on the landowners. Taking full advantage of the time lapse
between announcement and implementation, the farmers and
landowners taking heed of successful precedent, subdivided
and sold their land in a hurry, and at a handsome profit.[1] A
provision in the acquisition policy put already developed land out
of the clutches of the administration. Taking advantage of this
clause some of the farmers sold their land and encouraged the
new owner to construct make-shift buildings overnight. The land
could not be legally sold this time, unlike in the earlier instances.
However, the 'colonizers' in an effort to reduce the perceived
risks, ensure tenure security for the buyer, and establish a

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[1] as compared to the price that the public authorities were offering,
which was Rs.2.79/sq.yd. while the surrounding developed areas had
land values upto Rs.100/sq.yd.; Bose, Delhi 1973.

Fig.6.2.3   The location of unauthorized colonies in Delhi, 1980.

bonafide, took care of this shortcoming by instituting a transfer executed through a Power of Attorney, documenting the sale on court paper and recording the transfer of property at the Land Registry.[1] Besides, the house owners had to pay house tax to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), an annual ritual that served to reinforce tenure security.

Over the ensuing years the urban landscape of Delhi changed rapidly with the simultaneous mushrooming of a multitude of these colonies. Functioning somewhat parallel to and leaving room for the processes adopted by the formal markets, the unauthorized colonies provided an effective and speedy way of ameliorating, if not absorbing a crisis that the 'competent'

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[1] The Land Registry office functioned as an entity distinctly separate from the Delhi Development Authority.

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN UNAUTHORIZED COLONIES: DELHI URBAN AREA, 1961

ZONE	URBAN POP. (Thousands)	POPULATION IN UNAUTHORIZED COLONIES (Thousands)	As % of URBAN POP. in zone	As % of TOTAL POP. in colonies	NO. OF UNAUTH. COLONIES
East	151	88	58.2	39.7	45
South	258	44	17.2	20.0	8
West	172	32	18.6	14.4	34
North	362	51	14.2	23.2	17
Center	1300	6	0.4	2.7	5
TOTAL	2359	221	9.5	100.0	109

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN UNAUTHORIZED COLONIES: DELHI URBAN AREA, 1971

ZONE	URBAN POP. (Thousands)	POPULATION IN UNAUTHORIZED COLONIES (Thousands)	As % of URBAN POP. in zone	As % of TOTAL POP. in colonies	NO. OF UNAUTH. COLONIES
East	456	280	61.4	41.3	76
South	690	58	8.4	8.6	56
West	402	146	36.3	21.5	122
North	629	146	23.2	21.5	18
Center	1410	48	3.3	7.1	8
TOTAL	3647	678	19.0	100.0	280

Fig.6.2.3   Source: B.Chatterji Mitra, The Evolution of SCRS in Delhi; from Census 1971; DDA Record

authorities could never have dealt with, just in terms of sheer numbers. The condition of the formal or legal real estate market - the skyhigh prices - precluded the people who chose to invest in this option from any other reasonable alternative.

LAJWANTI GARDEN: PATTERN OF EVOLUTION

YEAR	AREA (Ha)	NO. OF PLOTS	BUILT UP PLOTS NO.	%	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	DENSITY (HH/Ha)	
1952	1.2	49	2	4	2	-	Origin
1962	1.2	49	20	40	20	1	Regularization
1967	4.3	250	150	60	200	38	200 plots added
1972	4.3	250	180	72	300	70	Industrial area dev.
1975	4.3	258	200	78	600	140	
1978	4.3	258	230	90	700	163	

EAST GURU ANGAD NAGAR: PATTERN OF EVOLUTION

YEAR	AREA (Ha)	NO. OF PLOTS	BUILT UP PLOTS NO.	%	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	DENSITY (HH/Ha)	AVG. LAND PRICE(Rs/sqm.)
1955	5.8	215	-	-	-	-	3-4
1962	5.8	215	10	-	10	-	5
1967	6.4	248	20	8	25	4	10
1972	6.4	248	130	52	150	23	12
1975	8.0	450	380	84	500	63	18
1978	8.0	460	410	89	750	94	20
1980	8.0	460	430	93	810	101	35

Fig.6.2.4   Source: B.Chatterji Mitra, The Evolution of SCRS in Delhi; from Census

As a recent study estimated, roughly about 14-15% of Delhi's urban population finds a home in the unauthorised colonies. Mainly located in the Eastern, Northern and Western zones of the city,[1] these colonies have been gradually regularized by the authorities over time, in successive legislations passed just before general elections were held in the country.

6.2.1   ATTITUDES

To document and analyze attitudinal orientations, without the benefit of a visit to the site is a handicap that is difficult to overcome. I have attempted to limit the discussion to two areas that I consider of utmost importance from the viewpoint of attitudes, as they influence the process of settlement development. The first are those attitudes which taint the relationship between the residents of unauthorized colonies and the authority-establishment. The second include some of the socio-economic attitudes which inform preference. This preference, in turn, is reflected in the form and the socio-physical organization of these colonies. I have discussed earlier that attitudes can be seen as a combination of three components, the cognitive, the affective, and the behavioral.[2] I shall attempt to focus on the cognitive and the behavioral components in the following section, more so than the affective. This is because the affective component is the diffused, dialectically speculative grey area between the cognitive component instituted in the ideas and beliefs of people, and the behavioral component which is the outcome of attitudinal dispositions and can be traced analytically.

The establishment, as viewed by the residents of unauthorized colonies, has always been a thorny subject, largely as a result of

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[1] Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983.
[2] *ibid.* pp.
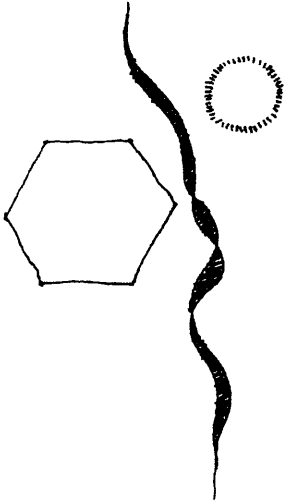
the legal scenario. The establishment reciprocates this sentiment in no uncertain terms. The location of the early colonies, on land across the river away from the city and from surveillance of almost any kind, betrays to some extent, a timorous perception of authority. This was not surprising at that time. Since this was prior to independence, and democracy, the authorities expressed no qualms about adopting hardline attitudes in dealing with those who came in the way of their policies. Questions of electoral support, civil rights, dignity of labor, public opinion, and humanitarian considerations, did not impede swift rectification of what was perceived as wrong doing.
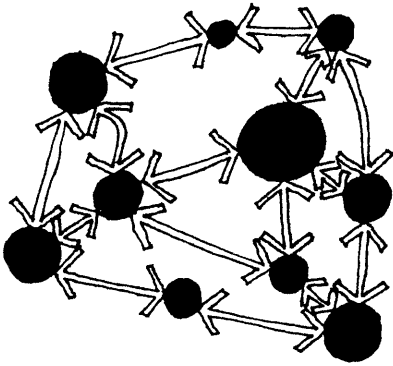
As the numbers in the unauthorized settlements increased over time, a certain solidarity was perceived by the residents, a solidarity that did not necessarily have to be voiced. This security, derived from numerical strength, must have bolstered courage that grew harmlessly for a time. Come independence, a new surge of freedom and optimism washed over these illegal settlers, much as it did the rest of the country. Nothing was forthcoming from the government in the form of opportunities including housing; the immigrants and refugees from partition would yet keep the government busy for some time. The advent of the 'illegal colonizers' heralded the beginnings of a new dimension in the relationship with the administration. Reassured by the pseudo legality, which characterized these deals between the developers and the residents, and by the paralysis which characterized the administration's response to the illicit parcelization of land, an undercurrent of 'tea-stall insurgency' emerged. The dissatisfaction expressed in these casual social occasions, coupled with what was perceived as government inaction, negligence, and repressive policies, was sufficient reason to foster an attitude reminiscent of colonial times - a pervasive disrespect, suspicion, and antipathy towards all forms of administrative authority. This dislike surfaces through either passive verbal reprehension, or the constant search for ways to get around legal procedure by political patronage, or other

dubious means, or even in the form of protests and protest movements articulated through whatever voice is accessible to the discontent residents. An attitude that alternates between apprehension, if not fear, and confrontation, characterizes the perspective with which the residents of the unauthorized colonies view the establishment. Remnant from feudal times, there is a tendency of obsequiousness towards symbols of authority, be it social, economic, and political, that are held dear at heart, whether it is a politician, a local leader, a wealthy businessman or even a somewhat exploitative policy. There is another subterranean tendency, also a remnant from colonial days, that of perversive confrontation and opposition. The former is often harnessed to express discontent fuelled by the latter.

The other end of the equation, the establishment's view of the unauthorized colonies is equally significant. After independence, the administration attached its policy stance to the coat tails of the politically framed, progressive, social goals that were outlined for the new nation. It was assumed that by borrowing the western institutional framework, in some modified form, India 'could enter into a capitalist phase and eventually climax in a classless society'.[1] After independence, the decision taken by the political leadership to jump, in a single unmitigated leap, a socio cultural gap that spanned three hundred years,[2] without really understanding the mechanics involved was, more than pragmatism, an instance of well-meaning spirited thinking. In a manner similar to the selective permeability of osmosis, society was discriminative in absorbing only those parts of the new system, that caused minimum friction to the existing status quo.

This preoccupation with western ideologies and institutions, cut across the political machinery and infiltrated the administration, as well as the dominant elité. Planners, sketching a future for the

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[1] Somjee, New York 1984.

[2] between the industrialized societies, which evolved gradually over time, and Indian society in 1947.

urban areas, did not ignore the prevalent mood for 'occidentalism'. Western standards were adopted for space, sanitation, construction, and the provision of amenities; slums and squatters were deemed an abhorrent eyesore, measures for their removal and resettlement were envisaged without an altogether comprehensive understanding of the way these settlements functioned as a human ecosystem; new concepts of mass housing were introduced, primarily the construction of homogeneous colonies to house large numbers, even the layouts of these colonies were mimics of western solutions.

The emergence of the unauthorized colonies took the administration by surprise. There was no ready precedent of this nature to fall back on. Western models could provide little assistance or solace. The colonies themselves were a legal anomaly - illegal from the administrations perspective, but not undoubtedly so. This dubious legal status was an additional retardant to quick and effective action. Besides, over time, the residents of these colonies made their presence felt as useful sections of society, primarily by virtue of their entrepreneurship and industry. As potent vote banks, these colonies drew considerable political patronage as well. The administration viewed these colonies as an irritant, a phenomenon which, in light of their inaction and helplessness, amplified their ineffectiveness, as well as the incompatibility of the models they so deeply believed in. The politicians viewed it as a necessary evil, one which could be converted into political capital.

> The various decisions taken so far by the government basically asserts the authorities' determination to prevent illegal subdivisions of land and unauthorised building. At the same time they legalize all SCRS which were in existence upto an arbitrarily decided cut off point, under certain conditions.[1]

Much like a new born infant shuts out complex, conflicting, stimuli by falling asleep, the administration too shut out these colonies

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[1] Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983.

from their image of the city beautiful. Thereafter, the regularization and improvement, in these colonies, became a process led by the political, rather than the planning-administrative process.
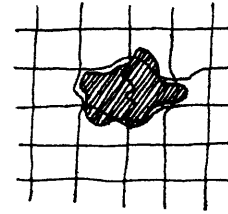
Finally, let me outline some of the socio-economic attitudes which are reflected in the form, process of development, and the socio-physical organization of these colonies. The foremost among these must be the sense of tenure security, without which these colonies could not have become the successful socio-economic propositions they are today. It can be assumed that a number of the prospective residents who came from the rural setting, besides having financial limitations, were credulous enough to rest their doubts on the strength of the developer's sales pitch as well as other ploys used[1] to heighten the sense of tenure security. If this popularity was merely a result of salesmanship, it could not have withstood the test of time, nor could it have been used to deceive the resolute urbanite, who aiso invested in these colonies in large numbers. Over a period of time a plot in these colonies came to be seen as an investment, which was perceived to be almost as safe as land purchased on the regular market. In fact today,

> . . this notion could be seen as one, generated from (a realization), that tenure security could be achieved through (the use of) pressure and influence on the city authorities.[2]

Besides, once a buildings is erected, demolition is virtually made impossible due to human and legal considerations. A majority of the plot holder, therefore, builds at least a single room to reduce the possibility of demolition. Expansion takes place incrementally, over time. Thus, the outlines of a common belief can be discerned, one that perpetuates and strengthens a relatively newfound development tradition.

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[1] *ibid.* pp.

[2] Mukherji, Cambridge MA 1988.

In the same vein has come the realization that there exists a system, parallel to the formal establishment, which lies outside of the formal legal and economic framework and can be used to get things done. Numerous seemingly insurmountable obstacles which litter one's path in the efforts to obtain cement and steel for building, or a permit to start a small shop, or an immediate telephone connection, or even an unconditional driving license, seem to melt away when formal procedure and lobbying is supplemented by extra-legal pressures and incentives. It is no secret that in the form of bribes, favor mongering, and innocuous arm twisting by virtue of personal and political connections, these illicit procedures are often extremely effective. However, like the formal system, everyone does not have equal access or opportunity to utilize the potentials offered by the parallel system. The resultant attitude, is one of some disdain and disrespect for any form of legal procedure. The first question that normally comes to mind when confronted by the prospect of dealing with the formal establishment is,'Is there an easier way of doing this?'

Further investigation conducted at the sites, I am sure, will result in greater clarity and comprehensiveness in relating attitudes to the way people perceive, use, and influence the process of building these colonies. Attitudes which influence peoples' stance towards issues such as multiple and mixed landuse, code and bye-law response (after regularization), significance of regularization, politicizing the built environment, civic liberties and amenities, religion, caste and ethnic groups, privacy and community, neighborhood solidarity and pride, ownership, and others, could well have some kind of impact on the form of the settlement, as well as on processes which have a bearing on the form. Besides these mainstream attitudinal orientations, there are sub group attitudes within the broader 'type', which find expression in, or influences other decisions regarding the articulation of the built environment. This results in a rich,

interwoven, texture that cannot be explained away in simplistic terms.

6.2.2 LIFESTYLES

Lifestyles are informed by attitudes and circumstances. Lifestyle within a group varies according to characteristics such as sex, education, ethnicity, marital status etc. ., in fact each lifestyle is *sui generis*. Within a type, it is possible to discern and synthesize numerous, very distinct lifestyles, as much as it is possible to discern a few broad generalizations. The available literature and documentation on unauthorized colonies has very little material on this subject. These colonies attract all kinds of people, from different walks of life; from different occupations, ethnic groups, income levels and backgrounds. Some have recently migrated from villages, and are struggling to find an acceptable compromise between their erstwhile rustic lifestyles, and the new and unfamiliar urban one. Others have merely relocated from different urban areas, steeped in the ways of city life. Heterogeneity is a consistent characteristic across the type.

The city has an unparalleled ability to homogenize certain aspects of a diverse group of people, over time. The unauthorized colonies are no exceptions. Families gravitate to these colonies from very different backgrounds, the most significantly different being the one I have already mentioned a number of times, the rural-urban dichotomy. In the early years of their tenancy in the city, the traditional lifestyle is an emotional security blanket few want to discard in a hurry. The activity center in the house is located in the courtyard and in the kitchen. The cooking, washing, talking, and even sleeping in the summer months, move into the courtyard. Guests in the house, in the form of relatives and others either enjoying a visit to the city, or guests in adversity, or urban tyros trying to find their way about town, are commonplace. Other realms of rural life are not amenable to preservation for very long, the urban culture exerts a
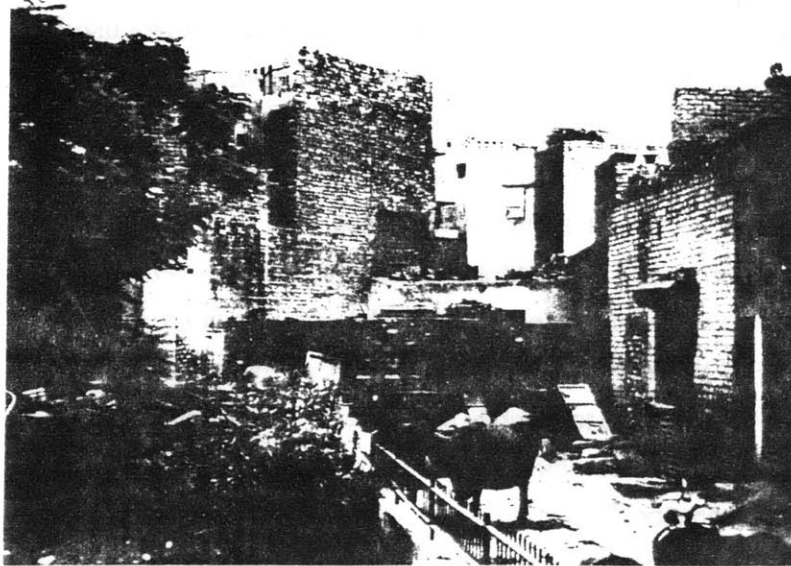
Fig.6.2.2.1   Shahpur Jat, a Delhi colony where traditional values
                such as the posession of domestic cattle is prevalent.

tremendous pressure on households to conform. For instance, the children will go out to find their peers on the streets, a decidedly urban scenario, and will join lustily in the racuous play, or more sedentary pastimes, chatting in groups on doorsteps and porches. The head of the family too, has to leave home early in the morning and steel himself to an hour's struggle so that he may reach his place of work, an exercise which he religiously repeats in reverse at the end of the day.

As time goes by a larger pattern of life ossifies into a routine that binds almost everyone living in the colonies. To a certain extent it explains the strong social ties in the community, organized around the homogeneity of this patterning, which accommodates social time, to be spent with family, friends or neighbors. The richness of individual circumstances and backgrounds still continue to add texture to the fabric.

In addition to the basic forms of lifestyle that complement new-urban, and settled-urban families, there are also basic lifestyles organized around the usage patterns established on the plots.

Chatterji Mitra points out three distinct categories of plot use.[1] First, the household that uses their plot exclusively as a place of residence. Their sense of ownership affects the way they articulate their lifestyles. Second, the household which combines a workplace with the residence. This can range from a one-room office to a fitted workshop, replete with small machinery and other equipment. Naturally, in such a case, lifestyles cannot remain unaffected or undifferentiated in certain ways as compared to a purely residential unit. The third category of plot use combines owner residence with rental accommodation. The family uses a part of the structure that is constructed upon the site and rents out the remaining portion to tenants. On many occasions the tenants are transient workers or new arrivals on the urban setting. Households may have one or numerous rooms to rent, normally with shared toilets. The diversity of lifestyles, in this case, forms a complex weave. The landlords often impose some restrictions on the tenants, primarily to conserve as much of their own lifestyles as possible. However, even the owner's family cannot lead its earlier, so called 'chaste and unspoilt' lifestyle.
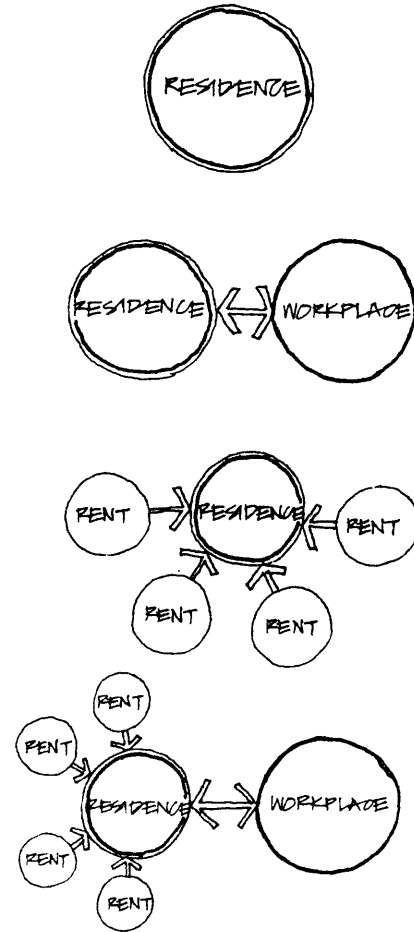
Another feature of lifestyle that spreads itself across the various unauthorized colonies, is the way in which the residents cope with the non-availability of services offered by the city administration. Electricity is available in the early stages of development and is a notable exception. This is made possible by the policies of the Delhi Electric Supply Undertaking (DESU) which follows an eligibility test and a sanction criteria quite different from the DDA.[2] The lack of water supply is resolved as best as possible by the installation of hand pumps at home, or by purchasing water from water-carriers. Sewage flows down open street drains emptying into any surrounding vacant land or drainage canals. Some of the affluent residents often install

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[1] Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983.
[2] Mukherji, Cambridge MA 1988.

Fig.6.2.2.2   *The border of the green belt at the edge of Shyam*
                Nagar, an unauthorized colony, is festered with
                domestic garbage and sewage effluent.

septic tanks. The source of water plays a greater role on our lifestyles than we would like to believe. Uniformity, nurtured by technology and regulatory codes, makes it one of those things in life that we take for granted. The residents of the unauthorized colonies shape their daily lives, among other things, around the source of water and sewage disposal arrangements.

When colonies are regularized, blanket regulations and codes are imposed on these settlements. Little consideration is afforded the differences between the prevalent form of living in these colonies, and other 'types'. The objective of these case descriptions is not to provide holistic accounts of 'types', nor is it an objective of this study to provide the 'right alternatives'. The depth of the study, based on available information and references, is grossly inadequate for such purposes. I am trying to illustrate, through these piece-meal sketches, the significance of deep and insightful studies into the nature of peoples' relationship with their settlement. Lifestyles, as much as any of the other four orders of understanding, explain and underscore the main tenets of this relationship. The disrespect and inconsequential treatment that is meted out to the concerns that I

am struggling to express, in formal regulatory measures that are adopted, as also in the rationalé behind them, results in the trivialization of the issues that are noteworthy in understanding a man-environment symbiosis.

6.2.3   CONTROL

Issues of control, related to the unauthorized colony, can be investigated at various levels. Gradation along the vertical would range from the macro to the micro, starting from the type, to an individual colony, right down to a single plot of land. Gradation along the horizontal would include the various spheres of control that may operate at any point on the vertical scale, e.g. physical, social, political, economic etc. . Each of these realms of control cannot be segregated from the intricacy of the overall schema, yet, it is possible to identify their respective impacts on the dynamics of people and place. In this section I will try and illustrate some of the larger issues of control that characterize the type, as well as those issues that are variables within somewhat flexible parameters.

The question of who is controlling what, in this particular vernacular 'type', is exceptionally complex due to its dubious legal status. With a predominantly quasi democratic, quasi feudalistic system of socio-political and economic control, the voice of each economic section of a bottom heavy pyramidical society has a progressively smaller capacity to play a direct and dominant role in public policy from top-down. The poorly represented bottom stratas of society have had to, over the years, establish indirect and subtle ways of exerting pressure on the status quo without altogether upsetting the apple cart. The successive regularizations of these colonies by the DDA in 1969, 1977, 1978 and 1982, with the general elections hot in pursuit to scoop up the bargain vote, exemplifies the almost imperceptible bottom-up control mechanism in operation. The bottom-up control enjoys a limited, yet oftentimes crucial influence.
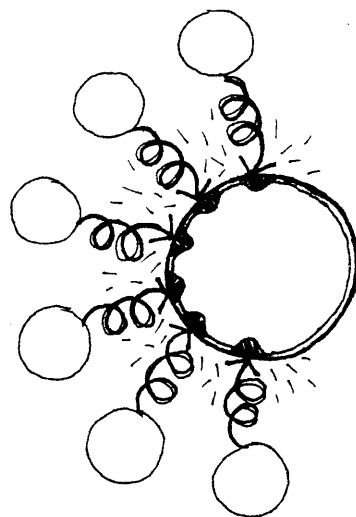
If the political structure coupled with the administrative infrastructure could be said to maintain a stable system of control, the people of the unauthorized colonies provide the fulcrum which essentially holds the equation in balance. One faction of the political framework exerts pressure on the institutional authority to 'clean up the mess', this faction is answerable to the upper echelons of society. Another faction, the locally dependent politicians, exert pressure on the authority to pursue only those objectives which may be beneficial to the residents alone. The administrative authority, caught in the cross-fire manipulates itself into a position where it adopts a 'carrot and stick' approach. The local politician finds a report of the 'carrot' operations on his desk, while he hears of the 'stick' operations from his ward, or the media. Representatives of the other political faction find the 'stick' report on their desks, their wards inform them of the 'nothing is happening to remove these eyesores' predicament.

The commercial establishment also plays a part in the control scenario of these extra-legal settlements. As these unauthorised colonies consolidate, businesses and industry spring up which establish links with the formal market structure. These links are sometimes tenuous, but most often they are firmly interwoven with the establishment. Any disturbance in the colonies, in the form of demolition or restrictive policies would affect the entire market structure, rather too significant a concern to ignore. The political structure feeds off this economic prosperity which flourishes in their domain. Enhanced donations and contributions to the 'party funds' boost the politicians chances as well as his booty. Sometimes, politics and administration work hand in glove to exploit the residents,

. . a threat of demolition (issued by the administration) at times
might mean simply increased donations to the 'party funds',
helping the politician to win elections.[1]

The administration is 'paid-off' appropriately.

In the case of each individual colony, the equation of control
varies based on the local dynamics and circumstances. For
instance the development of an Industrial complex at Naraina
resulted in boosting the numbers in West Delhi colonies and
consequently in a greater degree of control being vested in
industry and commercial interests. Construction of roads and
sewers, and regularization enhances the politicians control over
his ward.

Occasionally the control structure changes drastically, as was the
case during the internal emergency imposed on the nation in the
mid- seventies. During this period the exercise of political control
disregarded and quashed every other form of control that chose
to act in conflict. It was only abject deference that resulted in
enhanced control for those who chose to take advantage of the
situation. Some of the unauthorized colonies were razed to the
ground and the occupants forcibly resettled in distant locations.
The administration was perceived as the villain, since it had no
other choice but to execute the political will. However, the
equation was so transparent that it did not take long before the
animosity was directed where it belonged. A gross disregard for
the implicit balance of forces which stabilize society, the power
structure, resulted in the eventual downfall for the perpetrators of
compulsory resettlement.

Control over the physical form of the settlement can be attributed
to a equation which includes a number of factors. First, the
physical delimitations imposed by the developers, in terms of plot
size and shape, access, circulation and the location of open
space and amenities, if any at all. After regularization, most of
these delimitations are set by the administrative authority whose

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[1] Mukherji, Cambridge MA 1987.

jurisdiction includes the colony. Second, the economic restrictions which the household must respect. This would include their buying power, the periodic income of the household, the necessity to set up a working unit, or to rent out space. Third, the social norms and standards, both of the community and within the family, each of which exercise a great deal of control over the way households conduct themselves in any setting. Although these three factors are of prime significance, they are by no means the only ones. The petty-contractor, who builds extensively within a particular colony, in close consultation with the owners, exercises a great deal of implicit control over the form and layout of the building. The niché he has found for himself, in the evolutionary process of a settlement, may primarily be an outcome of the combination of economic and social forces. His methods and idiosyncrasies, which helps articulate the built environment, cannot be seen as anything but another factor in the multilayered control system which establishes a *status quo* within the community while at the same time contributing to the identity of that particular setting.

The control scenario is similar to a complex concatenation wherein the linkage between the parts is responsible for the stability of the whole. A change in any single link, may require a realignment of a number of other links. An understanding of control therefore lies in the conceptualization of the entire chain, which would enable a better insight into the nature of the links. In the preceding section, I have merely tried to expand upon certain limited sections of this control ecology. A more comprehensive study exceeds the scope of this thesis.

6.2.4   ROLES AND TASKS

Roles and tasks, of individuals, communities, institutions, and governments contribute significantly in building up the socio-physical setting. Roles and tasks essentially form the link

between attitudes, lifestyle, and control on the one hand, and form and place on the other. The sense of 'roles and tasks' that I have appropriated for this study can be described as broad relationships among various groups, community, and individuals, viewed in a larger social perspective. This larger perspective is informed by certain attitudes which do not have a direct, marked, influence on lifestyle. These are attitudes which accommodate and address larger issues of control in society, define ideological stances, and shape postures which address issues larger than those addressed directly in articulating lifestyles.

The roles played by different parties, reconfirm, redefine and/or reinforce the control equation, which could be in a state of stability, or in flux. Areas of conflict and creativity are established, over time, and it is negotiations in this area that results in change, if at all. Naturally, in the case of the unauthorized colony, which, in its initial stages, evolved on the strength of the dispassionate and ineffective role of the administration, the households that pitched home base in these areas played a significant role in the evolution of the settlement type. Administrative control was non-existent except in the garb of a few empty threats of demolition which were issued with periodic regularity. The specific case of the unauthorized colony probably exemplifies the changing roles of participants in the process of evolution better than any other type.

The colonizer's (developer) role was initially the most significant. A pristine case of creative role formulation, when in reality there was none, at least, in terms of expectations generated by society. From the initial role of the inducer, the colonizer modified his role as the colony matured. There are a few typical roles that has best been adopted by these 'breast-pocket' entrepreneurs. Some have taken a lead in canvassing for, and expediting, the regularization/ authorization process in the colonies they helped set up. In many cases the developers act as the intermediaries between the authorities and the community. Others took a

hands-off approach and backed away, once they saw their roles as inducers fulfilled, of course very much a wealthier man than before. Some remain, as property brokers in the colonies, and serve the cause of profit and function as a channel for property transactions.

Their impact on the settlement is clearly significant in the formative stages. The roles they find themselves in subsequent stages, along with the motivations that drive them, will determine the extent of their impression on the development of the settlement and the process of place making.

Let us focus on the omnipresent influence in the development of these colonies, and their role in the process. I am referring here, to the colony dweller, the individuals and the households, who stake their futures and their savings, in adopting dubious agricultural acreage as home. In the absence of official sponsorship of these colonies, the residents had to rally around each other to accomplish their objectives. As I narrate some aspects of their role in colony building, the role of some of the other actors, will become evident.

Earlier, I have mentioned the diversity of the people who congregated in these colonies. Their initial role was to take the piece of land the developer had marked into subdivisions, and using these divisions as the only 'givens', to build shelters around which to articulate their lives. In doing so, the residents played out a role that would have been, in any part of the formal structure of the city, a composite role incorporating different actors. The only essential functions of the formal structure, that the dwellers of these unauthorized colonies could not substitute, or indigenize, was the provision of infrastructure that included water supply, roads, sewage and sanitation. There was nobody to replace the administration in this role, since it had a virtual monopoly and totalitarian control over matters of capital intensive infrastructure.

The residents acting on their own behalf, fulfilled the role of social institutions, both formal, i.e. schools etc. ., and informal, i.e. community groups etc. . As the colony matured and developed, and the residents got to know each other and their problems better, they took on the role of the catalyst in stimulating change. Paraphrasing Chatterji Mitra,

> Not having been effective in getting access to infrastructure, households have done the next best thing - they have organized themselves into pressure groups to bargain for regularization and provision of infrastructure.[1]

Almost all colonies today have registered residents' organizations, which spearhead the lobby for improvements and regularizations through political channels. These residents' associations have a considerable role to play in influencing the course of development within the communities. If they are effective and resourceful, the colony will soon have water, a functioning sewage system, garbage disposal, ease of obtaining loans to finance construction, cement and steel available on the regular market etc. . An impact on 'form' and 'place' could not be very far behind.

The political and administrative machinery that interacts with these colonies, have already been characterized to some degree, in the section under control. Summing up, in Chatterji Mitra's words,

> The state has assumed contradictory roles. It has initially been a silent collaborator to the process; has tried, in a dilute way, to prevent it (the colonies); has actively given support through regularization; and has curbed the evolutionary potential of settlement (through) regressive regulations.[2]

The role of the state in development is essentially a function of control; either through the actual exercise of this control, or through default. In certain crucial areas they are the enabling

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[1] Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983.

[2] Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983; paranthesis are mine.

authority. Their actions are deterministic, and have a distinct effect on the community. In spite of this control potential, these institutions of authority find themselves most insecure and uncomfortable dealing with the colonies. The administration's discomfort lies in the knowledge that their jurisdiction over the unauthorized settlements is, at best tentative, and that too, only on paper. Therefore, even though these authorities represent the longest arm of the law, their reach remains short of what is required to provide them with sufficient leverage to act decisively in the manner they choose to. The politicians, on the other hand, have a very sensitive constituency to deal with. The voting members of the constituency are conscious of their predicament vis a vis the administration, one of abject disapproval. A majority of them are part of lower-middle to middle class families, consequently more aware of what can be done about their lot, than would be the case of the lowest economic ranks of society. The effective leverage they use to pressurize the political framework is evidence enough.

The balance between these diverse roles are monitored implicitly in this sensitive ecology. Although it is very seldom that a win-win situation emerges from the multiple layers of negotiations that are constantly taking place, the critical mass required to disturb the *status quo*, is successfully kept at bay.

6.2.5   FORMS AND PLACES

Finally, the forms and the places which are the physical expressions of the settlement. These forms of expression result from a complex process involving numerous players, each having played out their roles with varying degrees of success. It also represents, as an integral function of the process, the controls that have been exercised over various domains, physical, social, economic, and political, and the influence of a part of this relationship of dominance, that has translated into forms and

places. Lifestyles incorporate role and control, they also reflect a cultural component that lies in the creatively expression of doing things. Attitudes can be discerned, only as the underlying readiness, which colors the particular response of the community, to the cumulative exigencies of the situation.

In illustrating the study of forms and places within the realm of the unauthorized colonies, I have chosen three cases in Delhi.[1] In the treatment of these cases I shall not dwell upon the specifics of each, instead the aim will be to foster an appreciation of the unity and the diversity within the broader definition of type. The essential differences between the three cases lie in their location, initial growth impetus, socio-economic and occupational characteristics of each community, physical layout and developer commitment.

Although the resident profiles in these communities vary, almost all belong to the low to middle-income category. A roof over the head is considered the single most important motive for building. Tied up with household economics, family size and needs, it is the prevalent tendency to build on each parcel of land incrementally over time. Therefore, the physical form of the settlement is extremely dynamic and fluid at the plot level, where changes are constantly being incorporated. There is no definite pattern of evolution that persists, yet broad types can be discerned.

Let me begin with the building envelope. There are two ways in which people articulate their buildings in these colonies, one is the interior patio or courtyard type, while the other is the consolidated bungalow or block type. According to the study conducted by Chatterji Mitra, the courtyard type is preferred by the families which adopt a traditional way of living, this is specially

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[1] The source for the information and data for these three cases is Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983.
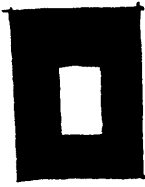
applicable to families who were recent migrants from the rural sector during the period of construction. The block type, she claims, is the preference of the committed urbanite.[1] The residents of the courtyard type are normally economically weaker than those who opt for the block type.

Although heterogeneity is a byword in these colonies, affordability is a major issue in creating a resident profile for a specific unauthorized colony[2], as is the socio-cultural background, strengthened by kinship and regional ties. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the two building types predominate in each location. It is also interesting to note, that those who transplant themselves in an unfamiliar environment - the in-migrants from rural areas - find themselves embracing traditional forms (the courtyard type), possibly as a source of security in an unfriendly and, in many ways, an alien world. Their primary concern is survival, which may later evolve into a reasonable subsistence. It is only then that these migrants may adopt progressive urban models as rungs on the ladder of ambition. What Shelley described as 'the desire of the moth for the star', eventually haunts every city dweller. The marginally affluent urbanites, in keeping with this unspoken edict, mold their houses from images which symbolize their aspirations, the bungalow type.

The physical character of the colony is read as the sum of its parts, not necessarily in the mathematical sense, but in a more abstract, perceptive sense. Each plot has the potential to be built upon, in numerous different ways. Plots themselves are divided into an innumerable variety of sizes and proportions. Within each plot, the structure of the family, both social and economic, the effect of all of the preceding attributes of attitudes, lifestyle, and control, collectively determine the usage of the building as well

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[1] Chatterji Mitra, Rotterdam 1983.
[2] refer to the discussion on consumption trends and lifestyles, *ibid.*,pp. 76; Sobel, New York 1981.
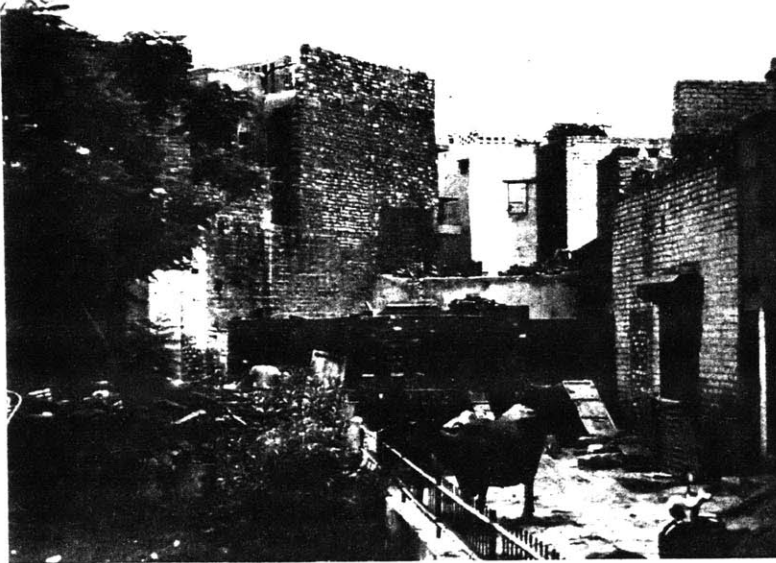
Fig.6.2.5.1   Traditional lifestyles carried over to the urban sphere. Domestic cattle, and signs of other outdoor living activities.

as its form and increment pattern. The predominant uses include various permutations and combinations of living, working, and renting, within each property.

The making of place, in these colonies, does not normally involve the strenuous efforts of specialized professionals. Since the colonies are highly packed, with densities reaching upto almost

Fig.6.2.5.2   The limited public realm, endowed with meaning through the intensity of use,

EAST GURU ANGAD NAGAR
1971

EAST GURU ANGAD NAGAR
1975

two hundred households per hectare, the limited public realm is richly articulated with meaning as the colony evolves. Along with childrens' play, and adult socializing, workshop functions, commerce, and other occupational chores spill onto these spaces, rendering them with a delicate patina of activity and human usage. Although the residents yearn for the wide tree lined avenues, regularized services, and the ambience of the regularized colonies, they surely find some deep seated comfort in the texture of life that their particular environment affords them.

The actual construction of the settlements is an incremental process of growth. The built in safeguard against demolition, once a structure is erected, prompts a majority of the plot owners to immediately erect a small room with which to stake their claim. Depending on the financial condition of the household, this preliminary insurance policy, could be anything ranging from a marginal structure in brick, mud mortar, and thatch, to something more permanent using sandstone slabs, supported on T-section steel joists. Incremental addition takes place, unfettered by codes and specifications from the city authorities. Eventually, the development on a plot reaches maturity in the form of a three or
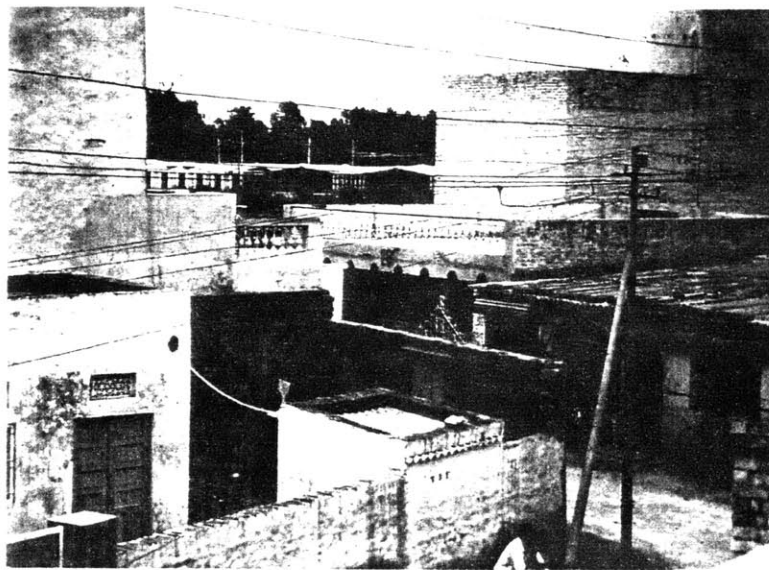
Fig.6.2.5.3   Growth is incremental in stages, of the colony as well as on every plot.

four storey building, which displays a somewhat carefree flippancy in the way the progressive stages in construction appear to vie for attention. This formal expression is a synthesis of the attitudes, lifestyles, controls, and roles, which are characteristic of the place.

Regularization, or even the prospect of it, sets into motion dynamics which alter the shape of these colonies. Regularization, for one, restricts the residents of unauthorized colonies from any building activity whatsoever. Therefore, at the slightest hint of imminent regularization, construction activity peaks, as people try to add as much as they possibly can to the existing structures. Authorization, the next step in bringing these colonies into the folds of the formal fabric of the city, entails the imposition of codes and bye-laws, requiring residents to alter their buildings, even knocking off parts of it in order to conform. These regulatory measures form part of the blanket solution approach, applied uniformly to the entire city, that is so tactlessly adopted in Delhi. Each settlement 'type' differs widely from the others, and needs to be treated uniquely, at least in some critical matters that fall under the purview of regulatory agencies.

LAJWANTI GARDEN 1962

LAJWANTI GARDEN 1978

6.3   A METHOD FOR THE STUDY OF TYPES

There is no real information base available for the 'type' in the next sketch, public housing. An analysis, similar to the one that I have undertaken for the unauthorized colonies will only serve to trivialize a cogent development of the argument. Therefore, using the DDA Housing type as a prop, I have chosen to deal with some salient methodological issues, that may be useful in observing, and consequently analyzing, on site, the various orders within the 'type'.

The development of urban vernaculars, as a co-ordinated body of knowledge and information, has to be based upon the evolution of a broad methodological framework that may be used

as a broad criteria, or maybe an intellectual framework with which to approach fieldwork. This method merely provides us with an ideological vantage point from which to purview diverse settings. It is certainly not a formula, nor is it a set of rules. It is more akin to a set of values, an orientation. In fact, this 'method' itself has to be the outcome of a process of evolution. The following section forms the tentative beginnings of such an evolutionary process. Although inchoate in many respects, the explorations will follow the groundwork established in the preceding chapters, and will consequently divide the treatment of the subject into the five orders.[1]

I have begun by outlining a brief history of the development of public housing in Delhi, so as to provide a rudimentary frame of reference.

6.4   DDA HOUSING & CO-OPS

Prior to independence itself, Delhi was already a major destination for the migrant, both from rural and from other depressed urban areas, in search of a better life. Besides, the city had been finally reinstated as the capital of a rapidly growing colony. This necessitated the maintenance of an elaborate Government structure in the city, replete with the hordes of bureaucrats and clerks. Some came in search of fortune, others transferred in the name of duty. A growing number of families had to be housed in a hurry. It was time for a system that generated rapid turnovers, in terms of numbers. Publicly sponsored mass housing had thus arrived to stay.

The earliest form of housing that provided undifferentiated shelter for a sizeable number of people in Delhi was what is

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[1] viz., attitudes, lifestyle, control, roles and tasks, and forms and places.

Fig.6.4.1   Govt. housing for clerks in New Delhi, designed by W.H. Nicholls in the immediate post-Lutyens era.

known as the 'Railway Colonies'. Constructed many years before independence, in the years after the railway first came to Delhi, these colonies were built by the state-owned railways from a mold that was used to churn out housing stock right across the country. It was the closest thing to instant, formula housing. Amidst the excitement and exuberation of building a new capital city, some rather elegant mass housing schemes were designed and built for gazetted and non-gazetted officers. In fact Lutyen's plan was changed in 1931 to accommodate bureaucrats and other officials.[1] This was the first time that public housing, as a type of settlement design, proliferated highly visible, centrally located areas of the city. As the transfer of the capital was set underway, accompanied by a gradually increasing influx of migrants, the Public Works Department (PWD) went to work with a vengeance trying to set up homes for the multitudes that streamed into the city. At this time public housing was synonymous with Government employee housing.

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[1] Delhi Development Committee 1939 Report; from Breese, Princeton 1974.

Fig.6.4.2 Refugee resettlement housing built in the forties and early fifties, showing the richness they have come to manifest as they age over time.

These were rows of two roomed apartments arranged in a linear fashion, with either common or individual toilets depending upon the class of civil servants served.[1]

Come independence, and the influx of refugees, the housing needs escalated by astronomical leaps. The PWD geared up its efforts, while private developers provided for the affluent. Mass housing therefore, in its early stages, catered almost exclusively to the lower-middle and middle income families. The lower income groups continued to suffer, while the upper income groups lived in bungalows in colonies developed by private colonizers under approval from the competent authority. Supply lagged demand woefully[2], as a result of delays in the legal processes involved in the acquisition of land, the spiralling prices due to a reluctance to accept realistic standards, and a shortage of technical staff. Part of the problem was also an attitude towards the nature of housing that colored public policy. As Payne puts it,

[1] Benjamin, Cambridge 1985.

[2] This shortage phenomenon has doggedly haunted the administration. The Delhi Draft Master Plan itself estimated that 42,500 houses would need to be built each year. The Authority, however, only aimed at building 16,000 units each year, and actually completed a miserly 4,700 units in 1968-69,and 5,606 units in 1970-71; Payne, London/Boston 1977.

*Fig.6.4.3   The location of public housing schemes in Delhi, of which a
             large percentage falls under the umbrella of all that which is
             perceived to be 'DDA housing'.*

It was assumed. .that authorities had a responsibility to
provide decent 'minimum' standard housing to the lower income
groups despite the increasing international and Indian
evidence that people of *all* income levels had proved
themselves perfectly capable of providing their own housing,
and that what they need is access to resources and
infrastructural supports.[1]

The elaborate and misguided slum and squatter resettlement

policies in Delhi, owe their allegiance partly to this misconception

of housing that pervaded the thinking of those that mattered.

The era of the Master Plan ushered in a massive thrust by the

DDA to acquire all undeveloped land in the city. The objective

was to control land prices and speculation, socialize urban land,

ensure land availability, and to bring this land under the control of

a single authority, which would then monitor its usage and

[1] Payne, London/Boston 1977.

distribution according to plan specifications. Public housing delivered under the stewardship of the DDA, was almost entirely located on this land. The process was initiated in 1966, providing housing units under three categories, i.e. EWS (Economically Weaker Sections) /Janata, LIG (Lower Income Group), and MIG (Middle Income Group).

Over the years, the DDA has tried to streamline its operating procedure, and has introduced a number of schemes which it monitors, these include high income group housing schemes, and self-financing housing schemes. The co-operative movement has also emerged recently as a popular prospect as a means for delivering mass housing. Land is allotted to the registered co-operative society, which then organizes its own resources and constructs the buildings under authorization of the DDA. Except for the issue of control, and some respects of form, these societies are similar to the DDA housing in many ways. At this point, I would place them under the envelope of a single 'type'. The diversity of subtypes within this overall typological framework renders this a difficult agglomeration to characterize.

Fig.6.4.4   A recently built DDA housing complex.

After having written so extensively on the relevance and the nature of urban vernaculars, and type, let me explore briefly the nature of investigation that might be adopted to look at a settlement form from this unique perspective. I shall begin, as in the rest of the text, with attitudes, and follow through with lifestyle, control, roles and tasks, concluding with forms and place. It is pertinent to note that as I progress along this sequence, from attitudes to forms and place, each order will draw from the inquiries conducted into the others. The study of urban history, is an essential study, which can illuminate certain aspects within each of the five orders, in the articulation of type. Chapter Four and Five, as also sections 6.2 and 6.4 have been devoted to a rendering of various perceptions of urban development in Delhi. However, as I proceed along the ensuing exploration, the significance of certain historical processes and perspectives may emerge that are missing from the narration provided this study.

6.4.1   ATTITUDES

Since attitude is a learned phenomenon, it has to be perceived both in continuity, and in change. Halloran writes of three main sources of attitudes as,

> . . direct experience with the objects and situations, explicit and implicit learning from others, and personality development.[1]

The study of attitudes is colored by some degree of hit and trial methods. Causality, as well as consequence, has to be studied, and occasionally the links between the two could be tenuous, or, at best, be left to intuitive reasoning. Leff raise pertinent questions in asking,

> Are the things we believe and value likely to encourage or even allow us to deal effectively with problems after we recognize them as problems? As a further step, we can also ask whether our current attitudes and values will facilitate or inhibit any

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[1] Halloran, Westport CO, 1970.

long-term improvement in the quality of the environment and of
our lives beyond the mere solution of problems?[1]

The essence of studying attitudes collectively, lies in the ability to
simplify the composition of a complex group of people, into
broad conceivable categories based on some criteria. These
criteria could emerge from demographic studies, from such
parameters such as age, sex, education, ethnic compositions
and social history, religion, political ideology, income groups etc.
For each type, based on preliminary investigations, these
categories can be narrowed down to those that seem particularly
relevant. The next step in the process, would be to study the
inter-relationships amongst the categories selected as significant
in the study of attitudes. Every group of people have certain
motivations, and some very specific perceptions based on their
life situation; these cannot be ignored in the development of an
attitude scenario of a type.

How is this pertinent to the type selected here, the DDA
housing? First, an analysis of how the development of the type in
the past may have affected or shaped attitudes, could throw light
on the present scenario. Specifically with respect to
environmental issues, we can think as an example, of the attitude
towards nature in the articulation of place. This is definitely tied
up with attitudes towards private and community space, as also
the issues of institutionalization of management, maintenance,
and decision making. However, children's attitudes, are definitely
in variance with those of their elders, even though elders
definitely influence the youngsters. Hypothesizing from my own
experience, the significant people categories in this particular
form of settlement will probably emerge divided primarily along
the lines of age differentiation, sex, income groups, and social
history (family background). Religion and ethnicity are factors
which, in contemporary urban Delhi, are subject to an increasing
degree of equability.

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[1] Leff, New York 1978.

An understanding of the larger perspective within which the collective operates is significant since,

> An individual's (or, a limited collective's) attitude towards a class of objects is determined by the particular role these objects have come to play in facilitating responses which reduce the tensions of particular conflicts among motives.[1]

This is probably an important constituent of the cultural matrix that characterizes a place. The investigation of environmental attitudes can only stem from the study of a broader conceptualization of attitudes, as they percolate into our social, political, and economic lives.

Individualism & Community: The notion of individualism and competition, as opposed to community. Leff, in *Experience, Environment, and Human Potential*, outlines the individualistic orientation of American society and how that affects attitudinal framework and consequently decisions that concern different spheres of life.[2] The conception of family, community, and society, is intricately linked up with perceived individualism.

Hierarchical Thinking: Attitudes are significant players in the way we process information. Prioritization is a phenomenon that we constantly partake in. Education, the role of the media, social structure, as also the role of the individual versus community, are some of the more salient factors that affect our hierarchical thinking. Hierarchies, as Leff points out, can either be linear or more complex three dimensional structures. He observes, however that linearity seems to be the tendency in most modern societies.[3] This has a significant influence on issues of process, as it pertains to the built environment. For instance the redressal of grievances, for an average

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[1] "Psychoanalytic Theory and Social Attitudes", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 24, 1960; from Halloran, Westport CO 1970.
[2] Leff, New York 1978.
[3] Leff, New York 1978.

community in Delhi,[1] is perceived to be a very complex non-linear process, this has a significant bearing on alternative means adopted to solve problems.

Status: Attitudes toward issues of status and status differentiation are consequential too.

Time and Time Orientation: The conception of time and time orientation in terms of viewing the future, as a factor in goal determination etc. .

Tradition and Modernity: The degree of inertia that is inbuilt within societal attitudes, the way in which socio-economic and technological progress is viewed, as also the form in which it is adopted.

Authority: Although related to the question of hierarchical thinking, the perceived role and effectiveness of authority over time, shapes the way in which people develop an attitude towards the political and the legal framework, the police, and regulatory institutions.

Where do we seek the relevant information that will offer us insights into these attitudinal orientations of groups within types? From a limited introduction and familiarity of the site, as we pose the relevant questions arising from each of the above mentioned issues, the specifics of the inquiry in each situation will present themselves to the observer. As I have mentioned before, it would be unwise to try and pin down a process which is meticulous to the point of formulation. Some of the techniques adopted in public opinion surveys could be useful in the study of attitudes, if adapted carefully to the purpose at hand. With respect to the case at hand, the DDA housing, each of these categories can be studied across the entire type, major variations can be categorized and established as broad sub-types. For instance, the manner in which transformations manifest themselves as extensions and additions to the existing built-up structures, give us valuable insights into attitudes with respect to

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[1] as we have witnessed in the deliberations on unauthorized colonies.

the relationship with authority, modern/traditional orientations, even individualism. The last reflected in the form of distinctiveness that these additions strive to express.

6.4.2   LIFESTYLES

Individual lifestyle variations, reiterating Sobel,

> . . was hypothesized to stem from the variety of 'referents' and orientations that compose an individual's experience. The variation in these social psychological phenomenon was viewed as a function of the variation in the positions individuals occupy within the social structure.[1]

He views lifestyle variations as stemming from structural differences within society. What can be said about the lifestyle of collectives and the variation among these collectives? I think it is safe to say that there are threads that weave together certain aspects of a collective lifestyle, even in the face of the enormous diversity that characterizes contemporary urban life. This factor of lifestyle coincidence varies from one setting to another. From the parties and glitzy social occasions of the affluent, to the practice of fetching water from the community tap in the squatter settlements, lifestyle permeates in some generic form, across the type.

The extent of attitudinal accord that characterizes a settlement form, of course, has a great deal to do with the way in which certain aspects of lifestyle are articulated. For instance, the salience of individualism over community, in attitude development, will certainly affect the form of social communication and interaction. In the upper category DDA housing, for example, people come from that strata of society that is more exposed to Western institutions and values, than are people in the unauthorized colonies and squatter settlements. Consequently, social interaction and the sense of community, although extant, is not as strong and visible in the DDA colonies,

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[1] Sobel, New York 1981.

as it is in the settlements characterized by subdued individualism. I must point out that although *individualism* is not a practiced ideology in some of these settlements, the people living there are not lacking in *individuality*.

Where and how do we seek the information that is required to develop an understanding of issues related to, and influenced by lifestyle? First and foremost, where available, data on tangible aspects which give us valuable clues to lifestyle could be scrutinized. Consumer patterns and profiles could be overlaid on the study area in a search for coincidence. Demographics, religion, occupational trends, layout and usage studies of both private and public spaces could be valuable indicators which may give us critical insight into common trends in lifestyles. Apart from these studies conducted on available research material, the most valuable source of information in the study of lifestyle is observation. General observation could be combined with methodical observation. The daily life of sample subjects could be charted across time and compared for results, as also for similarities in their social, economic, and political profiles.

The salience of each of these, and other methods, will vary based on the specifics of each settlement. Some special considerations may emerge, based on the particularities of a special case. In the case of the certain categories of DDA housing schemes, the presence of a part time domestic help forms a significant part of the lifestyle. Some households even have a full time domestic help. The accommodation of this extra person as an itinerant member of the household has had little impact on the planning of the community. However, the presence of this domestic help does affect the lifestyle of the family, as also the usage of space, and the distribution of roles and tasks within the house.

6.4.3   CONTROL

Control is an issue, central to the relationship amongst men, as also between man and his urban environment. In the book *Folkways*, sociologist William Sumner categorizes control in society according to the consequences of nonobservance, articulated as habits, customs, norms, mores, and finally law.[1] Control, as I have discussed earlier, is imposed through tacit and explicit mechanisms embedded in, or articulated by society. Freud formulated the concept of the 'external policeman', the explicit controls, largely supplementing an 'internal policeman', the tacit self imposed control. The latter is self imposed only as a result of society's expectations. Although Freud's reference is aimed at the individual, type specific sections of society also exercise control that is monitored both from within and without.

Based on Piaget's work in *The Moral Judgement of the Child*,[2] we can develop an argument that holds the social framework responsible for control, both tacit and explicit, both through formal (school, church, government) and non formal institutions (custom, moral judgement, peer behavior). The significance of control has also been emphasized by Merton as 'the choice between socially structured alternatives.'[3] Besides this, there is also a sense of control that is derived from the nature of something, it's natural tendency to enable or disable. A good example is the actual physical form of a settlement, for example in a dense historical township in a hot dry region, the layout of houses and streets, by its very nature would not permit the residents to have garages along with their homes. A door enables transition, a wall does not.

The study of control involves exploration in three broad realms. First, the institutional framework, which is the major exponent of

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[1] Sumner, Boston 1906.

[2] Piaget. New York 1948.

[3] Stinchcombe, in Coser, New York 1975.

explicit control, the 'external policeman'. This can be further divided into the regulatory institutions and the instructional institutions. Broadly, the regulatory institutions set down rules and enforce them through incentives and disincentives, while the instructional institutions translate some aspects of conformity, conflict, and creativity into formal instruction. Second, the social framework, which works through a process of learning from experience, as also from values and attitudes which define the 'internal policeman'. Finally, there is the control imposed by circumstances; control that is exerted on the expression of the type, merely on the grounds that some aspect of life just happens to be a certain way, although the mechanics of that happening has little to do with an intent to control. Layouts, market conditions, technical innovations may sometimes be used as examples. In the urban context of the DDA housing, in acknowledgement of the heterogeneity that characterizes this type, the institutions exert a great degree of control. The reliance on the 'external policeman' is far greater than its internal counterpart, although societal forces render this institutional control with another layer of complexity, the tacit set of norms that guide human action.

The influence of attitudes on the formulation of control as exerted by social pressures, and on the degree of conformity with institutional control, cannot be belabored sufficiently. The notions of physical control of public space, application of covert influence, manipulation, decision making, deviation, and arbitration, have predefined limits and normative methods. These norms, however, leave sufficient room for creativity. Institutional control, specifically regulatory mechanisms, have a strong influence on the form and pattern of the settlement, and consequently influences lifestyles to some conceivable extent.

A study of the formal controls begin with the understanding of the process of development of the type. Tracing the historical development, with a special emphasis on the role of institutions

could be a very useful beginning. The framework of control and regulation as laid down in letter, and its actual enforcement, including the extent and nature of deviation, further enlightens the search. The basis on which the formal rules are framed could offer valuable insight into the power of various forms of control, for example in Sanaa, Yemen, the traditional Islamic Law has been formalized into a body of regulations that is enforced strictly. In Delhi the sources for regulation find root in western ideologies and the progressive image of a industrially developing society. The control of the industrial and commercial establishment in the struggle for control cannot be ignored.

Social control is more difficult to conceptualize in all its complexity. Although the methods used to study attitudes and lifestyles could provide valuable insight, this form of control manifests itself in ways often very difficult for an outside observer to discern. However, sustained studies over time could aid in developing a useful method for field research. The third form of control, which is circumstantial, can be studied in the form of an analytical exercise that covers the formal aspects of the settlement, social idiosyncracies, market phenomenon, technical innovation etc. . Not that all of these will necessarily be circumstantial. A certain market phenomenon could be induced to enhance the control of industry over the lives of the people.

The study of each of these areas of control could be voluminous, leave alone the interpolations between them. However, it is crucial that such studies be conducted with relation to the urban environment before we can understand the art of place making, and are able to use the regulatory mechanism artfully and sensitively to respond to the wishes and the collective aspirations of society. In the case of the DDA housing, much as the case with my rendition of the unauthorized colonies, the larger picture emerges with an understanding of authority hierarchies and their dynamics as they affect the settlement.

6.4.4   ROLES AND TASKS

Roles and tasks, as much as attitudes, lifestyle, and control can be conceived at both the macro and the micro level. Control relationships, as they are accommodated in lifestyle, determine many of the roles and tasks in society. In most cases, social position is a function of control, mirroring this, Leff writes,

> Roles can be loosely defined as the patterns of behavior associated with specific social positions.[1]

We can consider a social position to be a 'power', since by virtue of what it is seen to be, that particular position, marks out the limits of what is enabling and what is not in a relationship with other 'powers'. An individual can be a power; a single power can also represent several individuals who act in some sense of unison. Habraken, in *Transformations of the Site*, limits his observation to the results of actions on the site, rather than those who perpetrate the action, or the relationship amongst these perpetrators. Under this frame of reference, he refers to power and dominance as follows,

> The ability to change the physical reality is power. . It may be that one power can influence another while the reverse is not true. When this is the case we find the first power to dominate the second.[2]

When we translate this into the social realm, and include both the actors as well as their actions, we may discern that every individual has a certain socially defined potential to act, that is indeed his 'power', as long as he chooses not to be deviant. Even the limits of deviation are embedded in this definition. He also has a self defined potential, which conforms, to a great extent with the social definition of his potential, but could also include individual limits of deviation. His roles are defined by these potential limits that frame his actions. It so happens that in certain respect the power conforms, and in other respects he

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[1] Leff, New York 1978.
[2] Habraken, Cambridge MA 1983.

feels the necessity to deviate, thus realigning the entire equation. Essentially, within a broad format of consistency, roles and tasks present a dynamic proposition.

In a specific type, as in the DDA housing, roles and tasks can be studied across a vast range of reference scales, from the role of the individual within the family, to the role of city institutions in place making. The study of roles and tasks has to be linked closely to the study of both lifestyles and control. The manner in which the institutions define their roles, as also how the people interpret this definition, has a great deal to do with control equations as they find expression, and certain aspects of lifestyle as they manifest themselves in specific settings. Putting it in differently, one interpretation of roles can be seen as the interpretation of those critical aspects lifestyle that are actually control relationships, translated into action through the filter of attitudes and self definition. Another interpretation of roles could translate to the relationship between 'powers' at the larger conception, where the players are the institutions, government, commerce, industry, the people belonging to the type etc. .

In the case of the DDA housing, the role of various categories of people could be studied, people, who through their actions help demarcate the usage of space and time within the community. The roles in the creation and maintenance of the overall system could also be studied, as it is defined by each party and interpreted by the others. For instance, the city authorities may decide that the tenants will look after certain public areas. The tenants on the other hand, perceive the maintenance of those spaces to be the responsibility of the authorities. Eventually, the space is given over to blight, as each party becomes victim to their respective interpretations. A group of people, who may not have been allowed to use that space, had it been manicured by any of the parties, appropriate it for play. I am referring here to children who reside in the housing complex.

As we follow these concatenated strings of evidence, patterns will begin to emerge that can be co-related within some overall structural umbrella. This structuring is, of course, site specific, and in a broader sense, type specific.

6.4.5   FORMS AND PLACES

From the viewpoint of this thesis, forms and places, constitute the pivotal concern in the characterization of type. Among the five orders used to construct the type, the order of form and place suffers from the greatest degree of dependence on the issues of control, and roles and task. The most profound influence probably results from attitudes that permeate and color the articulation of control. I am not speaking here of the process of construction and building alone, but also of the process of place making, the reading of forms in the light of meanings attributed to them by the users.

What we may find in our investigations into attitudes, lifestyle, control relationships, and roles and tasks, are clues which can be pieced together in some coherent fashion, to get a better idea of the puzzle, if not to solve it. This puzzle is the story of forms and places, not as it is viewed by the establishment, and by establishment architects, but by the people who live within that puzzle, breathing its pieces and living out its complex ordinariness. Venturi Scott Brown & Izenour, presented an unique perspective in *Learning from Las Vegas*, and tried to articulate, in a broad aesthetic sense, an everyday pluralistic sensibility by portraying a contrast and juxtaposition of polarity in the attitudes adopted in the design and development of form. The oppositions consisted of the 'heroic and original', versus the 'ugly and ordinary'.[1]

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[1] Venturi, Scott Brown, & Izenour, Cambridge MA 1986.

Although I have reservations about the appropriateness of the words chosen to describe the ideological antipodes, I cannot but applaud the underlying argument which calls for a design approach that develops forms as derivatives of the conventional, or in the words of the authors, 'ordinary'. The 'heroic and original' cannot be relegated to the 'irrelevant' as the book suggests, its significance in the articulation of forms and places is undeniable. Here we may turn to Rossi, who speaks of a rendition of the urban artifact in a medium drawn from deep within our consciousness to complement the collective memory.

> The value of history seen as a collective memory, as the relationship of the collective to its place, is that it helps us to grasp the significance of the urban structure, its individuality, and its architecture which is the form of this individuality. This individuality ultimately is connected to an original artifact - in the sense of Cattaneo's principle; *it is an event and a form.*[1]

Thus there is definitely a place for the heroic too. The only limitations I pose to this monumentality, is one of sympathy to its context; sympathy that is, born of an acknowledgement of the collective individuality of the place. This sympathetic disposition does in no way come in the way of change or even the imposition of alien orders; the deviation merely comes from an understanding of the urban vernacular, not from the repetition of its captive vocabulary.

The DDA housing is an alien model of public housing, transported to its present context in what is close to a pristine form. As a formal type, it has found a place in the city, however derogatory we may see it to be in retrospect. It has, over the years, transformed and reorganized the puzzle of place making within its typological boundaries. Unlike many other forms of settlements, and like many, all the pieces of the puzzle do not complement each other. The study of the four previously outlined orders of type, can reinforce an understanding of forms and places. However, there remains a lot that can enlighten

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[1] Rossi, Cambridge MA, 1986.

through the study of forms and places themselves. Overlapping the realms of the four orders dealt with earlier, this order of forms and places can be attacked intellectually from three distinct perspectives. First, the articulation of forms and places as 'process'. Second, the expression of forms and places as 'product'. Finally, the usage of forms and places as 'artifact'. These three perspectives are inter-related and maintain a continued dialogue among each other. I shall not elaborate upon this method that has been tested over time in the study of buildings and spaces, of forms and places. I should only like to add that such a study must consider, in simultaneity, the three perspectives outlined above. At the same time it should endeavor to align itself with the study of the four orders that help make up the portrait of the type.

This study is not the most appropriate vehicle for recommending changes. That is neither the immediate objective, nor the message of this thesis. In the treatment of the unauthorized colonies, I have concentrated on illustrating the inter-relation between the five orders of a vernacular 'type', while at the same time casting in relief, some of the unique features of each. The central issue here is the development of a method of looking at settlements, with the intention of fostering an inter-disciplinary understanding of the people-place relationship. It is the purpose of this exercise to illustrate that this relationship is expressed through the collision of external circumstances with normative perceptions, gathered under the umbrella of an urban vernacular.

CHAPTER VII
A NEW ORIENTATION

7.1   THE QUESTION OF APPROPRIATENESS

> In Manhattan's West Eighties where I live, there is nothing to
> write about but people.
>
> Alfred Kazin, *New
> Yorker*[1]

As a person intimately concerned with the built environment, I
cannot but disagree with Alfred Kazin. Where there are people,
there certainly are other things to write about, specially in
Manhattan's West Eighties. Something in Alfred Kazin's words
strike a discordant note through all of this. I am sure that they
have buildings there, and streets, they have history, although
how much they perceive it I know not. Where there are people,
buildings, streets, and history, could beauty and character be far
behind? I see history, and I see beauty, I see character, strengths
and weaknesses, not in the people alone, but in the buildings
that surround these people, and the spaces that fill the gaps
between these buildings. They may also have strengths that are
invigorating, and weaknesses that debilitate. Others, specialists,
who look in from the outside, read these qualities using the
different vocabularies and yardsticks of their profession. I am in a
dilemma, as one equipped specially to read the built
environment, do I consider that from my vantage point I have an
extraordinary depth of vision, and am able to see what most
others (including Alfred Kazin) cannot? Alternatively, am I
deprived of a visual innocence stripped away over time by my
vocational parochialism?

These are difficult questions to answer, and proponents of either
predilection may vehemently oppose a consideration of the
other. Some will even argue of a conjunction between my vision
and that of Alfred Kazin; for the setting is but merely a reflection

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[1] Fischer, Chicago 1982.

of the people. Others, in the continued spirit of the 'new' architecture of the twenties, will echo Le Corbusier's assertion,

> A city!
> It is the grip of man upon nature. It is human operation directed against nature, a human organism both for protection and for work. It is a creation.[1]

Who is the man that Le Corbusier portrays in his equation but the specialist? He is on his way to make pristine poetry, one that shuns the past and beckons a new and alien future. When in 1922, at the request of Salon d'Automne, Corbusier drew up a panorama of a *City of Three Million Inhabitants*, he created a masterpiece, an ode to his genius and an image for the consumption of the professional elité. Only three million clones of the Corbusian ideology, a multitude of visionary geniuses, could find themselves locked away happily in the claustrophobic poetics of its impetuous order. One has to only look as far as the housing at Pessac, near Bordeaux in France, to understand the incompatibility of a Corbusian authority of order and poetry, and
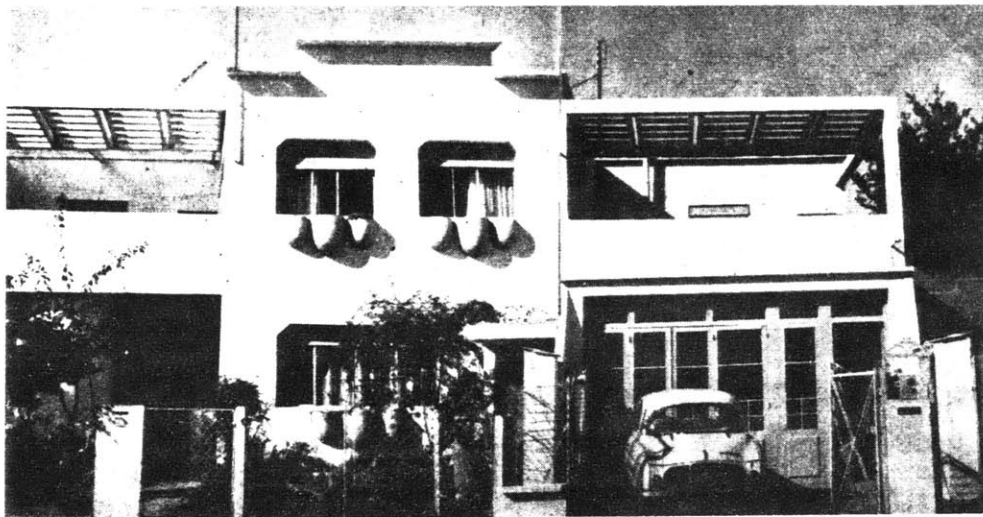
Fig.7.1.1   Housing at Pessac.

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[1] Le Corbusier, Cambridge MA 1971.

the plebeian sensibility of place and association. I cannot even begin to visualize the nature of a Corbusian truce with the perception that the city is a messy place.[1] Corbusier's legacy has unfortunately remained with us; Lisa Peattie's analysis of the planning efforts at Ciudad Guyana in Venezuela bears evidence as she diagnoses the three explanations for the 'undesirable outcome of the city',

> Indeed the desire to keep people from moving in and messing up the planned city was, it will be seen, a basic reason for the separation between the rich and the poor, and the settlements on the east (shantytown settlements) and the west (ordered masterplan development)of the river.
> The planning process was too rigid. What was wanted, it is argued, was not so much a plan or final design, but a program for directing and channeling urban growth.
> They (the planners) were unable to plan realistically for the development of the city, since to do so would have been to recognize and provide for the needs of a mass of poor and low-status people with whom they did not wish to be identified.[2]

Brasilia and Chandigarh: the silent megaliths that speak more than volumes I could pen. There is no room in Le Corbusier's (I use his name to symbolize a plurality that uses his intellectual address as their residence) world for the body of conventions that frame the little mans world.

Although the entire profession does not deserve castigation (gracious as is the limited presence of the bridge-builders![3]), those that give precedence to unquestioned professional faith over critical reasoning, certainly do. It is interesting to note that in their conditioned acceptance of the tenets of ideological movements, and in their fatuous endorsement of 'ism' ism, the specialists are giving expression to the same need for conformity and convention that they deny their client masses.[4] This created dichotomy of people and place has been the butt of a certain

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[1] refer to the Introduction for a discussion of the city as a messy place; ibid.,pp. xi-xii.

[2] Peattie, Ann Arbor MI 1987.

[3] refer to the description of the river-metaphor in the Introduction; ibid., pp. vii-ix.

[4] Certainly, in this respect, Corbusier stands apart as the visionary genius that he was.

kind of professional oversight which often takes expression as complacence; oversight that nurtures large sections of our urban environment. It is indeed a pity that we cannot perceive, from within our pretentious worlds, the richness of this relationship that is renounced.

Italo Calvino, in *Invisible Cities*, speaking through the persona of Marco Polo, provides us with the provocative in this ambience of man and setting,

> The inferno of the living is not something that will be; if there is one, it is what is already here, the inferno where we live every day, that we form by being together. There are two ways to escape suffering it. The first is easy for many: accept the inferno and become such a part of it that you can no longer see it. The second is risky and demands constant vigilance and apprehension: seek and learn to recognize who and what in the midst of the inferno, are not inferno, then make them endure, give them space.[1]

The first of the two ways to deal with the inferno is, according to Calvino, born of acceptance muted by ignorance. The indifference of the laity, the complacence of the specialist, and the folly of both, lie in the unquestioned acceptance of a bondage to the conventions of their respective worlds.[2] If it is assumed that regulation and authority can manifest itself in society both implicitly and explicitly, conventions, it may be argued, represent the implicit. Like regulation and authority, conventions too can be both enabling and disabling. Undoubting acceptance of the inferno, in Calvino's quote, implies a slavishness, compulsive enough to be disabling. Far from falling into this trap themselves, the specialists have the added responsibility of helping the more susceptible multitudes overcome this impulsive servility.

The second, of the two ways to deal with the inferno, is to confront it. This argument can be directed towards the question of conventions, an issue which has been central to the argument

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[1] Calvino, New York 1974.
[2] refer to the river-metaphor; *ibid.,* pp.vii-ix.

developed in this thesis. We have to 'seek and learn to recognize' the enabling component in conventional wisdom, and distinguish it from the bundle of conventions that bind us to antiquity. It is only then that the question of appropriateness will receive a fair hearing.

I have mentioned earlier, in the introduction,[1] the incapacity of traditional 'folk societies'[2] to look beyond the limitations of their world, defined by tradition and convention. Within the realm that constitute their world however, they have asked the question of appropriateness, and in many instances answered it to the best of their abilities. Lives in contemporary cities today are orchestrated in a field which dallies constantly with plurality and complexity. Although answers to the question of appropriateness will not be easy to find, it is surely time we began asking the question.

7.2   WHAT IS A 'GOOD FIT'?

Bertrand Russell once said of mathematics,

> . . the science in which one never knows what one is speaking of, nor whether what one is saying is true.[3]

If this were true of mathematics, as I am certain it is, I shudder to think of the predicament of the apostle, who seeks to delve deep for a vision of that insuperable truth in the form that we may appropriate for our cities. Goodman has a word for the consummate seeker,

> Briefly, then, truth of statements and rightness of descriptions, representations, exemplifications, expressions - of design, drawing, diction, rhythm - is primarily a matter of fit: fit to what is referred to in one way or another, or to other renderings, or to modes and manners of organization.[4]

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[1] *ibid.*, pp.x
[2] refer Redfield, Ithaca NY, 1971 for a definition of folk societies.
[3] Castoriades, Cambridge MA 1984.
[4] Goodman, Indianapolis IN 1978.

Given both Russell's and Goodman's allusion to the common allurement that draws many of us into a futile search for a singular, all-encompassing truth that knows no failing, contradiction, or inconsistency, it is prudent to look a little closer at the 'appropriateness' of 'fit'.

'Fit' is, in a pragmatic sense, a limited truth. Limited, because if it is applied to a set of variables or conditions, different from those originally stated, it ceases to consistently remain true.[1] Castoriades illustrates the fickleness of truth by elucidating the susceptibility of scientific theories that are tried, tested and sanctified, subsequently to be disproved. The moment a new theory appears to fit the parameters of the problem better , it is hallowed as the new truth.

> Scientific theories succeed one another; and this can be seen neither as an order, nor as mere disorder. Periodically, accepted theories are shown to be 'false', or turn out not to be 'true' in the sense intended at the time of their formulation. It would be meaningless to say that they (the new theories) 'transcend' them (the old theories) dialectically.[2]

Corbusier's projects and writings were the embodiment of such a fit, a visionary answer to a search for the ultimate truth. This apocalyptic truth was not intended to improve the world per se; it had as it's goal the creation of a brave new world. As we shall see, this momentous vision fails the acid test of rightness.

The question of appropriateness is, under certain circumstances, synonymous with 'good' fit more than it is with truth. Of course, fit and truth themselves display equivalence if we deprive truth of the infallibility normally associated with it. At this point let us deal with two significant questions.

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[1] Goodman provides us with an example which might throw further light on this; "2+2=4" is true of everything in that for every x, x is such that 2+2=4. A statement S will normally not be *true about* x unless S is about x in one of the senses of 'about' defined in "About" (*Problems and Projects*, Hackett Publishing Co.: Indianapolis IN; 1972); Goodman, Indianapolis IN 1978.

[2] Castoriades, Cambridge MA 1984.

First, how is this good fit tested? Let me explain. It is reasonably clear from every evidence that there are very few, if· any, ideological truths that remain perpetually immutable. In every situation there are conflicting and contradicting requirements that have to be resolved. In relatively heterogeneous societies, such as are most contemporary cities, plurality of choice has to be accommodated or based on some objective criteria that narrows it down to a minimum. The 'good' fit amounts to the distillation of the optimal path, one that offers the greatest amount of resolution among these conflicts and contradictions. This fit must also either afford the maximum discretion and latitude, or bear down upon the most valid among potential choices.[1] In accomplishing both these objectives, the good fit must be tested continually so as to preclude error, tantamount to a reliance on unfit models. Goodman's comments on the rightness of expression, pertaining to words and pictures, can be most aptly stated at this point,

> Whether a picture is rightly designed or a statement correctly describes is tested by examination and reexamination of the picture or statement and what it refers to in one way or another, by trying its fit in varied applications and with other patterns and statements.[2]

The rightness of fit has to be therefore continually tested both internally and externally; within the interstices of its own structure as also in relief against other structures and sensibilities.

The reason why I choose to use 'good' over 'best known' as a descriptive prefix to the word 'fit', is that 'best known', without qualification, could imply or reflect any state of accepted or prevalent fit. In this sense of the word then, any and all vernaculars would represent a 'best known' fit. However, the very premise of this thesis lies in the denial of a perfect vernacular. It is in the constitution of a struggle between prevalent fit and good

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[1] which again amounts to a superlative in the resolution of conflicts and contradictions.
[2] Goodman, Indianapolis IN 1978.

fit, between accepted and latent appropriateness, that one may discern the sustained objective of this thesis. Another point of contention lies in the definition of 'good' itself. As it is used in this case, there is no definition of the 'good'. However, there is a 'better'. The paradox of 'good' and 'better' is an interesting one. The struggle for a 'good' fit really translates into a struggle that is the sum of an infinite sequence of progressively 'better' fits. But in defining a 'better' fit, our initial point of departure is certainly not a 'good' fit, for which 'better' represents an improved state. The 'good' remains in perpetuity to symbolize the next step in the passage.

Second in this test for latency, is the question of how to confront the urban environment? 'Fit' can represent a relative truth in any sphere. There are visions that fit narrow avenues of individual worlds; there is also the fit that must integrate the entire network among these worlds. Often these levels of 'fit' may not be mutually inclusive. In such a case we sacrifice the lesser fit for the greater. With respect to our urban environments, is it possible to set an agenda for the greater 'fit' and the relationship between levels? It is here that the vernacular provides us with a significant tool for discovery, monitoring, and evaluation. The perception of a 'good' fit for the city at any moment in time, must come from a concert in which people on both sides of the river, the laity and the specialists, use the bridge as the stage for decision making.[1] Castells' definition of the necessary components for a theory of the good city, can be appropriated as elements in the conceptualization of a good fit. He lists them as,

> the production of new urban meaning by urban social movements,. . . . the management of urban functions (planning) and the creation of urban forms (design).[2]

Castells goes on to comment on the majority of existing research as having dealt with the latter two. His thesis deals with the

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[1] refer to the river-metaphor; *ibid.,* pp.vii-ix.
[2] Castells, London 1983.

question posed by the former. He also laments our vision of cities in study,

> the difficulty arises precisely from the separation between . . . the urban system on the one hand, and social movements on the other. . . people and the state, economy and society, cities and citizens, are considered as separate entities: one may dominate the other, or both may behave independently, but the logic of the analysis never allows them to interact in a meaningful structure.[1]

The surprising ease with which the specialist-laity dichotomy of the river-metaphor accommodates itself within this argument is reassuring.[2] Castells' references to urban system, the state, economy, and the 'city', distinctly characterizes the specialists' realm. His references to social movements, people, society, and citizens, could not but mean the laity. The separation between the two - the river - flows through his description.

The realm of the vernacular, as has been explored in this study, purviews the question of meaning from two significant vantage points. First, it looks at the laity, not necessarily from a perspective of social movement but also from the viewpoint of social inertia. It aims at providing an insight with which to develop a representation of society from the various levels that may constitute the 'grassroots', which is, in Castells' interpretation, the citizen masses. Second, the vernacular also explores the alliances, conflicts, domination, and compromises, that characterize the historical development of the relationship between the grassroots and the specialists. It is with an understanding that grows from a study of these faculties that a theoretical and methodological approach may evolve. The approach presented here provides a framework for confronting the elusive yet necessary question of what constitutes a good fit.

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[1] Castells, London 1983.

[2] refer to the river-metaphor; *ibid.*, pp.vii-ix.

7.3 SUMMING UP

Finally, some of the pieces are in place. Spinning, alone in the labyrinth, I still do not see the first signs of light. Yet, a strange sensation pervades the darkness, the fear has been washed away . I feel a confidence that has imparted a renewed vigor into my revolutions. The entire process of this research has revelled in uncertainty, of sailing an uncharted course with only a destination in mind, of hesitancy and doubt, of fear and excitement. As I break journey momentarily, let me try and assimilate all that has transpired, and place it in the perspective of a search for appropriateness and the good fit.

I began with the task of seeking out, to some degree of definition, the nature of a vernacular. It became clear that the essential nature of a vernacular lies in the notion of sharing. This shared sensibility is largely implicit. In many ways, like language, the vernacular is based on convention. On the other hand, in many ways, unlike language, the vernacular as a shared understanding of the world, reduces the burden on language as a means of communication. The unspoken assumptions and understandings that reinforce, and place in context the signification and denotation of words and pictures, enhances social interaction at every level. Vernaculars, by their definition also include the conventions that are shared by special groups. These groups could be identified and limited along the specialized lines of occupations, professions, special cliqués and elités. I have excluded this restrictive interpretation from the appropriation of the vernacular for the purposes of this study. Therefore, given that vernacular represents the sharing among quantifiable pluralities, certain other features of the vernacular become clear. These features help distinguish the vernacular from the awkward and incorrect connotations that have doggedly clung to this term.

The first of these is the notion that the world of high style is entirely divorced from the realm of the vernacular. It is true that the high style develops its own distinct set of conventions. Difficult to ignore however, is the fact that the vernacular of the laity is affected profoundly by the world of the high style that is either visible or accessible to them. The world of the high style, in complementary reciprocity, is affected by the vernacular. It is through a very sensitive system of implicitly couched checks and balances that the relationship between the two is established and articulated. The second misconception is that the vernacular implies a naive romanticism rooted in the past, with homogenized traditional societies. This misconception has been responsible for spawning an impression that the vernacular can be perceived only in isolated pockets, characterized by unselfconscious method and a reliance on 'right' and 'wrong' in the form of a powerful moral order.[1] I have countered this misreading on each front, arguing that life in every form of human settlement is organized along the lines of a collectively shared body of conventions. The argument extends to deny the legitimacy of a society that is exclusively 'modern' or 'traditional'. Each society expresses itself as some combination of both, distinguishable only in randomly scattered parts within the social fabric. A society may contain the 'moral' order within a shell predominantly of the 'technical' order. Selfconscious, conscious and unselfconscious orientations within society too, cannot be identified with any degree of clarity. A definite premium has been placed in this study on seeking to develop a critical consciousness that is seen in preference to either the unselfconscious or the selfconscious in the search for appropriateness and fit.

The focus of this study is the city. The next hurdle was to translate this notion of vernacular to the urban realm. On looking closer at the contemporary city, it became evident that the heterogeneity and disparity almost defies the conceptualization

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[1] *ibid.*, pp.28-33.

of a single vernacular umbrella for the entire city. Without a suitable tool to simplify this abstruse, multilayered multiplicity, the study could proceed no further. As a response, the question of type emerged as a broad format for differentiation. I hypothesized that a typological analysis could cast differences in relief, without setting up very sharp and definite boundaries among the types. Further, armed with an array of significant types, the inter-relationships and diffusions within and among them could be investigated with greater proficiency.

Creating a meaningful mosaic of a type was a more daunting proposal. How does one look at a type, capturing the nature of its vernacular, while at the same time highlighting its distinctions from other types? The most perceivable aspects of the vernacular are the expressive forms that society uses to represent itself. Among these, which include language, art, music, dress, artifacts, implements, and the physical articulation of space, the last, i.e. forms and places, has been the focus of this study. The scenario of the type was developed from this assumption: that the forms and places reflect to some extent overt expressions of accepted norms, as also a great ignorance of these very same norms. The creation of new, formally regulated environments, ignore these norms. On the other hand, these environments, as they are enriched by meaning through usage, begin to reflect a patina of the normative. The critical elements which constitute these norms and conventions can be constructed from a study of roles and tasks that are expressed in the creation and the use of forms and places; a study of control mechanisms and relationships within society as they influence roles and tasks; the study of lifestyles and lifestyle variations as they reflect the confluence of attitudes, control, and roles and tasks; and the study of attitudes as they interact with each of these other orders. These orders cannot be seen to exhibit a linear or sequential relationship, they reinforce and complement each other in complex ways. The type, in ultimate

analysis can be seen as both deductive and inductive. It is deductive because it employs the development of a general scenario (of the type) to address the specific (within the type). It is inductive in that it develops a relatively specific scenario of a type to address the general notion of a vernacular across the spectrum of types.

Having accomplished an anatomical sketch of the type as a useful tool in developing a study of vernaculars, the question of its behavior over time could not remain unexplored for long. I saw change as the energy that brought animation to the rigid anatomy of a vernacular. Change has a very profound role in developing our perception of the vernacular. It is change which induces us to reassess the basic underlying relationships that find expression in a vernacular, i.e. modernity and tradition; conscious, selfconscious, and unselfconscious. Speaking of change, as it relates to the urban vernacular, the dynamics of regulation and authority of the relationship between 'citizen' and 'city'; of laity and specialists; of people and the state; of power and control, become easier to follow. Specially dealing with the subject of authority and regulation, and its relationship with the vernacular sensibilities of the masses, it became clear that complementarity is a highly desirable goal. In the effort to establish this correlation, it is the authority figure (ascribed, achieved, or both), that has to take the initiative. In the sense that it is used here, initiative refers to the process of co-ordination and management which attempts, with limited success, to put the diverse parts of a contemporary city into a positive working relationship. Many have argued that it is the masses which should regulate, and not the august bodies that the regulatory institutions have come to be seen as. Indeed that is as noble a perception as it is impractical, given that social revolutions do not manifest themselves very often. Besides, the notion of regulating a contemporary city in all its complexity, without a strong moderator, is not akin to having a large university function without faculty. Teachers can be both enabling or

disabling, creative or stagnant, friendly or haughty, concerned or blasé, trusting or wary. In the same way, formal regulation, although it can be debilitating, is not necessarily in conception a cancer that has to be excised. In a nutshell, this thesis can only be seen to have fulfilled its task if it is of some benefit to this exclusive cabal of regulators. I suppose the message of this thesis could be seen as a caveat disguised as a plea, addressed to the few responsible for tampering with the lives of the many. If this weighty task is taken lightly, the burden could eventually overcome the bearer, in ways that undermine the sanctity of human purpose and will eventually threaten his special position.

This sums up the development of the theoretical argument presented in this thesis. In the subsequent chapters, through the analysis of a case, I have tried to put the study of urban vernacular to a limited test. The purpose of this case study was to develop an actual 'type' using the structure laid out in the first part of the thesis. I have devoted a rather lengthy section to the preparation of an urban history of Delhi, which sets up the contextual framework for the development of the type. The significance of the urban history of a place in the study of vernaculars cannot be overemphasized. The study of the unauthorized colonies has not been entirely comprehensive, yet it does, I feel, illustrate the potential of investigating vernaculars through the study of types. Having constructed a preliminary portrait of the 'type', I perceived a great inadequacy in the information that was available for this study. A great deal of specific information was required, as also direct field exposure to the type, and I was separated from my site by continents. It was at this point that I decided that I ought to include a section that made an initial probe into articulating a method for the actual study of a type that has been identified through superficial analysis. How does this theoretical framework translate into field research? I plunged into a study of the DDA housing with the purpose of developing a preliminary approach to field research,

yet it remains inchoate, an inquiry which has not developed into an adequate response. I perceived the lack of information even more keenly in this case. As and when I do get opportunities to conduct such studies, I am sure a method, or methods of greater clarity and perspicacity will appear.

7.4   CODA

> I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves, and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion. The remedy is not to take it from them, but to inform their discretion.
>
> *Thomas Jefferson*
> *September 29, 1820.*

Where does this study lead to? This has been a question that has followed me with unflagging persistence right through the entire thesis. The question has been all the more difficult to ignore, since at the outset I had accepted the idea of a study that would be the first step in the realization of a larger objective. I have tried to give form to this larger objective in the introduction and at various points along the study. The question at this point is, how do we get there from where we stand?

I see the development of this study in five major stages. First, one that has been broached tentatively in this thesis, the development of an adequate and tested method for exploring a type in the field. This is the most immediate consideration and one that I intend to look at in greater depth in the near future. Second, the development of a study which explores the question of regulation and enforcement from the viewpoint of the figures of authority, i.e. the public agencies, government etc.. In a sense, it would amount to the study of the limited vernacular of law makers and regulators. It would be a scrutiny of the other bank in the river-metaphor. Third, the development of a method for field study that can inform stage two, much in the same way the first stage informs this thesis. Fourth, the coming

together of the first and second parts of the study. Having studied the proclivities on either bank, the task will be to delineate the art and the science of bridge building. Progressive regulation, like the studies in the previous three stages must be both deductive and inductive. Fifth, the task of integrating the cumulative experience of the previous four stages, and this thesis, into an integrated approach to the question of negotiating regulation and supervising enforcement. The objective is to render regulation as a tool that enables in the final analysis. Lastly, the stage that appears to be the most difficult, that of educating those responsible for regulation, or maybe I should simply say marketing the product!

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CHAPTER 5

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CHAPTER 6

6.2.1	Courtesy of Aga Khan Program Archives; Akhtar Badshah., 1982 .
6.2.2	Courtesy of Snehanshu Mukherji.
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