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Visions of Modernity: Architectural Vignettes and Modern Living in Urban India  
1975-1990

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**Summary**

This article examines the discourse of housing and urban planning between 1975 and 1990 in India. It approaches this subject within the context of international and national development agendas, which aimed to improve living conditions of the poor. Architects Balkrishna Doshi and Charles Correa, commissioned to design houses and towns during this period, are the focus of this study. Their studios produced a body of visual material: drawings, serigraphs, watercolours and photographs for publications, presentations and exhibitions, sharing utopian visions of modern living. They also published essays and interviews, which, along with the visual material, have been instrumental in the shaping of the modern housing discourse. This article undertakes an inter-textual analysis of this material and applies Doreen Massey's approach to space 'as a product of interrelations' to examine the geopolitics of the houses and towns they designed during this period. While the architects' ambitions were rooted egalitarian ideologies of clean and open spaces for all, this study highlights that in reality, they were constrained by development agendas and the market, and their designs reproduced social hierarchies. The outdoor space became a focus of debate during this time. It was controlled and regulated by the architects and the developmental agencies, alike.

**Keywords:** Architecture; Regional development; Urban design; Modernity;  
Charles Correa; Balkrishna Doshi

## **Introduction**

This article examines architects Balkrishna Doshi and Charles Correa's contribution to the discourse of modern housing and urban planning between 1975 and 1990 in India. This period marked the rise of international development programmes and debates about modern housing. India-born architects, regarded as interpreters of western Modernism, became active mediators in this process of post-independence modernization. Other architects were also prominent during this period such as Laurie Baker, Louis Kahn, Achyut Kanvinde and H.K. Mewada. However, Correa and Doshi, due to their Western training and affordability<sup>1</sup>, were viewed as culturally and economically suitable for architectural commissions. They influenced national debates on town planning and housing and inflected policy and pedagogy. This article focuses on these two figures to develop a critical view of their practices in a context of shifting economic structures and modernization agendas. It examines a body of visual material used by the architects: drawings, serigraphs, a watercolour and a photograph produced during the design process and upon completion of key urban planning and housing projects. It undertakes an inter-textual analysis of this visual material, interviews and essays published by them.

Kenneth Frampton and William Curtis have written essays on principles underpinning the architects' works.<sup>2</sup> Textbooks on modern Indian architecture include Correa and Doshi's work in the canon.<sup>3</sup> Discussions on their projects are

largely based on the architects' own texts and rarely is there a critique of the content. Their approach to design and the production of narratives have a relationship to politics of development, which has been largely overlooked.<sup>4</sup> Mark Crinson's work on colonial and postcolonial architecture studies the relationship between the metropolis and the colony. This is done through locating Modernism as a language of postcolonial representation. The analysis is largely based on formal qualities of architecture showing colonial powers at play and develops a thesis from a centre-periphery model.<sup>5</sup> This article is also concerned with flows of power, however, here, stylistic qualities are secondary to transnational networks of power. It complicates the centre-periphery model and reveals power structures reproduced within the postcolonial space. Doreen Massey's methodological approach to space offers a critique of global mechanisms of power, which resists the temporal assumption of underdevelopment. The representation and production of this space, Massey argues, renders it historically fixed without its own trajectory and future, lacking coevalness. These forms of power, I argue, are reproduced within postcolonial spaces. By developing upon her proposition to approach space as a 'product of interrelations',<sup>6</sup> the politics of modern housing in India can be brought to the fore. Stylistic concerns about architecture recede into the background and bring to the fore international, national and regional agencies of power. This approach shows the thrust of global modernity on the postcolonial space, under the guise of development and the postcolonial architect's negotiation of this.

Scholars have suggested that architecture produced by the architects straddled tradition and modernity.<sup>7</sup> It was a revisiting of Indian heritage and vernacular

building tradition combined with western Modernism.<sup>8</sup> It also meant an amalgamation of traditional (often conflated with Indian) and modern ideologies, chiefly posited as spiritual and rational approaches. This article avoids essentialism that terms such as traditional and modern presuppose. It complicates this binary and examines the tension between utopian narratives of modern living and power relations produced by developmental agents. It develops a critical analysis of housing debates in India during this period, contributes to the study of postcolonial design and expands upon existing scholarship of Correa and Doshi's work. An absence of work on the design discourse of a post-Nehru India invites further research, and this article attempts to address this.

### **Postcolonial modernity and Modernism**

The discourse of postcolonial modernity has shifted during the last four decades. Once posited as developmental, it has been pluralized and spatialized. Dipesh Chakrabarty and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar acknowledge that modernity is a European concept against which societal norms, institutions and practices are measured. Its dispersal in the non-west does not produce a subsidiary version. Chakrabarty addresses the transition to capitalism as a form of a 'translation' of European modernity, modifying and interrupting the totalizing modern project. This produces disjunctured and fragmentary histories. For instance, Chakrabarty studies the Bengali *adda*. The formation of groups of men in urban spaces, is criticized as an obstacle to modernity, it is a sign of laziness. It is also a space for democratic speech. Here we see complex practices at play, updated from previous feudal Bengali histories of participating in *addas*, yet modern,

negotiating a capitalist modernity and its imposition.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Gaonkar elucidates the plurality of modernity and its incompleteness.<sup>10</sup> Duanfang Lu chooses the term 'entangled modernities', calling for an epistemological change in histories of modern architecture based on connectivity and dialogue, rather than on a singular dominant model of the modern.<sup>11</sup> Arjun Appadurai argued that modernity was 'at large'; it was everywhere and was plural.<sup>12</sup>

Notions of a singular modernity and monolithic Modernism have come under scrutiny. Frampton's 'Critical Regionalism' was thought to be resistant towards a universal Modernism. It, however, produced a new form of universalizing ideal, one that rejected 'nostalgic historicism and the glib decorative'<sup>13</sup> but proposed a strategy where regional identities, localism and place took precedence. This assumed a homogenous regional identity, ultimately resorted to stylistic characteristics and was another form of cultural hegemony that re-enforced the binaries of traditional/modern, visual/tactile, culture/nature.

Temporal dimensions of colonial modernity have been reproduced within the modernization and developmental discourse. Arturo Escobar examines these processes through which the discourse was constructed and produced an image of the Third World in need of development.<sup>14</sup> The production of knowledge identified a need to modernize Asian, Latin American and African subjects. The method to solve the need was through investment of capital. These ideologies were transnational and were subsumed within nation states, inflecting policy and the rhetoric of postcolonial modernization. Visual, verbal and text-based

representations of the 'poor' subject and visualization of modern spaces to house them formed narratives of housing in 1970s and 80s India.

Beatriz Colomina, Sarah Williams Goldhagen, Elizabeth Darling and Hyungmin Pai<sup>15</sup> examine the discursive formations of Modernism through media: photographs, drawings, diagrams, texts and exhibitions, and have studied the processes through which modern architecture was produced. Darling discusses architects' uses of buildings, sketches, architectural models, books, exhibitions and projects to propagandize modernist architecture and relate its role in social reform. They built networks and forged links with non-cultural organisations that influenced economic, social and political reform. This study is located within this context of a 'rhetorical Modernism',<sup>16</sup> developing an understanding of the discourse of modern housing, formulated and maintained by International Development officials, policy-makers, investors, architects, contractors and teachers of design and architecture. Attention to these discursive formations of modern architecture as a postmodern strategy and methodology, alongside a de-centering of western modernity offers the postcolonial historian an opportunity to examine socio-political agencies at play.

### **Producing narratives**

Doshi and Correa's careers accelerated soon after they established their private practices in Ahmedabad and Bombay<sup>17</sup> in 1955 and 1958, respectively. In addition to attracting numerous commissions, Doshi founded educational institutions in Ahmedabad, such as the School of Architecture (1962-72) and Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (1971-82).<sup>18</sup> Correa held

several influential posts on local and national government boards. He was a consultant architect and member of the Board of Directors for City and Industrial Development Corporation, Government of Maharashtra (1971-89) and Chairman of the National Commission on Urbanisation (1985-88).<sup>19</sup> Both shaped the professional and intellectual landscape of architecture through curricula and policy. Parallels can be drawn between their principled approach to design and contribution to public work. In Correa's case, the focus was on designing modern spaces for all, and for Doshi, modern architecture had to respond to regional lifestyles.

#### Balkrishna Doshi

Doshi states he reassessed International Style modernism and became interested in Indian architecture, art and Hindu texts from the early 1960s.<sup>20</sup> This interest grew during travels in India, conversing with Indologists and devising the curriculum for the School of Architecture, which focussed on vernacular architecture. He cites conversations with Buckminster Fuller and Louis Kahn and his observation of Le Corbusier's approach to design, concluding that to innovate one had to be free of one's past. These words provide an insight into his articulation of the creative qualities of his guru.<sup>21</sup>

I can say he [Corbusier] knew no barriers, otherwise there could not be a project like Ronchamp. I knew about the project when I was in Paris; he was working on it when I was in his studio. So I knew its early stages of design, but when I finally saw it, I was absolutely stunned about the kind of freedom that Corbusier could exercise, because he invented not only a language, but wrote a great story on what a church could be through his design.<sup>22</sup>

Admiring Le Corbusier's innovative abilities, Doshi reflects on the ways in which a creative practitioner could achieve these qualities through a process of continuous questioning. He adds:

Every time you see something new, every time you see a new invention, it is the denial of all the knowledge that was there, and this is really what is haunting me. So every time I happen to come across such instances, they tell me that I have to learn to be free, I have to deny my yesterdays, I must look at all things absolutely differently.<sup>23</sup>

In his quest to find creative solutions to design problems, Doshi turned to a wide range of visual and literary sources for inspiration. He states that observing 'native conditions'<sup>24</sup> in relation to local architecture and Indian painting taught him the ways in which artists dealt with problems creatively. He admires the *Mahabharata's* narration of an epic story about structures of society, urban planning and construction.<sup>25</sup> His search for an architectural language and experience of space is evident, for when he discusses the sources of his inspiration, visual and literary references to real and mythical places consistently emerge.

Doshi's study of visual and text based materials led to the production of two narrative screen-printed serigraphs *Vignettes* and *Bazaar* (1985-6) [1, 2] and a watercolour *Aranya Miniature* (1989) [3]. These served to develop a professional image of himself, depicting two town planning and housing projects he was commissioned to work on: Vidyadharnagar on the outskirts of the city of Jaipur, Rajasthan, commissioned by the Jaipur Development Authority and Aranya Housing near Indore, Madhya Pradesh, commissioned by the Indore Development



Agency. Doshi produced *Vignettes* and *Bazaar* in collaboration with his associates Girish Doshi and Ajit Rao in his studio. Atul Kanetkar, who worked with Doshi and was deputized to oversee the Aranya Housing project designed *Aranya Miniature*. The serigraphs and watercolour are in the eighteenth-century Rajput miniature painting style with multiple perspectival depictions of the buildings.

Rao states that making these in the miniature painting style was Doshi's idea.<sup>26</sup>

He explains the project brief and reasons for the adoption of the style:

The brief that Doshi gave us was that supposing a villager visits his building and goes back to his village and describes it to the folks out there and sketches out his experience, what kind of drawing will emerge? Now this drawing would not be as detailed and accurate as a typical architecture perspective drawing. It will be a narrative sketch. The emphasis will be more on capturing the experience remembered by memory rather than physical accuracy. And that is exactly how the miniature artists depict space. They are more preoccupied with evocative storytelling of the place rather than technically correct depiction of space. Armed with this brief, Girish and I researched how the miniature artists depicted buildings; how they rendered the trees, sky, water, birds and so on.<sup>27</sup>

This highlights Doshi's interest in storytelling, producing an image of a lived environment and mythologizing the towns he planned. The screen-printing method of layering ink to create a complete image aligned with his interest in designing an environment, adding elements to an already existing space, producing palimpsests. These palimpsests show a continuum of a Rajput past into modern India, mythologizing the modern Indian community, untouched by western colonialism and rooted in spiritualism, surrounded by nature within this modern housing colony. Doshi interest in Hindu mythology is translated into these illustrations.

Rao praises Doshi's pen drawings, which he would bring to him in the mornings to design the *Bazaar* serigraph [2]. This process of collaboration highlights the development of a shared vision of a place, its use and the experience of being within it. These visual narrations of sites of architecture were produced for exhibition and circulation. The Vidyadharnagar series was displayed in an exhibition curated by Charles Correa in Bombay in 1986, *Vistāra: Architecture of India* in the concluding section of modern architecture as an example of a post-Corbusier city plan.<sup>28</sup> Doshi gifted prints of the series to Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) archive when he was awarded the Fellowship in 2007. *Aranya Miniature* was reproduced for a cover of a book on the planning of Aranya Housing. They were used as tools for visual communication of the projects, disseminate his architectural vision and establish his professional identity.

#### *Charles Correa*

Correa describes his work as pragmatic solutions to social problems, in particular, India's class divide. He is attentive to the city and its people's needs. The city is a site of progress, aspiration and dreams, an incubating space for intellectuals, where exchange of ideas can lead to radical change. He is inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's announcement of the Quit India Movement of 1942 in an open ground in Bombay.<sup>29</sup> The village for Correa is an imagined space, but also an inspiration, offering design solutions to the problem of overcrowding in cities. I will return to this point later to examine the geopolitics of the Indian city and village, but here, I continue to examine his contribution to the discourse and his approach to design problems.

Correa refers to *mandalas* and their empty centres.<sup>30</sup> He compares this with the scientific equivalent the Black Hole, arguing a continuing process of rational thought into modern times. The *mandala* grid lends itself to developing architectural form. It becomes the open-to-sky space in his design, a feature his work is known for. This is reproduced in a pen and ink drawing and was first published in the revised edition of *Charles Correa: Architect in India* edited by Hasan-Uddin Khan (1987).<sup>31</sup> The drawing depicts a cluster of houses in Artists' Village in Belapur, New Bombay, with humans inhabiting various outdoor spaces [4]. It functions as a tool within the design process, highlighting his plan and vision, and communicating these to his colleagues, planners, contractors and engineers. A photograph of a housing cluster focuses on the shared outdoor space, a realization of his vision, showing the clientele in-situ. [5] Unlike Doshi's serigraphs and the watercolour, which are stylized works, Correa's drawing is representational, provides a perspectival view of the houses. They evoke a sense of place and community in an idyllic countryside.

Massey examines cartography as a form of representation of space: an aerial view, representing surface area that excludes the periphery. She argues this produces a closed and tamed space. The Artists' Village drawing could be approached as a process of mapping and representing its features: houses, trees and courtyard. This space is ordered and the individuals featured, perform everyday tasks. They show the architect's process of producing a social space, depicting the quotidian, yet unable to reproduce the messiness of the lived space. This representation shows 'technologies of power' at play, attempting to pin things down akin to a Western modern map.<sup>32</sup>

Sachin Agshikar, an Associate Architect at Charles Correa Associates, describes the collaborative working process at the design stages of the projects. He states that Correa communicated with sketches, which were then worked up to produce final architectural drawings to scale.<sup>33</sup> He adds: Correa made a sectional drawing of a privately-owned Kanchanjunga apartment more than a decade after the apartments were built for a 1996 monograph [6].<sup>34</sup> Agshikar states that many drawings (rather than architectural plans) were made for presentations and publications. He explains their function:

This was the only way to communicate the ideas, which people would understand. The best part is that these were real ideas, which were part of the design and not made up as a story later on. I am sure you would see them as sketches by Charles while the designing was going on. Perhaps they were not retained.<sup>35</sup>

Through this process of visualization and revision, writing essays for a global readership in monographs from the 1980s onwards, Correa established his identity as an architect. Both, Correa and Doshi, positioned themselves as reflective practitioners, producing research-led design and visions of modern living.

### **Modern living**

The drawings, photographs and serigraphs show persons inhabiting urban, suburban and semi-rural spaces. They imagine communities and their lifestyles enabled by architecture. The photograph shows an aerial view of a cluster of houses at the foot of a hill in Artists' Village. The subjects of the photograph: a woman, man, and children are presented within an outdoor courtyard. The

adults are dressed in Indian style clothing: the woman in a sari with her head covered and the man in an Indian style cotton pyjamas and vest. A cloth rests on one of his shoulders. In contrast, the Kanchanjunga pen and ink drawing produced in the mid-1970s, sketches a scene [7]. A group of people in westernized and fashionable urban clothing is relaxing on the terrace of an apartment. A man and woman are seated, while another couple is enjoying the view. This imagined clientele is depicted in trousers and shirt, sleeveless skirt or dress and a modern Indian sari made of translucent fabric complete with a fashionable hair bun. Westernized clothing here signifies cosmopolitan and upper class tastes, whereas the depiction of modest Indian style clothing indicates working class dress.<sup>36</sup> These visual representations are imagined spaces, distinct from their material reality. They show the intentions of the architect and fixed subject identities, while the built environment, in particular, Artists' Village was intended to be a space of possibilities and heterogeneity.

Each unit of a cluster of houses in Artists' Village was designed with its own private space that could be built upon to suit the needs of the family. These spaces are imagined in the pen and ink drawing, visualizing potential uses [4]. These are pictorially depicted, denoting activities such as neighbours conversing over a shared wall and a person reclining on the ground. Correa's utopian vision was to enable the residents to extend their homes themselves and make a mark on their living space. The self-build incremental house as a design concept could be traced to architect John Turner's 1976 work *Housing by People*.<sup>37</sup> Correa pre-empted changes in the lives of the residents. Form did follow function in his design, offering spaces open to change.

Artists' Village, located on the edge of the city of Bombay is 'quasi-urban, quasi-rural', a model for future planning that considers lifestyles and the environment (climate and ecology) and a developmental ideal initially proposed by Gandhi.<sup>38</sup> Correa's vision of a quasi-rural environment in the city was twofold. He saw the residents as self-sufficient with existing skills learnt from life in rural India. They could construct their own environments, produce energy from natural sources such as sunlight and biogas, keep buffaloes and grow vegetables. This space would produce energy harnessed from natural sources on a larger scale, becoming a new economic hub for the city.<sup>39</sup> The less polluted area of Belapur with its hills, green areas and a stream flowing through it, was an ideal site for these visions to be realized. His utopian vision encompasses an environmentalism that incorporates the potential of the future residents of the Village: the working classes. Spatial planning made manifest progressive visions of development that were Gandhian in origin.

In the Kanchanjunga drawing [7], a group of implied Bombayites are seen relaxing and viewing the cityscape and the Arabian Sea. The curve of the coast looks like Marine Drive, a widely recognized view of a modern, twentieth century Bombay. They are above the busy city and we are taking in the view with them. This drawing contains perspective and gives a sense of scale, both, on the terrace and along the horizon, where the sky and sea meet. The drawing is produced from a high vantage point, to demonstrate the experience of living in a high-rise with a privileged view. The image hides the realities of the pavement at ground

level. It is about modernity, and being at ease within it, expressed by the postures of the individuals.

Similar to the drawing of Artists' Village, the sectional view of Kanchanjunga shows the various spaces of habitation and modular living [6]. These apartments offer low-density spaces, represented by the number of individuals in each, who occupy different spaces within each apartment. Terrace gardens flank the sides of each apartment, creating green spaces and ventilation. The drawing also shows split-levels within each apartment, offering multiple functional spaces and views. The apartments are not incremental, however, one contains more space than another. There is variety, and most importantly choice, indicating a modern consumerist lifestyle. The absence of furniture emphasize their spatial characteristics, while also providing the viewer of this image a privileged glimpse of life in the high-rise.

The *Aranya Miniature* offers an aerial view of Aranya, as a distinct world, complete with a sea, mountains and sky [3]. Aranya was designed as a new settlement for 'low-income' families near Indore, Madhya Pradesh. The compositional arrangement of this painting produces a distinct place comprised of transitional spaces culminating into areas for rest and activity. The street is depicted as a transitional space, as a thoroughfare, with a bicycle and bullock cart moving towards the cul-de-sac. This part of the painting depicts a social space where residents congregate. The creation of a distinct place produces the environment of a *mohalla*. The term *Mohalla* originates from the Persian language, and is used within spoken Hindi and Urdu, indicating an area in a town

or village that has a cohesive community.<sup>40</sup> It denotes the locational arrangement of buildings that creates this community, which Doshi depicts as a group of people sharing a culture. The scene within the cul-de-sac depicts vendors with goods carts indicating small-scale trading, a distinct feature of a *mohalla*. To the left, this area transforms into a spiritual space, with a communal temple at its centre. This space and the depiction of the sky above the scene are an iteration of the style and content of Rajput miniature paintings. Here a cowherd, whose posture and stance is remarkably like Lord Krishna, is depicted with cattle. The trees and clouds are rendered to look ornamental. The threshold of the house on the right-hand side shows a *yantra*, a Hindu diagram, functioning as a representation of the cosmos. Doshi depicts the earth, and in particular his modern architectural design on the earth in relation to the cosmos. The image shows outdoor festivities as well as quotidian life in the streets, on the rooftops and in the balconies. It shows celebration, embraces devotionism and spiritualism, key themes in Rajput miniature paintings.

In the Vidyadharnagar serigraphs, Doshi creates a vision of Vidyadharnagar, which like its neighbour, the city of Jaipur, is shown in pink [1, 2]. Here too, there is an emphasis on communal activities in shared outdoor spaces as well as private spaces such as balconies, terraces, courtyards and verandahs. Cows, camels and cars co-exist in the shared space in this modern city. In these images Vidyadharnagar is presented as the new urban India. There is evidence of a consumer class; implicit in this is participation in the economy, shown through activities like trading in shops, camel rides and use of motorcars. People are viewing the new city with its large-scale buildings as a spectacle. Doshi has



handled the subjects in a way that increases the monumental scale of the buildings.

The *Aranya Miniature* and Vidyadharnagar representations illustrate residents dressed in a combination of stylized versions of Indian clothing. The women are all dressed in either saris or two-piece outfits comprised of a blouse and long skirt (*choli and ghaghra*) and the men in short and long tunics with fitted trousers. The portrayal of regional dress is mimetic of Rajput miniatures. A clear sense of a continuum of a regional culture in modern twentieth century city becomes apparent, highlighting the erasure of any evidence of western dress, which during the 1980s was ubiquitous.

Massey argues for heterogeneous spaces and coevalness rather than a singular and dominant notion of progress or development. The co-existence of heterogeneous identities and imagining such spaces is a radical political act. These drawings collectively envisage variety and alternative forms of modernity and show a celebration of cosmopolitan urban and the quasi-rural ideals. They also highlight the politics of representation of such spaces and its people. These representations create bounded and closed spaces within themselves and reveal both, structures of power between those representing and the represented subject, and societal divisions at play. Depictions of communities and their lifestyles show an ordering of society on the lines of class and religion. While Doshi depicts a Hindu vision of a modern society, Correa's 'villagers' belong to the lower classes. These, amidst intensified religious conflicts in the 1970s and 80s resulting in riots,<sup>41</sup> and the call for *Garibi Hatao* (eradicate poverty)<sup>42</sup> reveal

divisions, rather than visions of Massey's co-existing heterogeneity. This division was replicated in the geographical positioning of the settlements.

### **Geographies**

Artists' Village was part of the New Bombay creation instigated by Charles Correa, Pravina Mehta and Shirish Patel. Correa describes New Bombay as the 'new centre' in an essay.<sup>43</sup> In this context, he refers to European colonization and the formation of settlements in accordance to geography, trade and climate. He argues for the need of this new centre to meet the demands of a fast changing industrializing Bombay. He refers to this as 're-arranging scenery' borrowing words from Buckminster Fuller, one of his teachers at MIT.<sup>44</sup> Artists' Village was designed for low-income working families. The houses were high-density and low-rise but incremental, allowing for growth. Correa states in an essay he wrote in 1984 titled 'The New Landscape', 'Where there's growth there's hope'.<sup>45</sup> He argues that cities in the 'Third World' have huge potential for development and locates architecture as a means of managing this.

The contextualizing of development in India in relation to the 'Third World' reflects Correa's contribution to international developmental projects, such as PREVI Housing in Lima, Peru (1969-73). This project, also based on the principle of low-income group housing in clusters, predates Artists' Village. It was one of several pilots proposed by Peruvian and international architects for the Experimental Housing Project initiated by the Government of Peru and funded by the United Nations Development Programme. Correa's designs for Lima included open public spaces; they were incremental houses and for low-income

groups.<sup>46</sup> This format of housing was replicated in several urban development projects in India, including Aranya Housing in the 1980s.<sup>47</sup> Both, national and state level governments were investing in public housing with support from the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme to alleviate, what were seen as problems of overcrowding and slums in Indian cities.<sup>48</sup> Satellite cities and suburban towns were developed to house workers who could not afford to live in inner city areas.

Massey proposes useful ways of thinking about social and political geographies. She argues that a study of space shifts the manner in which questions about the political are formulated. She adds, 'most deeply – [space] can be an essential element in the imaginative structure, which enables in the first place an opening up to the very sphere of the political' and, proposes an understanding of space as a product of interrelations.<sup>49</sup> Studies of Correa and Doshi's work tend to examine individual architectural projects in isolation. They focus on their structural design and response to local climates. Such a body of scholarship produces a limited understanding of the politics of space and its geographies. Applying Massey's conception of space as a 'product of interrelations' to these projects in relation to their geographical positioning and the global and national discourses that led to their design, reveal the politics of the spaces.

Correa and Doshi responded to commissions at regional levels to house migrant workers, which was part of an international developmental agenda to house 'the poor'.<sup>50</sup> Of course, this type of classification is traceable across 'Third World' countries, pushed by international development agencies, in particular, the

United Nations Centre for Human Settlement and the World Bank supported by national governments.<sup>51</sup> Statutory planning government bodies were set up as conduits of the Bank and UN assistance.<sup>52</sup> For instance, in 1975, the Bombay Metropolitan Regional Development Authority (BMRDA) was established to undertake regional planning. The Board of Trustees comprised of the Chief Minister of the State and various government representatives, such as the Mayor and the Municipal Commissioner alongside an executive committee of experts in Engineering, Public Works and Planning. Correa sat on the Executive Committee between 1975-1994 as a consultant architect. Urban planning and housing was facilitated through a network of political agents and professional experts, who were invested in the project of the rehabilitation of the urban poor.

Industrial expansion in Indian cities meant a demand for workers. The lack of housing for these workers from rural communities led to squatting and poor living conditions. On the streets, compressed up to train tracks and under bridges. P.S.A. Sundaram scholar-administrator, Secretary of the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India in the 1980s, also associated with various international development agencies, wrote about the urban elite's view of squatter settlements in Indian cities. He states:

They believe in the city beautiful, with its contours derived from their notions of affluent western cities with their low densities, wide open spaces, autobahns, facilities for movement and parking of private cars, cultural amenities etc. They subscribe to the view of the city as a welfare problem calling for drastic steps to restrict the entry of migrants, removal or relocation of slums and squatter settlements, clearance of the pavements of hawkers and residents, and removal of impediments to the smooth passage of cars.<sup>53</sup>

He also reports perceptions of the pavement:

All of them share the frustration over the limited or no availability of basic services like potable water, functioning public latrines, non-formal education that recognizes their working hours, accessible health care, public transport.

Their dependence on the present location near the city centre for their employment makes them reluctant to seek shelter in the distant suburbs where developed sites could be afforded by the public housing agency. The slum dwellers prize above all potable water supply, sanitation, access roads, flexible regulations to permit repair and renovation of the huts.<sup>54</sup>

Land was acquired on the outskirts of cities to develop public housing. However, Sundaram adds, the geographical redistribution of work opportunities, in particular private sector work in Bombay, could not take place. They could not be prised out of Bombay even with incentives due to ineffective telecommunications and transport links in the 1980s.<sup>55</sup> Low-cost, high-density public housing on the outskirts of cities were built creating an inner city-suburban divide, a segregation of elite and low-income spaces, rather than enabling a spatial flow, which produced closed spaces (borrowing from Massey). Aranya served Indore, Artists' Village served Bombay, Vidyadharnagar, Jaipur.

Segregation of space and territorialization were also evident in the design of Aranya housing, even though the design principles were based on egalitarian ideology of creating a cohesive community environment for all, regardless of religious and caste-based differences. Aranya was planned on the basis of income-groupings. Therefore, the Aranya watercolour, showing a communally peaceful environment and cohabitation, must be viewed as a partial depiction of this egalitarian view. Those habiting the area shown in the painting are of one

class grouping. They are in a *mohalla* inhabited by an economically homogenous group. Documents outlining the design plan discuss demands for exclusivity:

On the other hand, people do prefer to live in social and economic groups of their own kind. Even the marketability of plots, specially the bigger plots for upper-income groups, depends on the level of exclusivity offered to them. Hence, larger plots were located on the south-east corner of the site and along the major street network in order to command better prices due to locational advantages. In this way, the locational potential of the site as well as the potential created by the road network and the town-centre was utilized.<sup>56</sup>

Implicit in the design was a space divided and territorialized based on class distinctions in response to the market. Ways of living, notions of exclusivity and suitability of home size, were already written into the planning of the site.

Massey considers the 'character of relations' between individuals and groups of people and their 'social and political implications'. She is attentive of the 'power-geometries of relations' through the structuring of spaces and their empowering effects (equally or unequally) on those people.<sup>57</sup> The example she provides is of spaces created by market relations. They inhabit unequal hierarchies, constituting multiple forms of dominance. The divisions created are evident in these housing projects and reveal agents of power that produced them: funder, commissioning agent and designer.

Vastu Shilpa Foundation, a research organization associated with Vastu Shilpa Associates, Doshi's architecture practice, undertook research on human living patterns in villages, towns and cities in Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. The study included squatter families in urban centres. Outdoor social interaction (using street furniture and pavements) between residents was associated with

'environmental comfort' and the street was described as an extension of the home.<sup>58</sup> This ethnographic study was used to develop a method of designing the homes in Aranya and Vidyadharnagar. Similarly, Correa refers to the lives of residents in cities and villages in India, identifies patterns of living and posits an understanding of housing needs. He states that courtyards, porches and terraces are used for essential activities such as cooking, sleeping and entertaining friends. The cost of constructing a room, he adds, and costs of space (land prices and service costs), should be traded off to create the best form of housing.<sup>59</sup> These pragmatic solutions to the issue of overcrowding in cities in relation to living patterns of people show the space occupied by the architect between State policy and real estate imperatives.

The visualization of the Kanchanjunga apartment is of a cosmopolitan modern life. The imagination of housing on the outskirts of Bombay was that of a quasi-urban quasi-rural life. The identities of the residents became fixed visions in design and planning. The residents of the newly planned suburban areas were already viewed as the opposite of the cosmopolitan, modern, inner-city luxury apartment dwellers. The knowledge constructed about them was as communal dwellers in close quarters with growing families habiting shared outdoor spaces for essential activities. Therefore, these public housing projects were not cases where the inhabitants were to be removed from 'slums' and modernized, this was about decongesting and modernizing inner cities.

The provision for self-build did contain the possibility of reshaping and creating individual spaces, giving agency to the resident and allowing potential for

intervention. This design element, which became synonymous with town planning and public housing between the early-1970s and late-1980s in India, reflects ideologies of self-help, of visualizing spaces and places in flux, rather than as fixed constructed spaces. The ideological packaging: the images and texts produced by the architects, helped promote the projects and illustrate solutions for better housing.

### **Open Spaces**

Correa and Doshi discuss the importance of open spaces in practical, ethnographic and environmental terms. Correa discusses the human relationship with the sky and the built form from a class perspective:

To the poor in their cramped dwellings, the roof terrace and the courtyard represent an additional room, used in many different ways during the course of a day: for cooking, for talking to friends, for sleeping at night, and so forth. And for the rich at the other end of the income spectrum, the lawn is as precious as the bungalow itself.<sup>60</sup>

The poor are identified with outdoor spaces in relation to its use for everyday activities. The rich are identified in relation to its value, luxury and scopic experience. An ethnographic study of uses of outdoor spaces influenced housing design. A similar study of the use of outdoor spaces (the streets and pavements) in inner city areas was severely criticized and became a focus of developmental agendas. For instance, Sundaram discusses the feared decay of cities due to chaos, garbage and odour and includes a long passage on the encounter with Bombay, the dirty city, upon entering it by either train or plane.<sup>61</sup>



Dipesh Chakrabarty posits this perception of the Indian city as the language of modernity, civic consciousness and public health. Ideas of beauty of public spaces and their management, he adds, are an order of aesthetics, which are irrevocably linked to public health and hygiene. He argues that the main bearers of this language and way of seeing the Indian city as dirty and crowded, were Europeans, however, not only colonial officials but modernist nationals also used this language. The modernists were continuously challenged by the Indians' use of open space as it confused the distinction of public and private spaces. To illustrate this, Chakrabarty quotes a nineteenth-century traveller to India:

As to any delicacy about taking a siesta, or indeed doing anything in public, nothing is farther from the Hindoo mind, and it is a perpetual source of wonder and amusement to see the unembarrassed ease with which employments of a personal nature are carried on in the most crowded streets.<sup>62</sup>

These words are similar to Sundaram's, albeit, written a century before. The difference is, while the nineteenth-century traveller essentialized the problem as a race issue, Sundaram, the twentieth-century modernist blames town planning. The function of housing for shelter and private use was also an issue of clean public spaces. The drawings, vignettes and serigraphs produced by Correa and Doshi's office show the use of outdoor spaces for relaxation, social interaction, festivities, hawkers selling small items in the open cul-de-sac space and entertainment, such as camel rides. The spaces within which these activities take place are depicted as clean, free of garbage and dirt, evidence of human activities. The outdoor, shared spaces are as clean as the private open-to-sky ones.

In conducting ethnography to develop innovative designs for housing, Correa and Doshi studied habits and practices of those inhabiting outdoor areas in cities or villages. They refer to their ways of living as an Indian way (Correa extends this to say it is an Asian way), in response to the climate and designs of vernacular housing as evidence of long-standing everyday living practices. They view their subjects as responsible citizens, using open spaces for acceptable activities rather than creating pollution.<sup>63</sup> Correa and Doshi were modernists in their perception of the problems of the over-crowded city and saw good town planning and housing as solutions to the problems. The citizens could continue their ways of living and lead a more humane life, rather than one on the streets of the city, which brought with it illness and death. The role of architecture is to enable a better life. This way of life could only be made possible on the edges of the city due to availability of land. The 'slum-dwellers' and 'squatters' in cities were moved to the city edges. Therefore, these spaces had to be imagined as quasi-rural. Massey refers to this process of territorialization as one of the characteristics of modernity. Viewing space and society as relational, she emphasizes that they were 'from the beginning' divided and bounded.<sup>64</sup> Formulation of distinct spaces, inner-city/suburban, private/public, correlate with societal formations as represented through the visual material. Massey states, it is a way of 'taming the spatial'.<sup>65</sup>

## **Conclusion**

This article extends knowledge and understanding of the 1970s and 80s design debates in India by the notion that Correa and Doshi were influential contributors to the discourse on modern housing. They produced designs for

affordable modern housing through a process of research and innovative solutions to what were regarded as 'urban problems' by national and international developmental agencies. The drawings, serigraphs, the watercolour painting and photograph illustrate visions of environmentally clean spaces. There is evidence of a consumer culture in some. The architects envisioned their towns and buildings as enabling modern living and promoted their skills of designing such spaces. Through an inter-textual analysis of a range of visual and text based materials, and comparing architectural projects, this study has enabled an examination of coeval modernities. These, however, mapped economic structures and conditions. While on the one hand, high-rise living was imagined; living at ground level was also celebrated. Suburban Vidyadharnagar was imagined as distinct from the other two types of modern spaces: the inner city urban and the quasi-urban quasi-rural space. Vidyadharnagar was where the new consumer class resided, and was seen a modern suburb of eighteenth-century Jaipur.

A common feature across all the case studies is the 'open space', which became ideologically charged during this period, particularly in housing. It became a controlled, regulated and managed space. The visual contribution made by Correa and Doshi idealized the open space. The elites perceived the ground level where the migrant workers lived as the space of poverty, chaos and dirt. When moved to the margins of the city, the open space became desirable. It became a modern space, designed for the performance of everyday activities, now empowering the citizen.

Certainly, the use of outdoor spaces and ideologies of self-building indicate potential for resistance and recuperation, reminding us that spaces are always under construction. A study of the use of the spaces by the residents would produce a further nuanced understanding of the designs. This study has traced the ways in which the architects negotiated developmental agendas and the market, with their own principled approaches to architecture, to produce spaces that were territorialized. It has also shown how the subjects, the potential residents, were imagined and represented in the process. They became a focus of ethnographic study for elite architects. The architecture produced hierarchical and social structures despite each picture presenting an egalitarian ideology of open space for all. They held a vision that economic growth would sustain modern lifestyles. This study shows that their designs ultimately served the market, within which their profession functioned, and wider societal divisions: of the rural and urban divide, the elite urban and the under-privileged.

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## **Figure List**

Figure 1. Vignettes, Balkrishna Doshi. Screen printed serigraph imagining modern life in Vidyadharnagar. Reproduced with permission from Vastu Shilpa Foundation.

Figure 2. Bazaar, Balkrishna Doshi. Screen printed panoramic serigraph imagining modern life in Vidyadharnagar. Reproduced with permission from Vastu Shilpa Foundation.

Figure 3. Aranya Miniature, Balkrishna Doshi. Watercolour painting made by Atul Kanetkar and Mahendra More and gifted to Vastu Shilpa Associates. Reproduced with permission from Vastu Shilpa Foundation.

Figure 4. Artists' Village. Pen and ink drawing. Reproduced with permission from Charles Correa Foundation and Charles Correa Associates.

Figure 5. Artists' Village. Photograph. Reproduced with permission from Charles Correa Foundation and Charles Correa Associates.

Figure 6. Sectional view of Kanchanjunga apartments. Produced by Sachin Agshikar. Reproduced with permission from Charles Correa Foundation and Charles Correa Associates.

Figure 7. Kanchanjunga apartment terrace. Pen and ink drawing. Reproduced with permission from Charles Correa Foundation and Charles Correa Associates.

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<sup>1</sup> Ravi Kalia discusses the economic context that led to the employment of Indian architects in the decolonizing nation. R. Kalia, *Gandhinagar: Building National Identity in Postcolonial India*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, 2004, 85-6.

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<sup>2</sup> W.J.R. Curtis, *Balkrishna Doshi: An Architecture for India*, Rizzoli, New York 1988; C. Correa, *Charles Correa, with an Essay by Kenneth Frampton*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1996, 8-16.

<sup>3</sup> J. Lang, *A Concise History of Modern Architecture in India*, Permanent Black, Delhi, 2002; P. Mitter, *Indian Art*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> P. Scriver and A. Srivastava, *India: Modern Architectures in History*, Reaktion Books, London, 2015. Scriver and Srivastava provide a history of modern architecture as part of nation building and development. It does not undertake a critical reading of international development, its stakeholders and the parts played by architects.

<sup>5</sup> M. Crinson, *Modern Architecture and the End of Empire*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, Aldershot, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> D. Massey, *For Space*, Sage Publications, London, p. 10.

<sup>7</sup> W.J.R. Curtis, op. cit. J. Steele, *The Complete Architecture of Balkrishna Doshi: Rethinking Modernism for the Developing World*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1998. R. Brown, *Art for a Modern India*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Elements can be found in their use of reinforced concrete, flat roofs and absence of ornamentation.

<sup>9</sup> D. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2000, 180-213.

<sup>10</sup> D. P. Gaonkar, *Alternative Modernities*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2001, p. 23.

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<sup>11</sup> D. Lu, 'Entangled Modernities in Architecture', in *The Sage Handbook of Architectural Theory*, C. G. Crysler, S. Cairns & H. Heynan (eds.), Sage Publications Ltd, London, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> K. Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance" in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, H. Foster (ed.), New Press, New York, 2000, p. 20. K.L. Eggener, 'Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism' *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55.4, (2002), 228-237.

<sup>14</sup> A. Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995.

<sup>15</sup> B. Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 1996; S. Williams Goldhagen, 'Something to Talk About: Modernism, Discourse, Style', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 64.2, (2005), 144-167; E. Darling, *Re-Forming Britain: Narratives of Modernity before Reconstruction*. London, Routledge, 2007; H. Pai, *The Portfolio and the Diagram: Architecture, Discourse and Modernity in America*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Darling, op. cit., p. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Bombay was renamed Mumbai in 1995. I refer to pre-1995 Mumbai as Bombay in this article.

<sup>18</sup> See a full list of Doshi's contribution to education. Vastu Shilpa Consultants <<http://sangath.org/people.html>> accessed 25 August 2016.

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- <sup>19</sup> See a full list of Charles Correa's professional experience on the Charles Correa Associates website. Resumé < <http://www.charlescorrea.net>> accessed 25 August.
- <sup>20</sup> Doshi, *The Acrobat, the Yogi and the Sangathi*, p. 5.
- <sup>21</sup> Doshi himself uses the word guru. Ibid, p. 18.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid, p. 7.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 8.
- <sup>25</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>26</sup> Ajit Rao, e-mail message to author, 22 July 2016.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>28</sup> Doshi, *The Acrobat, the Yogi and the Sangathi*, p. 21.
- <sup>29</sup> C. Correa, 'Great City...Terrible Place', *A Place in the Shade*, p. 217.
- <sup>30</sup> C. Correa, *Charles Correa, with an Essay by Kenneth Frampton*, pp. 26-9.
- <sup>31</sup> H. Khan, *Charles Correa: Architect in India*, London, Butterworth Architecture, 1987, p. 72.
- <sup>32</sup> Massey, op. cit., 110.
- <sup>33</sup> Sachin Agshikar, e-mail message to author, 21 July 2016.
- <sup>34</sup> The monograph Agshikar refers to is: C. Correa, *Charles Correa, with an Essay by Kenneth Frampton*.
- <sup>35</sup> Sachin Agshikar, op. cit.
- <sup>36</sup> Clothing differs regionally and assigns particular identities. See E. Tarlo, *Clothing Matters: Dress and Identity in India*, Hurst and Company, London, 1996.



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<sup>37</sup> J.F.C. Turner, *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments*, Boyars, London, 1976.

<sup>38</sup> See C. Correa, *A Place in the Shade*, 232. See also Krishnan, Shri, 'Discourses on Modernity: Gandhi and Savarkar', *Studies in History*, 29.1, (2013), 61-85.

Krishnan provides a detailed account of Gandhi's approach to development.

<sup>39</sup> C. Correa, 'The New Landscape', in *The Architecture of Empowerment: People, Shelter and Livable Cities*, I. Serageldin (ed.), Academy Editions, London, pp. 31-32.

<sup>40</sup> A. Desai, 'The Indian City: A Conglomeration of Culture', *Cultural Geography, Form and Process: Essays in Honour of Prof. A.B. Mukerji*, N. Grover & K.N. Singh (eds), Concept Publishing, New Delhi, p. 181.

<sup>41</sup> M. Mushirul, *Legacy of a Divided Nation: India's Muslims since Independence*, London: Hurst, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> The *Garibi Hatao* agenda was promoted by Indira Gandhi in 1971.

<sup>43</sup> C. Charles, *Charles Correa*, Mimar Press, Singapore, 1984, p. 50-51.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> C. Correa, *A Place in the Shade*, p. 231.

<sup>46</sup> C. Charles, *Charles Correa*, pp. 46-49.

<sup>47</sup> Another example is the Madipur widow colony in West Delhi built in 1987, marked as the UN International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. See A. Datta, 'Architecture of Low-income Widow Housing: 'Spatial Opportunities' in Madipur, West Delhi', *Cultural Geographies*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp. 231-253.

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<sup>48</sup> See A. Datta, *Ibid*; P. S. A. Sundaram, *Bombay: Can it House its Millions?* Clarion Books, New Delhi, 1989, in particular, ch. 5, 'Policy Ventures and External Stimulus'.

<sup>49</sup> Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> Arturo Escobar posits that a class of the poor was produced by the international development discourse after 1945. Escobar, *op. cit.*, p. 21-57.

<sup>51</sup> R. Harris, 'International Policy for Urban Housing since 1945, *Cities of the Global South Reader*, F. Miaftab & N. Kudva (eds.), Routledge, London, p. 122-33.

<sup>52</sup> Sundaram, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>53</sup> Sundaram, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p. 41.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p. 45-46.

<sup>56</sup> Anon, *Aranya Housing*, Vastu Shilpa Foundation for Studies and Research in Environmental Design, Ahmedabad, n.p.

<sup>57</sup> Massey, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>58</sup> Anon, "*Living Environments*": *Housing Designs by Balkrishna Doshi*, Vastu Shilpa Foundation for Studies and Research in Environmental Design, Ahmedabad, 1995, n.p.

<sup>59</sup> C. Charles, *Charles Correa*, 53.

<sup>60</sup> C. Correa, *Charles Correa, with an essay by Kenneth Frampton*, p. 18.

<sup>61</sup> Sundaram, *op. cit.* p, 31.

<sup>62</sup> A.U. Overland, *Inland and Upland: A Lady's Notes of Personal Observations and Adventures*. Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, London, 1874, 55-56, quotes in D.

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Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies*,  
University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002, 66.

<sup>63</sup> Gandhi's citizens looked after the environment. We see a continuum of this  
ideology in Correa and Doshi depictions.

<sup>64</sup> Massey, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>65</sup> Massey, op. cit., p. 65.