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Historic Preservation, Complexity, and the Shadow of Monumentality: The Case of Lutyens' Delhi

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Abstract

Over the years, the central administrative district of New Delhi, known colloquially as Lutyens' Delhi, dominantly shaped under the authorship of Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker, has been repeatedly called upon to support a wider range of uses and a higher range of densities than it currently houses. In reaction to such calls, arguments of historic preservation and conservation have been recycled in defense of the built environmental status quo within the area. One of the more layered arguments given for such a manner of preservation is that presented by Buch (2003) which pulls from a wide breadth of perspectives, ranging from basic arguments of architectural legacy to those which extrapolate connections between the *Vastu Purusha* and the masterplan inherent to Lutyens' Delhi. This paper is framed as an intrinsic case study into the argument of Buch (2003), offering a detailed cross-examination, and by extension refutation, of the various historical and ideological assertions found therein.

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Keywords

Edwin Lutyens; Lutyens' Delhi; New Delhi; Built Environment; Mixed-Use

1. Introduction

Approximately six decades ago, Jacobs (1961) framed the critical role played by mixed-use conditions within the urban fabric, and the oft-observed bias against them via the conventional discursive domain of urbanism at that time:

"Mixed uses look ugly. They cause traffic congestion. They invite ruinous uses.' These are some of the bugbears that cause cities to combat diversity. [...] They have helped rationalize city rebuilding into the sterile, regimented, empty thing it is. They stand in the way of planning that could deliberately encourage spontaneous diversity by providing the conditions necessary for its growth. Intricate minglings of different uses in cities are not a form of chaos. On the contrary, they represent a complex and highly developed form of order" (Jacobs 1961, 222).

Just a little over forty years following Jacobs' (1961) assertion, Mahesh Neelkanth (hereafter "M.N."), an urban planner and public servant in India, offered his support of the very urban sterility noted above:

"Every businessman would like to do business at a location where his clients find it convenient to come, find adequate parking space, and are able to move around conveniently and comfortably from shop to shop. That is the great advantage of American shopping malls. Therefore, we must try and plan for redesigning some of the areas which have been destroyed by unplanned mixed land use and create in them commercial complexes which free the rest of the land for more leisurely use" (Buch, 2003, pp. 38-39).

Buch's (2003) words were written in the context of the central administrative area of New Delhi colloquially referred to as *Lutyens' New Delhi*, or more commonly, *Lutyens' Delhi*. This area encapsulates the range of built world

interventions, primarily authored by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker in the early twentieth century—consisting of an array of institutional and residential buildings initially meant to function as a significant administrative core of the region.

Over the years, there have been persistent calls for the opening up of Lutyens' Delhi to accommodate a wider range of uses and a higher range of densities than it currently supports (Shah, 2019). In reaction to such calls, arguments of historic preservation and conservation have been recycled in defense of the status quo within the area in question. In recent years, this discourse has been overshadowed by the intense discussions surrounding the changes being implemented in Lutyens' Delhi by the administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, once the dust settles surrounding these contemporary changes, it is reasonable to extrapolate that the old debate surrounding density, diversity, and uses, will re-emerge.

Preempting this discursive dust settling, this paper is framed as an intrinsic case study focused on offering a detailed cross-examination, and by extension refutation, of the historic-preservationist arguments put forth by Buch (2003) for maintaining a homogeneity and low density of uses and inhabitants within Lutyens' Delhi.

2. Materials and Methods

This text is anchored around a historical methodology, leaning upon secondary and primary sources to frame a contrapuntal argument against the case for maintaining a monocultural range of uses and lower range of densities within Lutyens' Delhi, as asserted by Buch (2003). In the context of these specific and localized issues pertaining to Lutyens' Delhi, the paper is shaped around an intrinsic, as opposed to instrumental, case study framework.

Resources utilized include: peer-reviewed academic texts; newspaper articles relating to Lutyens' Delhi; seminal texts focused on the history and theory of urban form; and architectural documentation extracted from some of the works of Edwin Lutyens. The most significant portion of this argument unfolds in Section 3.3., while Sections 3.1 and 3.2 offer a historico-theoretical grounding for said argument.

3. Results

The following section is broken down into three areas. Section 3.1., *The Rise of Lutyens' Delhi*, briefly frames the historical and ideological context within which Lutyens' Delhi was authored. Section 3.2., *The Case for Monocultural Conservation* frames the details of the argument given for preserving a minimal number of uses within Lutyens' Delhi. Section 3.3., *Cross-examination*, taps into primary and secondary source material in order to offer refutations of the argument given in the prior section.

3.1. The Rise of Lutyens' Delhi

It was December of 1911 when the Imperial Capital of India was shifted from Calcutta to Delhi. Edwin Lutyens, George Swinton, and John Brodie were part of the group of experts called to the city to develop a plan for the new capital complex. Swinton was the only one in this triad to have previously visited India (Peck, 2006, p. 1). They began their survey of Delhi in March, which interestingly coincided with the portion of the year when the British government was not to be based in the city, as government employees typically rode out the hot weather in northern regions of the country (Peck, 2006, p. 1). While a range of built environmental professionals were invariably involved in the overarching design and execution of the central administrative area, the authorship of Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker is most dominantly imprinted within the zone (Butler, 2023).

The predominant goal of the project was to create a capital suited for the Indian wing of the British Empire, “which it was hoped (with less and less realism) would last many hundreds of years” (Peck, 2006, p. 2). However, complications and tensions surrounding the partitioning and subsequent re-unification of Bengal in the early 1900s, and the rise in local movements for sovereign independence that were “very far from wishing [that] colonial rule [should] last many more years, let alone centuries,” soon cast this initial dream of a long-lived empire in a veil of doubt (Peck, 2006, p. 2).



Figure 1: The Secretariat Buildings on Rajpath, New Delhi. (Source: Adaptorplug, 2009)

Lutyens' Delhi was not the first large-scale plan imposed by the British Empire upon the city. Hosagrahar (2001, p. 38) points out that in the wake of the Indian Rebellion of 1857, the city experienced its first wide-reaching urban interventions implemented via the hand of colonialism. Namely, the Royal Palace was converted into a military garrison; mansions, mosques, and landmarks around the existing British fort were destroyed, demolished, and parceled out; a 450-yard landscape buffer around the fort was established; and extensive areas within the city were appropriated in order to accommodate railroad infrastructure (Hosagrahar, 2001, p. 39). Almost one-third of the walled city, now known as *Old Delhi*, was demolished during this time (Hosagrahar, 2001, p. 39). Historic garden sites, along with other properties of the Indian elite, were confiscated by the British Empire. The sites used by the British to lay siege to Delhi during the rebellion were reformatted to showcase the British victory; sites associated with the rebellion were altered to showcase the subordination of the rebelling forces—the most potent example being the clearing of royal orchards in order to free up space for a shooting range (Sharma, 2007, pp. 213-214+217). Hosagrahar (2001, p. 31) argues that the British punished “conspirators and mutineers by confiscating their land” and bestowed “titles, land, and property [to] those natives who had been loyal to them.” For instance, the Nawab of Jhajjar, a leading official under Mughal rule was hanged due to his alleged mutiny, and his property was subsequently subdivided and distributed among those who supported the British (Hosagrahar, 2001, p. 31).

In this time period, *the Civil Lines* were established. These differentiated the areas deemed safe for the British military, civilian, and governmental population in Delhi (Sharma, 2007, p. 212). “Europeans, particularly troops” were told to keep interaction with the “indigenous settlements” to a bare minimum, on account that such areas were said to be prone to disease due to overcrowding, poor building stock, lack of building regulations, poor air circulation, and deficient sanitation (Sharma, 2007, pp. 212-213).

The local labor force which British imperialism innately relied upon on a day-to-day basis however, composed of Indian servants, maids, staff, coachmen, persons working in dairies and larders, brewers, bakers, household accountants, and so on, were permitted to breach this zone of imperial exclusivity, due to the nature of their daily work. As Hosagrahar (2001, p. 38) argues, “a more complex interdependency between the ‘black’ landscape of the indigenes and the ‘white’ world” was established.

This oft-veiled intermingling of local and imperial, micro and macro socioeconomic networks, formed an inherently diversified mixed-use condition within Lutyens' Delhi—one very much submerged by the shadow of the monolithically monumental built world conditions found therein.

Counter to this innate mingling of populations and socioeconomic networks, within Lutyens' design for the central administrative area, a vocabulary of supremacy and segregation was ever-present. The Viceroy's Palace for instance, designed on a scale to “defy man and nature” (Irving, 1982, p. 9) was intended to “brood over the city [...] like the [helmet] of a British soldier, district officer, missionary, or Viceroy, while great arms below grasp to subdue in their embrace an alien land and culture” (Irving, 1982, p. 14).



Figure 2: Viceroy's Residence / Rashtrapati Bhavan. (Source: Adaptorplug, 2009)

This approach, wherein the built environments of the colonized and colonizer are segregated, and the latter often looms over the latter, was in fact in line with newer waves of colonial-built environmental discourse of the time. While in prior generations of imperial rule, there had been Haussmanian efforts to transcribe European urban ideals upon existing portions of colonized settlement structures, a transition was observed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century wherein a clear separation of European and non-European populations, and built environments, was advocated (Kostof, 1992, p. 86).

On the one hand, this shift in the discourse arose as an expanding reconsideration and revaluation of vernacular and indigenous settlement patterns overtook prior transcription- and erasure-oriented tendencies (Kostof, 1992, p. 86). On the other hand, this shift towards a two-city approach to colonized regions, one city for the colonizer and one for the colonized set up the fertile grounds upon which apartheid-oriented ideologies could readily take root (Kostof, 1992, p. 86).

As will be noted in the subsequent sections, this ideological legacy is still observable in the current day, with the active political class in Lutyens' Delhi maintaining their separation from the broader populace, even while purportedly operating under liberated post-colonial ideological structures.

3.2. The Case for Monocultural Conservation

The original central features of Lutyens' Delhi consisted of: (1) the Imperial Complex, consisting of the Viceroy's House, the Imperial Secretariat, and the Central Legislative Assembly Complex; (2) the three-kilometer-long central axis, lined with lawns, trees, and artificial canals; (3) the Lutyens Bungalow Zone, composed of standalone residential typologies, segregated and stratified (in regard to proximity to the Secretariat and size) based on rank; (4) churches, schools, and hospitals, meant to serve the residential areas; (5) Connaught Place, meant to be the primary commercial hub of New Delhi; (6) and wide, tree-lined streets, intended to mimic the layout of Washington and Paris (Nath, 1993, pp. 172-174).

Since his 2019 prime-ministerial campaign, Narendra Modi has mobilized a significant effort to reshape the central administrative area (Ray, 2021). With this project, which for the purposes of brevity this paper cannot outline in depth, portions of the inherited built environment within Lutyens' Delhi are being significantly reshaped, with most of the alterations focused on the east-west Central Vista and its immediate environs. While the scope of critiques leveled against the redevelopment is varied, both poles of the discourse actively recognize that there is a clear manipulation of the built world around discursive or ideological lines.

On one end of the spectrum, the Modi administration is seen as fulfilling “an unfinished agenda of Free India” (Bhattacharya, 2023) and the subversion of societal hierarchies anchored in Lutyens' Delhi (Ray, 2021). On the other end of the spectrum, a strategic rewriting of the national historical narrative is noted, one which systematically erases the Islamic heritage of the country, subtly overwrites its legacy of nonviolence (i.e., transforming the visages within the Lion Capital of Ashoka from serene to slightly-grimacing), and is seemingly aimed at highlighting the inefficiencies and potential obsolescence of parliamentary structures (Brook, 2023).

Since their onset, discussions surrounding the Modi administration's interventions within Lutyens' Delhi have taken center stage in the overarching discourse concerning the central administrative area. There is however an older debate surrounding the area, submerged slightly since 2019, which will predictably re-emerge once the dust surrounding the Modi masterplan settles.

The central administrative area is an anomalously sparsely settled area in the otherwise significantly dense National Capital Territory of Delhi; and since the 1990s there have been repeated, albeit broadly failed, calls for bringing higher densities and greater mixes of uses to this area.

In June of 1998 for instance, the municipality of New Delhi organized a committee to review the built environmental potentials of the Lutyens Bungalow Zone. The proposal put forth by the Ministry of Urban Development at the time recommended that the Lutyens Bungalow Zone be “brought under high density, high-rise development in order to make the most economical use of the land, promote housing and generally bring about an egalitarian culture in what was deemed to be an elitist city with an imperial hangover” (Buch, 2003, pp. 34-35).

M.N. Buch, Chairman of the Lutyens Bungalow Zone Committee noted in the introductory portion of this article, sought to counteract what he saw as “a powerful lobby of builders and developers who greedily eyed the 550 hectares of prime land” (Buch, 2003, pp. 34-35). His final recommendation was that Lutyens' Delhi should be placed under strict conservation—an argument that rested on four main points.

First: Lutyens' Delhi functions as a critical manifestation of the sovereign narrative of India, casting a shadow of grandeur that even “Washington cannot make on the same scale” (Buch, 2003, p. 29); even further, that “New Delhi is the saving grace of the national capital [...] the symbol of its pride, the showcase of everything that is beautiful,” and that it should be treated as “hallowed ground” (Buch, 2003, p. 32). Buch (2003) also stresses that such administrative districts, shaped around City Beautiful and Grand Manner principles, play critical roles in the long-term maintenance of legitimacy and socio-cultural anchoring of national capitals (Buch, 2003, p. 41).

Second: Lutyens' design for the area mimics the “exact shape” of the traditional *Vastu Purusha*, with its head lying on the Raisina Hill, and its feet on the Purana Qila, or more specifically, that “this symbol of the British Empire [...] is in fact Edwin Landseer Lutyens' homage to India” (Buch, 2003, p. 30)—the *Vastu Purusha* being a diagrammatic

analytical tool for making massing and programming decisions in-built environmental design, operable from the scale of the building to the scale of the city (Venugopal, 2012).

Third: that New Delhi is a “very compact city” designed to accommodate “vehicular traffic, pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders in their own segregated spaces [enabling] modern town planners to widen roads to eight lanes without having to cut down a single tree” (Buch, 2003, p. 30-31); that the part of the Lutyens Bungalow Zone currently zoned for government and private residences, when placed in the broader context of the larger fabric of Delhi, is but a mere “0.37 percent of the entire Union Territory of Delhi” (Buch, 2003, p. 31); and that even if all 550 hectares of Lutyens’ New Delhi were given over to higher density construction, the housing problem in Delhi would not be solved, but that the “finest, most beautifully designed urban form in India, or, for that matter, anywhere in the world” would be destroyed (Buch, 2003, p. 32).

Fourth: the residences within the Lutyens Bungalow Zone, while not praiseworthy historic monuments by themselves, are part of the larger urban fabric of Lutyens’ Delhi, giving them “a value which makes them worthy of conservation” (Buch, 2003, pp. 34-35).

“These wide expanses of green obviously have to remain inviolate, not only because they give New Delhi an almost unique urban character, but also because they are now an oasis of nature in the midst of a vast urban desert” (Buch, 2003, pp. 40-41).

Buch (2003, pp. 32-33) also points out that uncontrolled urban development or poor urban decision-making, has critically altered several areas of Lutyens’ Delhi, and only managed to create not just built environmental “rot,” but also “some of the ugliest buildings in Delhi.” Buch (2003) mourns the construction of new commercial structures, major offices, banks, municipal complexes, as well as the replacement of bungalows by “institutions and offices and hospitals,” arguing that this new mixed-use urban fabric has changed the traffic pattern of the radial roads designed by Lutyens, in that they no longer function as rapid transit roads, but as roads carrying “a huge load of terminating and originating traffic” (Buch, 2003, p. 33).

3.3. Cross-examination

On the subject of the built environment and sovereign narratives. It is quite a difficult task to re-brand an architectural remnant of the colonial era as a symbol of the post-colonial era that proceeds it. This proves all the more complicated when the relationship between ruler and ruled leftover from the colonial era has not been subverted, but in fact strengthened, in the post-colonial day.

“The [bungalow zone] was imperial and exclusive then. Today, it seems to have become even more exclusive and excluding. The low walls around the old white bungalows are higher, extended, and topped with barbed or razor wire. The old wooden gates are now barricades guarded by armed sentries, some of whom even man-sandbagged machine gun posts. Guns have, in fact, become a status symbol for the elected elite. They underline separateness and successfully enforce a division that, in the Raj days, had been a matter of internalized custom” (Sharma, 2006, p. 35).

The redevelopment efforts in Lutyens’ Delhi, which have taken on a renewed vitality since 2019 (Ray, 2021), appear to engage the discourse of post-colonialism more directly than in prior years. However, this engagement is still dominantly undertaken via the context of architectural phenomena inherent to the built environment. While there is a sustained effort to transcribe post-colonial narratives upon the legacy of Lutyens’ Delhi, the overarching effort is focused on an aesthetic rewriting of the area. In terms of functionality, the relationship between colonizer and colonized, and between Lutyens’ Delhi and Old Delhi, initially established within the colonial era, is only being reinforced. While this is indicative of a certain type of sovereign narrative in development, it is regrettably not a narrative of postcolonial liberation from inherited colonial structures.

On the subject of the Vastu Purusha. Lutyens was not coy about expressing his disparagement for the Indian socio-cultural fabric. He openly commented on what he considered to be the “low intellect” of the “natives,” underscoring his open relegation of the Indian citizenry to societal strata beneath his standing (Sharma, 2006, p. 35). While it is well documented that Lutyens laced portions of his designs for the central administrative area with vernacular architectural motifs (Butler, 2023), the idea that he would have allowed his grand intervention in New Delhi to be influenced at such a large scale by such a distinctly Indian element, seems quite unlikely.

There is also the basic structure of the *Vastu Purusha* to consider. It is traditionally portrayed by a dominant Northeast-Southwest axis, whereas the dominant axis of Lutyens' Delhi, currently occupied by Kartavya Path, previously known as Rajpath, and prior to that as Kingsway (Bhattacharya, 2023), is strictly East-West. The *Vastu Purusha* is used to allocate massing and programming on a given site in the most auspicious way possible, based significantly on orientation (Sharma and Sharma, 2011). It cannot be rotated and still maintain its presumed utility as an analytical and design tool (Venugopal, 2012). That this isn't mentioned in the case for conservation put forth by Buch (2003) is a significant oversight at best. At worst, it resembles the type of oversight that would take place in a colonial misrepresentation of an indigenous sociocultural practice.

On the purported compactness of Lutyens' Delhi. When Lutyens' Delhi was initially constructed, the "new imperial city was twice the size of the older, indigenous city, but had only 640 residential units while Old Delhi housed 250,000 people" (Sharma, 2006, pp. 35-36). Buch (2003) attempts to de-contextualize and de-historicize this reality by comparing the size of Lutyens' Delhi to the current acreage of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, leading to the less-than-one-percent figure noted previously.

This distorted storyline however is difficult to maintain, even within the Buch (2003) text itself. The author praises Lutyens' Delhi for its grandeur and for being open enough to have its roads expanded to eight lanes without having to "cut down a single tree", while at the same time claiming it is compact (Buch, 2003, pp. 30-31). It cannot be both. A similarly vulnerable effort at rationalizing the large, sprawling bungalows is given by the Lutyens Bungalow Zone Committee Report, attempting to cast civil officials as the unfortunate victims of a profession which by nature necessitates the bungalow typology:

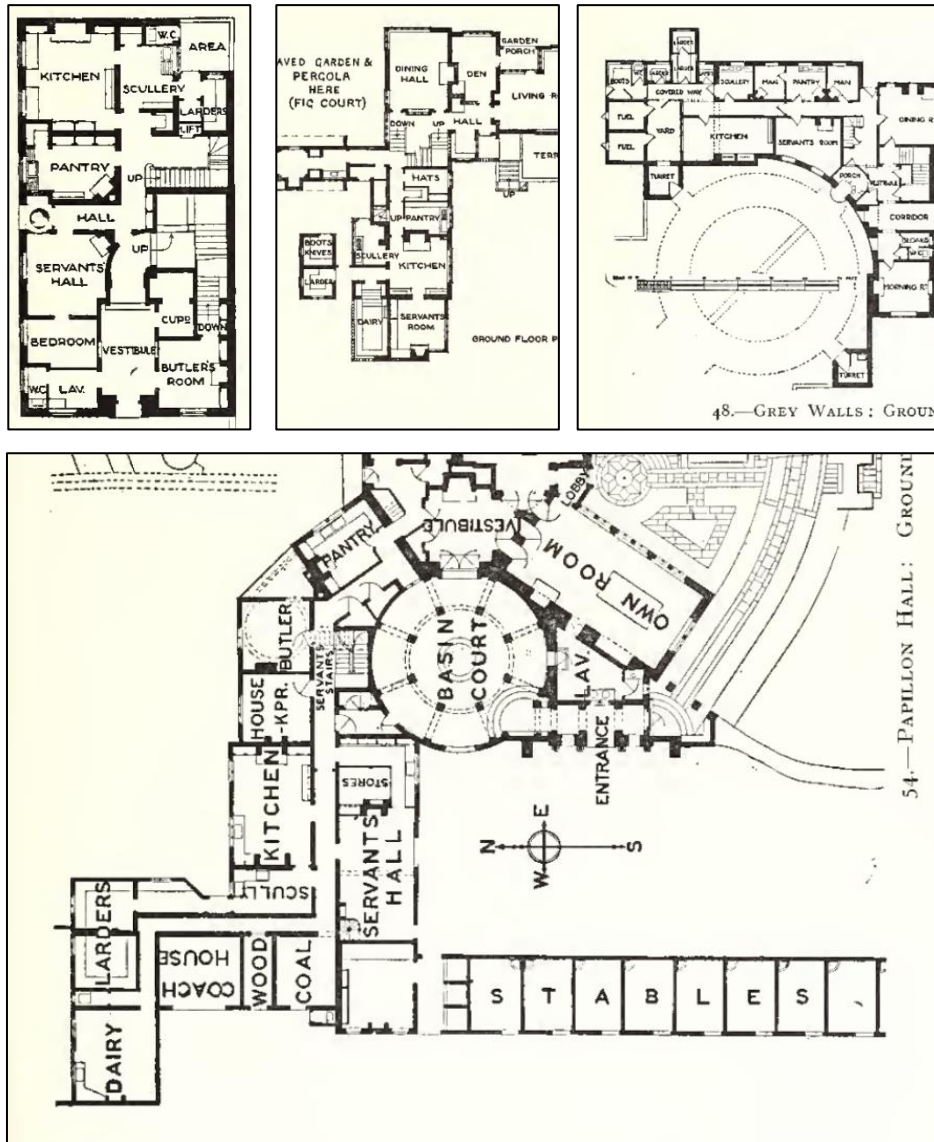
"When a study was made of how ministers live, it was found that on the one hand, they have no privacy because of the constant stream of visitors and on the other they only use a small portion of the bungalows, the rest being given over to visitors and guests. [...] An Indian minister is virtually under siege, not only on account of people seeking favours but also on account of constituents visiting him with genuine complaints. Therefore, in Bhopal the bungalows for ministers were designed to have a built area of about 4500 square feet for the personal part of the house and another 2500 square feet for the bungalow office, visitor reception area, and dormitory for constituents who might want to stay overnight. Accommodation also had to be provided for personal staff and police personnel on guard duty, in addition to the above. Naturally, the bungalow compounds had to be large in order to accommodate these buildings. The permissible ground coverage and FAR are somewhat higher than in New Delhi, but nevertheless, there has been no escaping large compounds and large bungalows. The nature of the job almost mandates this" (Buch, 2003, pp. 35-36).

This justification, when placed next to the shrinking minimum plot sizes of resettlement projects for informal settlements over the decades—from eighty-nine square yards proposed by the Delhi Improvement Trust to twenty-five square yards implemented by the Delhi Development Authority (Priya, 1993, p. 828)—sheds light on how the same system that subordinates the impoverished, while also favoring the elite, can do so all in the name of necessity, and within the confines of an overarching, and silently contradictory, functionalist rationale.

On the subject of low-density monocultures versus high-density polycultures. The ideological crux of M.N. Buch's argument lies within this territory. Within Buch's (2003, pp. 32-33) criticisms of the "rot" of the mixed-use, high-density urban fabric encroaching upon the monolithic, segregated functions of Lutyens' Delhi, there lies a vocabulary that intermingles high Modernist principles promoting programmatically hyper-segregated cities, with Orientalist worldviews tending to glorify the West at the cost of the East. The climactic point for this is the author's extolling of the "American shopping mall" as an ideal urban condition (Buch, 2003, pp. 38-39), that a highly layered and complex city such as Delhi should look to the programmatically monocultural American shopping mall as a praiseworthy example of built environmental design, particularly when contemporary conceptual frameworks such as the fifteen-minute city are endeavoring to achieve the complexity and density innate to cities such as Delhi, is once more a significant oversight.

An in-depth reading of Lutyens' works also provides a counterpoint to this glorification of monocultural uses. Figures 3-6 show excerpts from plans from Lutyens' Reginald McKenna House, constructed in 1911 (Figure 3), the Crooksbury House, constructed in 1899 (Figure 4), Greywalls, constructed in 1901 (Figure 5), and Papillon Hall, renovated by Lutyens in 1903 (Figure 6). In all of these excerpts, the commonplace domestic programming of dining rooms, bedrooms, living rooms, etc., are observed within the residential confines, however there is also a range of

less noticeable functions, either allocated to back-of-house wings or ground floors, which make the architecture much more mixed-use than would be expected—e.g., spaces for dairies, larders, sculleries, servant halls, various storage facilities, rooms for housekeepers and butlers, and so forth.



Figures 3-6: Excerpts from the ground floor plan of Reginald McKenna House (Figure 3, top left), the ground floor plan of Crooksbury House (Figure 4, top middle), the ground floor plan of Greywalls (Figure 5, top right), and the ground floor plan of Papillon Hall (Figure 6, bottom), depicting the hidden mixtures of uses required for residential architecture at the time. Plan excerpts extracted from Weaver (1921).

Within the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, these were functions required to run most residential typologies supporting families of high socioeconomic standing. Such historic residences were not mere unified and monolithic villas—rather an aggregation of residential and non-residential functions also supporting mixtures of demographics. This mingling of uses and inhabitants was echoed in comparable havelis of Old Delhi, which effectively operated as functionally fine-grained and diverse microcities (Hosagrahar, 2001, pp. 28-29).

Incidentally, the same socioeconomic density and diversity can be seen in Lutyens' designs for the Viceroy's House, completed in 1929 in the central administrative area, now known as the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Although the basement floors of this iconic structure are often painted over as forming "a plateau, some 17 feet above the level of the surrounding plain," these plinth floors were composed of a range of socioeconomic elements (Greenberg, 1969, p. 138). In the lower basement in particular, a wide variety of functions can be found, including but not limited to: wine and beer cellars, a storeroom for burlap items, a furniture storeroom, a camp equipment store room, linen rooms, kitchen storage rooms, a main kitchen, a chef's office, larders, a confectionary room, pastry rooms, an ice-making room, a bakery, a tinman's workshop, a pot scullery room, storage rooms for wood and coal, dairies, a tailor's shop,

a carpet storage room, a stationary room, a box shop, a furniture workshop, a tent storage room, and so forth (Butler, 2023, Plate XXXVII).

In the literature that analyzes Lutyens' work, very little focus is given to this programmatic diversity embedded into his residential projects. In Lutyens' Delhi, this habit is once more mirrored, with the presumption of monolithic programming maintained.

Lutyens most likely incorporated mixtures of functions (and by extension, persons) into his work not due to some theoretical appreciation for mixed-use conditions, but rather due to the practical requirements of the day. Regardless of intention, however, the historical reality remains that a far wider range of socioeconomic networks were intermingled within the historic built environment of Lutyens' Delhi than the popular and academic literature on the topic conveys.

In the case of the central administrative area, this intermingling and diversity of uses is easy to lose sight of in the shadows cast by the monumental architecture of the district. Within the Viceroy's House for instance, much if not all the diversity of functions supported by the built world is relegated to the lower basement floor. Phenomenologically from the exterior, this floor behaves as the neutral *plinth* upon which Lutyens' imperial architectural language begins to grow.



Figure 7: Viceroy's Residence / Rashtrapati Bhavan. Note the individual sweeping the grounds in the foreground, easy to overlook in the context of the monument in the background. The bottom floors of the Viceroy's Residence which support the range of functions mentioned prior, are comparably easy to overlook, buried in the proverbial "plinth" upon which the more-visible architectural language rests. (Source: Adaptorplug, 2009)

Architecture in this case, while supporting a diversity of uses and socioeconomic classes, also aids in the phenomenological erasure of said diversity. This erasure in turn supports the myth of a monocultural Lutyens' Delhi, upon which a distorted historical-preservation framework, concerned with how the area should be permitted to change and grow in the modern day, is developed. A more rigorous reading of architectural and urban history in this context, focused not only upon the exterior, phenomenological language of the built environment, but also upon the uses, functions, and dynamics supported by the built world, would offer a much more fine-grained approach to the pursuit of historic stewardship in Lutyens' Delhi.

4. Conclusion

Lutyens' Delhi is a significant architectural and urban site, with a significant historic legacy. In the details of this legacy, however, there is a clear and reasonable argument for promoting a much more complex mingling of uses in the sprawling site, than is currently maintained.

As calls for the diversification and connected densification for Lutyens' Delhi have been brought to the forefront, however, persistent calls for preserving the status quo have served as rebuttals. This paper attempts to offer a counterpoint to these latter rebuttals.

If the goal is to truly preserve Lutyens' Delhi, the initial complexity and diversity of functions Lutyens embedded within the area must be taken into account, not simply the imagery of the monumental that veiled them. If the maintenance of segregated zoning, and a strictly monocultural approach to urbanism is assumed to be necessary in keeping Lutyens' New Delhi true to its original form, then the Viceroy's House in its initial state must in itself be recognized as a point of historic non-conformity.

As the plans for the Viceroy's House show, historically there was an immense complexity of on-site uses required for the day-to-day maintenance of large-scale complexes. Lutyens' Delhi today supports the functions of elected and appointed public officials and servants, however, there is also still a vast network of service staff, food providers, builders, contractors, repairmen, technicians, craftsmen, distributors, procurers, mechanics, etc., deeply intertwined with the operation of this area. The discourse concerning the historic stewardship of Lutyens' Delhi historically and contemporaneously skims over this fact and uses this oversight as a foundation for supporting the monocultural programming of this area. This monocultural approach however is neither historically accurate nor is it fitting with some of the basic ideological ambitions of the post-colonial narrative—e.g., overcoming structures of segregation and exclusion between ruler and ruled, between the political class and the public citizenry.

While variances have been granted for new construction to occur in Lutyens' Delhi over the years, they have been granted to projects promoting monolithic high-rise residential uses, supporting monolithic socioeconomic classes (Gruen, 2013). A range of seminal works within the contemporary urban discourse—e.g., works of Jacobs (1961), Alexander (1965), Alexander (1965 and 1977), Duany (1991), Cruz (2012), Davis (2012 and 2020), and Moreno et al (2021)—has pushed back against such monocultural tendencies, underscoring rather the complexity and layering required for cities to feel and function as robust urban systems. The defense of a monolithic Lutyens' Delhi on the fundament of functionality, once more falls to frailty.

It is a discursive oddity that while the proverbial West often looks to older cities in South and Southeast Asia to understand how dense *minglings* of uses can be accommodated and supported within the urban fabric, the proverbial East should be looking to the proverbial West to mimic some of the most sterilized examples of built environmental monocultures that have ever been produced therein (e.g., the American shopping mall). In the case of Lutyens' Delhi, this Westward gaze has been combined with distorted or falsified historic narratives to establish an argument for maintaining the purported monocultural nature of the central administrative area of New Delhi and shield it from the density and diversity of socioeconomic functions found within the vast urban fabric immediately beyond the boundaries of Lutyens' Delhi.

Although currently overwhelmed by the discourse surrounding the Modi administration's alterations to the central administrative area, there has been a persistent call for breaking the exclusivity and monocultural programming of Lutyens' Delhi. Once the current discussion dies down, it is predictable that the monocultural and sprawling area, anomalous in the context of the broader urban fabric of Delhi, will be called upon once more to begin to support a higher complexity and density than it currently does. This text offers a preemptive re-entry into that discussion, countering the range of historical, theoretical, and ideological arguments oft given in support of the maintenance of a monocultural urban fabric within Lutyens' Delhi.

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