

# ICOA661A: CONTESTED PUBLIC SPACES: WALLED CITY REDEVELOPMENT CASE STUDIES FROM INDIA

## Subtheme 01: Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by engaging diverse Communities for Heritage Management

**Session 2:** Management, Documentation

**Location:** Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre

**Time:** December 13, 2017, 11:15 – 11:30

### **Author: Abdul Bari**

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**Abstract:** In globalization context and the promotion of world cities as main drivers of economic growth for 21st century nation-states, the urban issues of historic Indian city-cores are relegated to mere ‘heritage zones’ in City Development and Master Plans. As a result, sustainable conservation and regeneration efforts are constrained under blanket bye-laws and regulations which have little relevance to the makeup and historical urbanism of these ‘zones’. Multiplicity of institutions/ agencies, possibilities opened up by new building technologies/ engineering services and a break in the architectural/ planning continuity have all contributed immensely to the physical and perceived economic decline of historic built environments. The focus of this paper is to acknowledge the dynamics of real world contemporary urbanism in such environments as opposed to the promotion of an imagined disconnected ideal of urban conservation. Two project case studies, one representing an archetypal context from Lutyens’ New Delhi and another doing the same for Shahjahanabad, Delhi; incidentally the two ‘cities’ that form the nomination of Delhi as a World Heritage City to UNESCO; illustrate these dynamics through their respective histories, processes and eventual outcomes. Through an analysis of professional engagement in these projects, the paper seeks to put forth a perspective from the field on how democratic planning processes are negotiated in the everyday urbanism of built environments under the ‘heritage’ tag. Keeping in perspective Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) of UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda, a more relevant approach to ensure a sustainable future for the past may be arrived at through retrospection at various levels of engagement.

**Key words:** *sustainability, development, stakeholder, planning*

## Introduction

The main objectives of sustainable design are to reduce depletion of critical resources like energy, water, and raw materials; prevent environmental degradation caused by facilities and infrastructure throughout their life cycle; and create built environments that are liveable, comfortable, safe, and productive. In addition to including sustainable design concepts in new construction, sustainable design advocates commonly encourage retrofitting existing buildings rather than building anew. Designing major renovations and retrofits for existing buildings to include sustainable design attributes reduces operation costs and environmental impacts, and can increase building resiliency. The embodied energy of the existing building, a term expressing the cost of resources in both human labour and materials consumed during the building's construction and use, are squandered when the building is allowed to decay or be demolished.<sup>1</sup> Most cities have an extensive old building stock which is generally of some historical and cultural value; that can go a long way in contributing to their overall sustainability. Hence, the logical reason for conserving and reusing old buildings, leaving aside historic interest, is that they are useful resources.

## Context & Case Studies

In globalization context and the promotion of world cities as main drivers of economic growth for 21st century nation-states, the urban issues of historic Indian city-cores are relegated to mere 'heritage zones' in City Development and Master Plans. They fall prey to vague definitions and unclear directions as to where these zones fit in in the state or national development agenda, except perhaps for revenue generation through tourism augmentation. The nation's first Urban Renewal Mission - the JNNURM<sup>2</sup> saw just 1% of its overall 'projects' being approved for the 'Development of Heritage Areas' (Sivaramakrishnan, 2011). But, in terms of 'plans' it is essential to see how the Master Plans looks at historic built environment and what regulatory framework they provide for a sustainable future. There exist building bye-laws and guidelines for general architectural interventions in historic buildings; though, these seem to compromise the contribution historic built environments are capable of at the city scale by discounting their ability to adapt coherently. As a result, sustainable conservation and regeneration efforts are constrained under blanket bye-laws and regulations which have little relevance to the makeup and historical urbanism of these 'zones'.

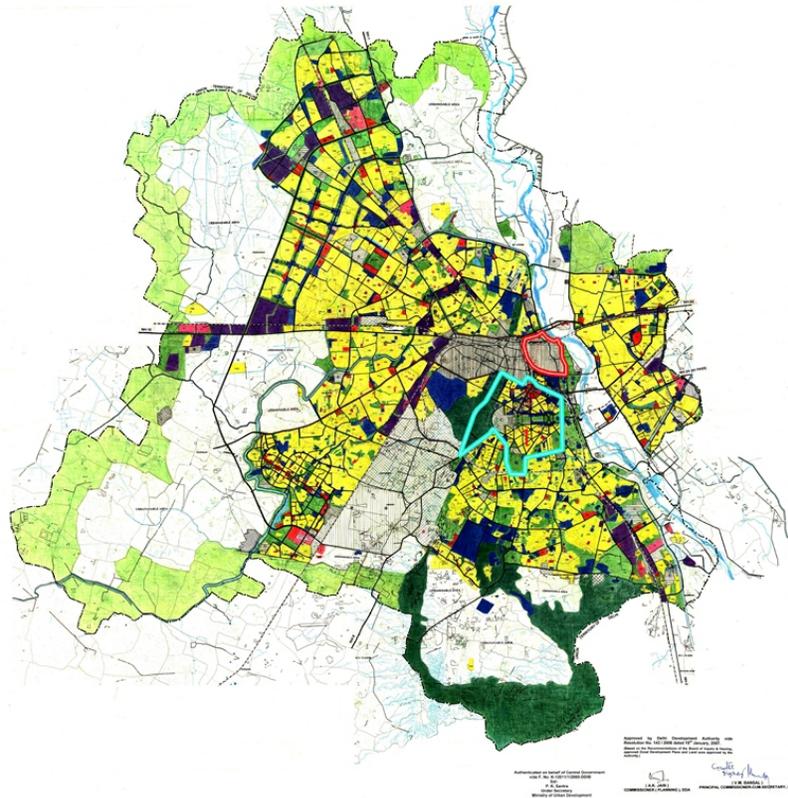
The historic built environments are usually the most vibrant parts of the city. The visible degradation is majorly in the physical environment due to rapid economic development which takes a toll on the inadequate infrastructure that has failed to keep up pace with the contemporary world. Multiplicity of institutions/ agencies, possibilities opened up by new building technologies/ engineering services and a break in the architectural/ planning continuity have all contributed immensely to the physical and *perceived* economic decline of historic built environments. The resulting urbanism is more of a negotiation between people and their built environment, and less of an interaction. The focus of this paper is to acknowledge these dynamics of real world contemporary urbanism in historic built environments as opposed to the promotion of an imagined disconnected ideal of urban conservation to provide a perspective for theoretical discourse.

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<sup>1</sup>26 Oct. 2016, <https://www.wbdg.org/design-objectives/sustainable>. Accessed 18 Dec. 2016.

<sup>2</sup>Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (2005-2014) was a massive city-modernization scheme launched by the Government of India under Ministry of Urban Development.

Two project case studies, one representing an archetypal context from Lutyens' New Delhi and another doing the same for Shahjahanabad, Delhi; incidentally the two 'cities' that form the nomination of Delhi as a World Heritage City to UNESCO<sup>3</sup>; have been selected to illustrate these dynamics through their respective histories, processes and eventual outcomes.



*Fig.1- Land-Use Master Plan for Delhi 2021 showing Lutyens Delhi (Cyan) & Shahjahanabad (Red)*

## **Status of Property**

Located at Jantar Mantar Road in Kerala House Complex, the British Era Bungalow most popularly known to be the childhood home of renowned writer Khushwant Singh is commonly referred to as Cochin House. The bungalow has seen many constructions come up around it since its construction in early 1900s, and has silently adapted to the many uses that it was put to<sup>4</sup>, the last of which were the various Kerala state government offices in the capital along with a few guest rooms, dormitories and kitchen (Bhowmick, 2016). When the idea of demolition was put forward by the Public Works Department (PWD) to construct a new building, a group of conservation professionals came together to make a case for renovation. Interestingly, this was not a 'protected' Heritage building with any of the

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<sup>3</sup>"Delhi - A Heritage City - UNESCO World Heritage Centre." 22 May. 2012, <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5743/>. Accessed 26 Dec. 2016.

<sup>4</sup>The United States government set up its first diplomatic organization in New Delhi - office of the Personal Representative of the President - at Cochin House in November 1941. It moved out in 1943. Cochin House was then leased to the International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1949 till 1958.

authorities in New Delhi, but was located within the Lutyens Bungalow Zone (LBZ). The LBZ is a ‘heritage zone’ within the Zone D Division of the Delhi Master Plan 2021 (MPD 21), largely comprising of the New Delhi region planned by Edwin Lutyens in early 1900 AD, and hence is subject to a special set of development ‘guidelines’. These set of guidelines are not specifically targeted at conservation of the built heritage, but are broad development control regulations (DCRs) which look at restricting the redevelopment activity in order to maintain the ‘basic character’ of the region, both natural and built.<sup>5</sup>

	<b>Cochin House</b>	<b>Daryaganj Townhouse</b>
Location within Delhi City	<i>Lutyens New Delhi</i>	<i>Shahjahanabad</i>
Zone as per MPD 21	<i>Zone D</i>	<i>Special Area</i>
Zonal Development Plan	<i>Lutyens Bungalow Zone</i>	<i>Zone A, B &amp; C</i>
Property Land use as per MPD 21	<i>Residential</i>	<i>Residential</i>
Current Ownership	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private</i>
Original Ownership	<i>Private</i>	<i>Private</i>
Development Control Regulations (DCR)	<i>DDA/ LBZ Guidelines</i>	<i>DDA/ ASI Acts</i>
Use before intervention	<i>Government Office</i>	<i>Residential</i>

*Table 1 Comparison of Status of Property*

The private plot along Ansari Road in Daryaganj on the other hand is much easier to locate on MPD 21. It is identifiable by a blotch of grey hatch in the centre of the otherwise colourful land use map and designated as ‘Special Area’. This special area is further spread over Zone A, B & C Divisions with some sub-zones falling in or out of the special area boundary. However, unlike the LBZ rules, the Special Area does not have specific DCRs or defined redevelopment controls.<sup>6</sup> Most of the wordings in the master plan leave it to the ‘requirement of heritage controls’ (MPD 21) without further definition as to what those controls are. As a result the properties within this zone are subject to the DCRs that are applicable to the rest of the city.<sup>7</sup>

These set of development/ redevelopment entitlements in the form of DCRs are the first set of negotiations that property owners have to navigate through in order to make a case for either reusing their historic buildings or redeveloping them. A further set of regulations from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) acts as another development control measure wherein a property falling within a specified radial distance from a nationally protected monument entitles it to certain restrictions.<sup>8</sup> In the case of both these case studies, the properties were falling within the 100-to-300m radius of their respective nearest monuments, which meant they were in a ‘regulated’ zone; the interpretation of which was left to the officials of ASI.

<sup>5</sup>See LBZ Guidelines 1988

<sup>6</sup>See section 3.3.2, 4.2.2.2 & 10 in Master Plan Delhi 2021

<sup>7</sup>These are commonly referred to as DDA (Delhi Development Authority) Building Bye-laws

<sup>8</sup>The Amendment and Validation Bill, 2010 for the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 Government of India.

## Inception of Projects

	Cochin House	Daryaganj Townhouse
Within UNESCO WHC Nomination Boundary	<i>Yes (New Delhi)</i>	<i>Yes (Shahjahanabad)</i>
State Protection under Built Heritage	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Year of Construction (pre-independence)	<i>Early 1900s</i>	<i>Mid 1900s</i>
Architecture Style	<i>Colonial Bungalow</i>	<i>Colonial Townhouse</i>
Type of Construction	<i>Load Bearing (G+1)</i>	<i>Load Bearing (G+2)</i>
Planned Development	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Plot Area	<i>10,200 Sqm.</i>	<i>225 Sqm.</i>
Type of Intervention	<i>Addition/ Alteration</i>	<i>Redevelopment</i>
Qualified Professional Consulted	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>

*Table 2 Comparison of Project briefs*

Multiplicity of institutions/ agencies is known to create conflicts in the distribution and delivery of basic urban services in the contemporary city (Sanyal, 2005; Sivaramakrishnan, 2011). But in terms of regulations and enforcement, the overlapping boundaries of zones and subzones under each of these institutions invite conflicts and contradictions, often left open ended for the property owners to interpret, negotiate and eventually use to their advantage. It is not uncommon in the Indian context for small scale property owners to take up construction without seeking professional help or consultancy. But, in the cases under study, relevant professional help was sought in terms of architectural consultancy for conservation and design. Moreover, in the case of Cochin House, since professionals were involved at an early stage to protest the demolition proposal by PWD, the redevelopment brief was modeled based on addition/ alteration using the LBZ guidelines as a tool to negotiate conservation and renovation instead of demolition and reconstruction.

Worthy of note here is the fact that the LBZ guidelines helped make a case for re-use, wherein professionals were able to take leverage from existing regulation to weave a narrative that put re-use at the heart of the project instead of demolition. That was not the case in Daryaganj, wherein demolition had to take place even before building permission could be sought from the competent authority. The owner, a seasoned businessman in Ansari road, synonymous with various publishing houses, had recently acquired the property with the intention of making it his business headquarters. And in order to redevelop the plot as per prevalent building bye-laws and extract maximum benefit, one had to show an empty plot or at least an irreparable dilapidated old building to the competent authority. Even after consultation with architecture professionals, the owner proceeded with demolition in stealth on the advice of liaison middlemen to pursue with the required permits in the quickest, easiest and the most expensive way possible. The contradiction in the two cases becomes apparent thus; while one set of rules helped facilitate reuse of an existing building resource, another set of rules facilitated destruction of an existing

historic built environment; one component at a time till the whole is ‘redeveloped’. We will come back to this contradiction ahead.



*Fig.2- Daryaganj Townhouse (left), 2013 & Cochin House Bungalow (right), 2010. Source: Author*

## **Project Process & Implementation**

Cochin House in truth was deteriorating. A portion of the first floor RBC roof had collapsed and replaced with a makeshift metal sloping roof shed in early 2000s AD. It had long ceased to be an English Bungalow and resembled a typical government office with large double height halls being partitioned into smaller rooms and wet areas plonked arbitrarily. Extensions to the original bungalow also kept creeping up at various points of time and eventually rose higher. The new proposal combined renovation and extension to build a single building complex with a courtyard, restoring the focus to the older bungalow by opening up encroached verandahs and balconies. However, the most complicated part of the whole exercise proved to be the one of obtaining required permits for implementing the plan. Owing to the overlapping institutional and regulatory boundaries, the plan needed approval from all the agencies involved. These included primarily the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) along with parallel approvals from the Delhi Urban Arts Commission (DUAC), the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC), the National Monuments Authority (NMA) and the Fire Officer. Taking due professional help where required, coupled with the occasional bureaucratic push and informal negotiations at every step forward, the complete approval process spanned a whole three years before the project could begin on ground. How many of our unprotected historic buildings in need of repair and rehabilitation can be expected to endure such a lengthy and expensive process?

	<b>Cochin House</b>	<b>Daryaganj Townhouse</b>
Type of New Construction	<i>Repair to Load bearing component, and RCC framed addition</i>	<i>RCC Framed Construction</i>
Project Funding & Execution	<i>Public</i>	<i>Private</i>
Municipal Approvals	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
DUAC Approvals	<i>Yes</i>	<i>Yes</i>
Build-out	<i>G+1 Building. 1,000 Sqm.</i>	<i>Basement + Stilt + 4 Floors Building. 1,000 Sqm.</i>
Parking	<i>Surface</i>	<i>Stilt &amp; Basement</i>
HVAC System	<i>VRV</i>	<i>VRV</i>
Electrical Fixtures	<i>LED</i>	<i>LED</i>
External Glazing	<i>Wood with SGU</i>	<i>UPVC with DGU</i>
Solar Power	<i>No</i>	<i>Planned for Rooftop 15KW</i>
Solar Water Heating	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
STP	<i>No</i>	<i>No</i>
Rain Water Harvesting	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Plumbing System	<i>Conventional</i>	<i>Dual Plumbing</i>
Sanitary Fixtures	<i>Low-Flow</i>	<i>Low-Flow</i>
Fire-Fighting	<i>Non-Sprinkled Building with Fire Extinguishers</i>	<i>Non-Sprinkled Building with Smoke Detectors, Fire Alarm &amp; Fire Extinguishers</i>

*Table 3 Comparison of project features*

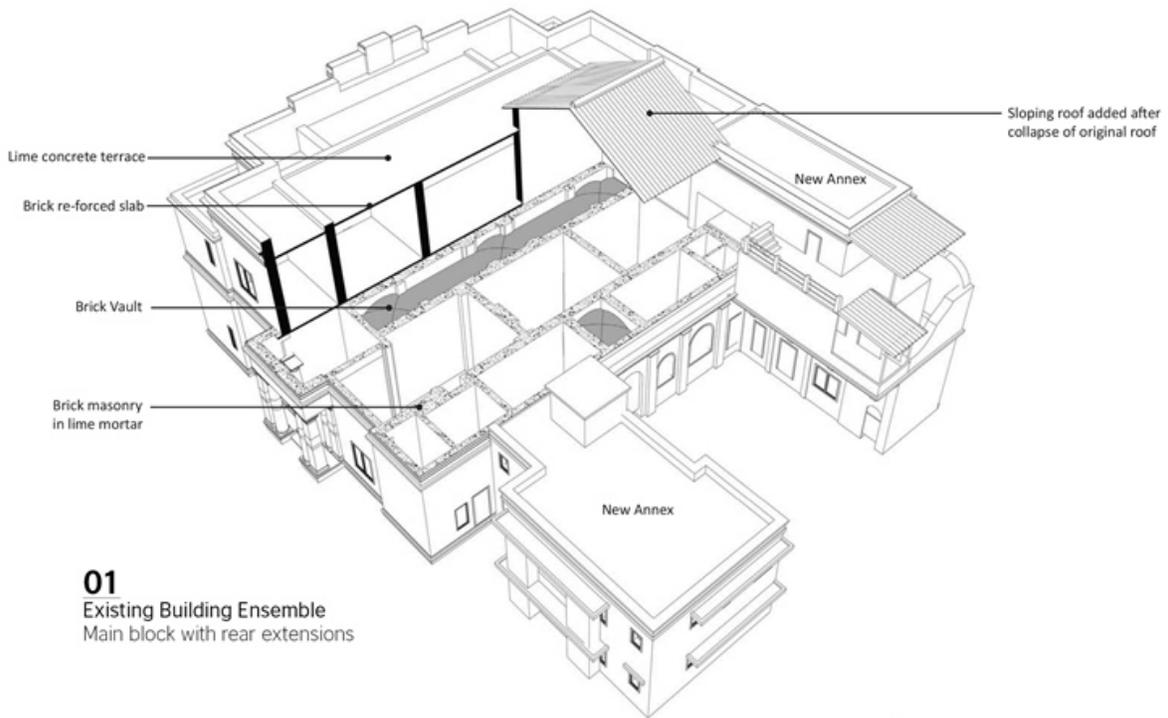
<b>Development Control Regulation</b>	<b>As Applicable</b>	<b>As Built</b>	<b>Compliance</b>
Ground Coverage	Not exceeding existing plinth & area	As per Existing building	Complied

FAR	Not exceeding existing built-up area	As per Existing	Complied
Height	Not exceeding existing building height	As per Existing	Complied
Setbacks	N/A	N/A	N/A
Basement	Not Allowed	Not Constructed	Complied

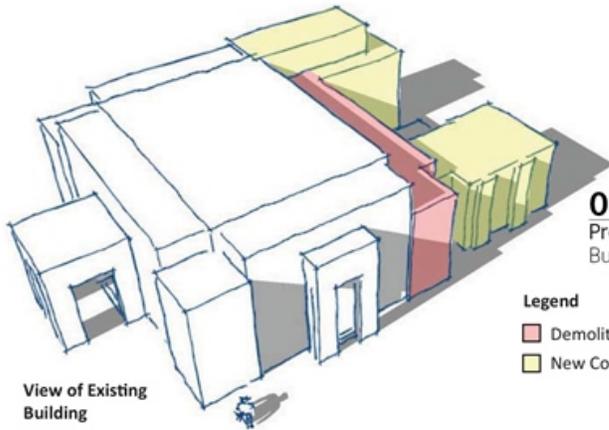
*Table 4 Cochin House: Bye-laws vs. As Built comparison*

The Daryaganj townhouse was an abandoned building. It presented the typical scenario of a colonial townhouse broken up into smaller tenements post national independence. With load bearing walls made of brick and lime mortar, a small courtyard within the confines of its narrow boundary and an open to sky backyard; the building retained intricate ornamental plaster work in its interior as well as exterior. Seen in unison with its surviving neighbouring buildings from the pre-independence era, one could imagine how the three storey street facades would have worked along with the narrow rear service lanes. However, its new owner understandably did not see the townhouse as anything more than what it was on paper; a commodity in a convenient location.

Professional help was sought to convert this property into a commercial office space with all the contemporary technology and sustainability features short of an LEED rating. Ideas and proposals revolving around reuse of whatever could be from the existing built fabric, even if only for maintaining some sort of architectural continuity purely ornamental in purpose, did not find much resonance with the owner; probably because demolishing it and applying for a building permit would prove to be a much easier process. This building also had to go through the complicated procedure of obtaining building permits for construction which included the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) primarily along with the DUAC, ASI and the Fire Officer.



**01**  
Existing Building Ensemble  
Main block with rear extensions



**02**  
Proposed Reorganisation  
Building & Courtyard

- Legend**
- Demolition & Reconstruction
  - New Construction

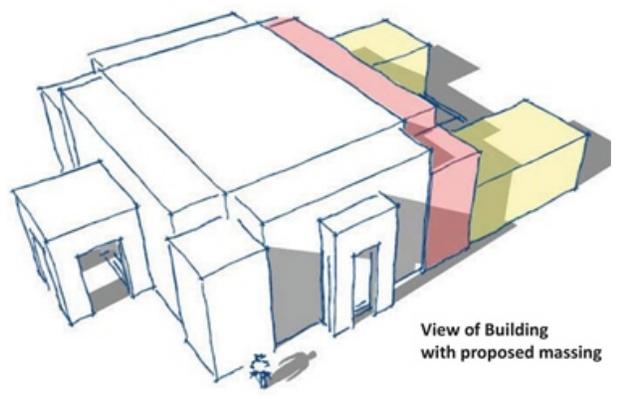
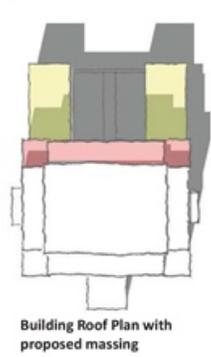
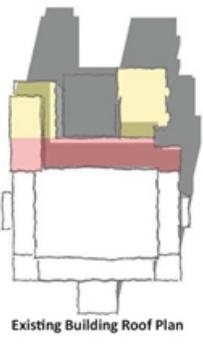
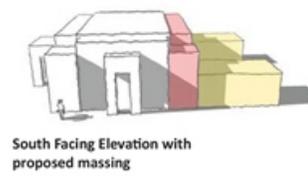


Fig.3- Cochin House Morphology & Evolution 2010-2015

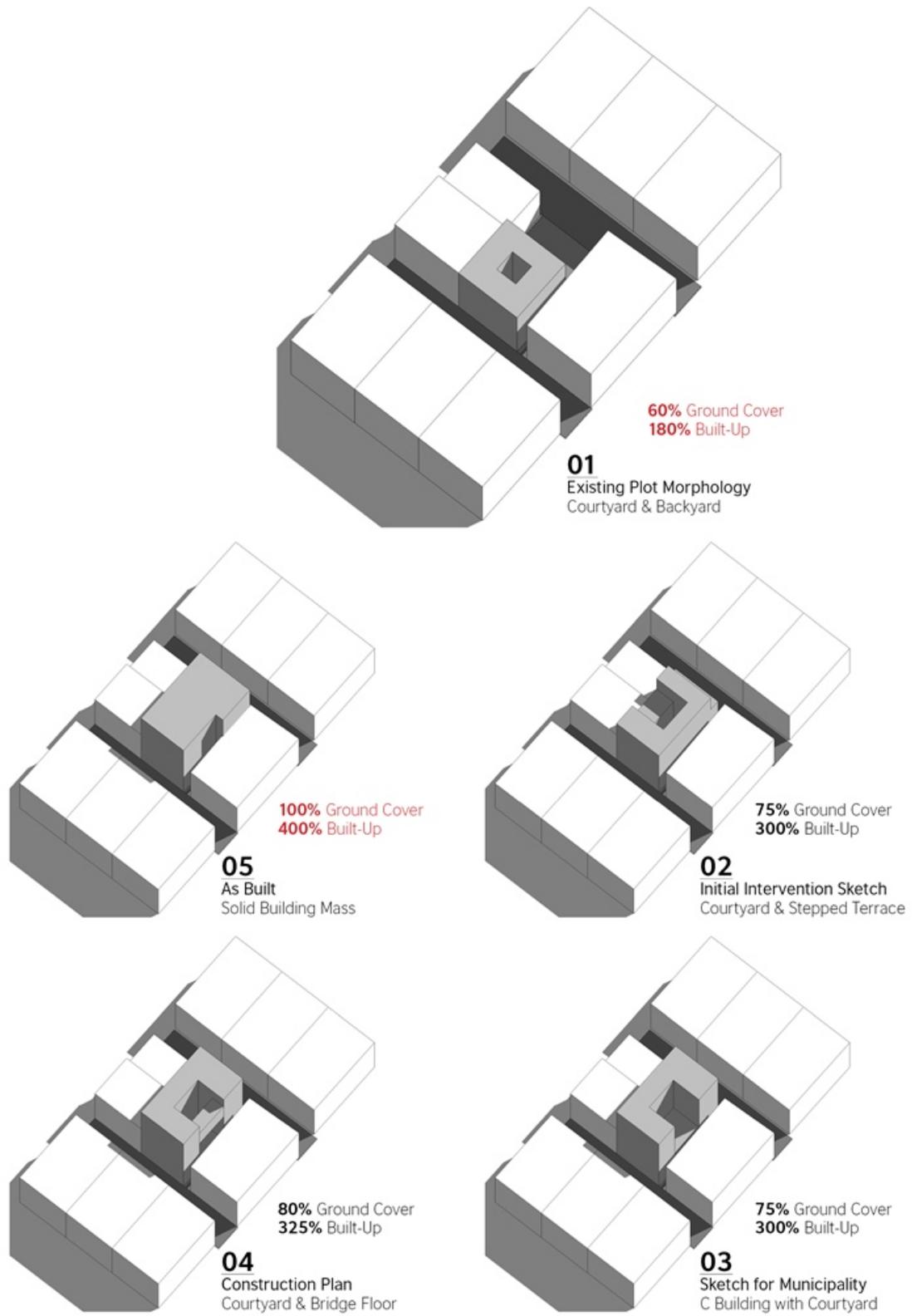


Fig.4- Daryaganj Townhouse Morphology & Evolution 2013-2015

Notably, no professional help (nor interference) was taken for the approval process which was handled by liaison middlemen and was obtained within six months; a big contrast to the three years that Cochin House had to wait. The only restriction that was put on the final permit was the dis-allowance of basement construction. This was because the ASI was an active decision-making agency in the zone and it happened to be the site of the major clearances undertaken by the British after the revolt of 1857 AD (Hosagrahar 2005). However, neither the MPD 21 land-use regulation nor the ASI restriction could eventually prevent the construction of a commercial office building or the basement. Though, interestingly, the only real resistance to the redevelopment came from the RWA of the colony which was firmly opposed to the idea of a commercial office establishment in their otherwise majorly residential colony. As a result of which, the owner had to cover up his act by making the facade of the building look ‘residential’ in-line with some of the other plots which were being redeveloped as apartments. What does this imply for the enforcement mechanism that is emerging from the contemporary urbanism?

Development Control Regulation	As Applicable	As Built	Compliance
Ground Coverage	75%	100%	Rule Violated
FAR	300	400%	Rule Violated
Height	15m	15m	Complied
Setbacks	N/A	N/A	N/A
Basement	Not Allowed	Constructed	Rule Violated

*Table 5 Daryaganj Townhouse: Bye-laws vs. As Built comparison*

## 2.4 Project Outcome

What these case studies have illustrated is the fate of non-monumental built heritage, which might not generate tourism revenue for the government, but plays a vital role in creating timeless sustainable places. These will never gain relevance in modern times till the time they continue to be seen as outside of contemporary planning, a status they share only with urban slums. The contrast between the two case study contexts is the fact that Lutyens Delhi is relevant to the current planning policies, since current planning itself is a colonial legacy (Legg, 2007). Is it a surprise then that Cochin House managed to scrape through a demolition drive? It wasn't a ‘heritage regulation’ that helped its case, but a ‘development control regulation’. Daryaganj, on the other hand is also a British planned zone within the walled city. But it being a geographic part of the walled city grouped it with the rest of the ‘special area’ in the master plan. This state of exception from the formal order of urbanization at the planning level is a classic case of informality being seen as outside the scope of planning (Roy, 2005). The logic is that what has not been created through the contemporary planning process must lie outside it, and hence is informal. Whereas, the city-core is in fact at the heart of the whole urbanization phenomenon, showcasing all contemporary planning issues in their most complex and dynamic form. It precedes planning, and hence should have ideally influenced planning, instead of planning imposing its misplaced ideals on an indigenous built environment. The argument here, just as Gautam Bhan (2016) argues for informal housing in Delhi, is that planning practice must understand Indian urbanism as it exists in such small scale projects today. Disconnect between theory, policy and practice needs to be bridged in order to aspire for a meaningful future for the numerous historic built environments in India. Such environments are less static and more dynamic in their evolution of architecture and urbanism. What remains static is perhaps their capacity and resources, rather than the ability to adapt. This suggests Form-Based Codes (Parolek,

Parolek & Crawford 2008) to be a much more relevant approach in historic built environments. With the principle of learning from traditional urbanism at the heart of its philosophy, they reverse the conventional 'form follows function' ideology on its head, which may help preserve physical and experiential character while allowing places to adapt functionally. The potential of historic built environments need to be explored through a more realistic re-imagination using contemporary tools that are relevant to their context.



*Fig. 5 Cochin House before Intervention (Left, 2010) & After (Right, 2015)*



*Fig. 6 Daryaganj Townhouse after Intervention (Left, 2016) & before (Right, 2013)*

## **Conclusion**

Being listed or unlisted is a piece of writing on the paper. What will save our built heritage for posterity is the will of the community to preserve its association with the untold history of their environment. It is not for any government to own up built heritage; it is for the communities to own up their history. Our country is replete with settings where communities have a strong association with their histories through the built environment, but lack the ability to translate it into a narrative which would bring people together to manage resources. The onus is on the professional and administrative community to fill this gap and bring built heritage, monumental or commonplace, into the mainstream development agenda.

## Acknowledgements

The Cochin House Renovation project at Jantar Mantar Road in New Delhi was planned by Prof. N. Ramaswamy, Kollam with M/s. Kshetra Consultants, Hyderabad. The author was a leading member of the design team for the project period (2010-15).

The Daryaganj Townhouse project at Ansari Road in Shahjahanabad was designed by Design Atelier Urbis, New Delhi. The author was a leading member of the team for the project period (2013-16)

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# ICOA661A: ESPACES PUBLICS CONTESTÉS: RÉAMÉNAGEMENT DE VILLES, ÉTUDES DE CAS INDIENS

## Sous-thème 01: Intégrer le patrimoine et le développement urbain durable en engageant Diverses communautés pour la gestion du patrimoine

**Session 2:** Le management, documentation

**Lieu:** Stein Auditorium, India Habitat Centre

**Date et heure:** 13 Décembre, 2017, 11:15 – 11:30

**Auteur:** Abdul Bari

*Abdul Bari est architecte, actuellement établi à New Delhi (Inde). Après avoir débuté en travaillant étroitement avec les autorités gouvernementales sur des projets privés de réaménagement en centre urbain, il s'est depuis investi plus personnellement dans la conception et la pratique de l'architecture contemporaine à New Delhi. Il se focalise principalement sur l'architecture et la construction en milieu urbain avec un intérêt marqué pour les projets de réaffectation et la recherche en conservation.*

**Résumé:** Dans le contexte de globalisation et de promotion des métropoles comme principaux moteurs de la croissance économique des états-nations du XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, les problématiques urbaines des centres historiques indiens ont été réduites à simples « zones patrimoniales » dans l'aménagement urbain et les Plans directeurs. Par conséquent, les initiatives de conservation et de rénovation durables sont entravées par des législations et réglementations générales peu pertinentes au vu des caractéristiques et de l'histoire urbanistiques de ces « zones ». La multiplicité des institutions et organismes, les possibilités offertes par les nouveaux équipements technologiques et d'ingénierie ainsi qu'une rupture dans l'évolution de l'architecture et de la planification, ont toutes grandement contribué au déclin physique et économique des édifices historiques. L'objectif de cet article est de reconnaître la dynamique d'un urbanisme contemporain réaliste dans de telles conditions, par opposition à la promotion d'un idéal de conservation urbaine imaginaire et utopique.

Deux études de cas, en contexte archétypal, l'un représenté par le New Delhi d'Edwin Lutyens, l'autre par Shahjahanabad à Delhi – par ailleurs parties de la candidature de Delhi à la Liste du patrimoine mondial en tant que ville historique –, illustrent ces dynamiques au travers de leur histoire, de leur évolution et de leurs éventuelles réalisations respectives. Par une analyse de l'engagement professionnel dans ces projets, l'article vise à mettre en avant un témoignage de terrain sur la manière dont les processus démocratiques de planification sont négociés dans l'urbanisation quotidienne du milieu urbain, avec l'étiquette « patrimoine ». Gardant à l'esprit l'Objectif 11 (Villes et Communautés durables) des Objectifs de développement durable du Programme de développement des Nations Unies pour l'Agenda 2030, on pourrait élaborer une stratégie plus pertinente pour assurer un avenir durable pour le passé grâce à l'expérience acquise à différents niveaux de responsabilité.

**Mots clés:** durabilité, développement, intervenants, planification