

CHAPTER 2.6

SUBALTERN DRAWINGS: CAN ARCHITECTURE, URBANISM, AND FIELDWORK STRIKE BACK?

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Architects do not make buildings; they make drawings of buildings¹.

To look for the *Other* in [...] images, drawings and moving pictures is to find a paradigmatic Western discourse and to understand the gaze. We bring to bear on Elsewhere².

Introduction³

What does it mean to speak, and what does it mean to be heard? Domination and oppression are usually theorised along political subjectivity, political agency and having a voice through continuous negotiation, contestation and confrontation. Depending on the framework, the speech of certain people, architecture and cities is rendered intelligible, whilst other people,

¹ Robin Evans, “Architectural Projection”, in *Architecture and its Image: Four Centuries of Architectural Representation*, eds. Eve Blau and Edward Kaufman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 369.

² Pascal Blanchard et al., eds., *L’Autre et Nous, «Scènes et Types», anthropologues et historiens devant les représentations des populations colonisées, des ethnies, des tribus et des races depuis les conquêtes coloniales* (Marseille: Syros, 1995).

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architecture and cities are denied an authoritative voice and are mostly politically invisible or silenced in certain circumstances.

In this chapter, I will explore how architecture and cities are analysed around making sense of what it means to have a voice through drawing. The subaltern architecture and urbanism discussed here are sites of contestation, often challenging to access, and must be documented in official spatial archives⁴.

Architectural drawings are one of the main techniques covered to examine the often disregarded and unseen spatial practices of places. I will attempt to show how drawing can be both a creative and a disruptive force, a method of understanding the world through observation and a tool that can be used to redraw the lines to portray other histories and representations.

A drawing is an 'as-found' object in its physical integrity. The lines are drawn, and the worlds encompassed offer essential insights into how architecture and cities are imagined and ultimately constructed. I propose that re-enacting a drawing process can reveal hidden intentions and decisions. I invite you to experiment with the interweaving of drawing and spoken word/writing as the result of architectural practice and urban design.

Architectural drawings provide tools for understanding the past embodied in the physical built environment and the design approaches and attitudes that shape it. I interpret potential meanings of built reality as evident in the

⁴ The work by the 'Subaltern Studies Group' led by the Indian historian Ranajit Guha (who died last April 2023) stated the need to recover the *Other*, less heard, voices in the writing of colonial history and to shift attention from mainstream political history-writing to the domain of social history, local and micro-histories including those of peasant and lower-caste groups, labour, and women. In 1982, the volumes of *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society* were edited by Guha and published in New Delhi. In the inaugural preface, Guha called for more academic work on subaltern themes and critiques of elitism. A school of research was established that came to be called 'subalterns'. *Selected Subaltern Studies*, seminal essays were published later in 1988 by Guha and Gayatri Spivak, with a foreword by Edward Said. By 1990, the historian Burton Stein cited the growing interest in Subaltern Studies as one sign that the 1980s were 'a decade of historical efflorescence' in 'South Asian studies.' In the 1990s 'Subaltern Studies' became a topic and an influence in academic circles ranging across disciplines from history to anthropology, sociology, political science, literary criticism, cultural studies and finally architecture and urbanism. See Ranajit Guha, ed., *A Subaltern Studies Reader 1986-1995* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

drawing, rather than through texts and theories, in a search for alternative types of communication between past and present. I will focus on drawing to fathom intentions and effects and to enable imaginative narratives that emerge from cross-cultural contact due to colonialism.

A lack of access to resources and political power often characterises subaltern architecture and urbanism. As a result, subaltern spaces may also be neglected or marginalised by the mainstream architectural and planning professions in their drawing practices. Drawings can be essential for understanding and documenting subaltern architecture and urbanism and advocating for the rights and needs of the communities that use subaltern spaces. These often reflect the values, cultural traditions, and conditions of the communities that inhabit them and can provide a sense of identity and belonging.

The literary theorist Mary Louise Pratt argues that travel literature is inherently linked to the colonial gaze, which is how colonisers and travellers viewed the people and places they encountered during their journeys⁵. She argues that travel literature served as a means of justifying colonialism and imperialism by portraying colonised peoples and cultures as exotic, primitive, and inferior. According to Pratt, travel literature was a key mechanism for constructing and perpetuating the colonial gaze.

Travel literature helped reinforce colonialism's power dynamics, positioning Europeans as superior and non-European peoples as subordinate. The colonial gaze is characterised by a tendency to objectify and exoticise non-European peoples, treating them as specimens to be observed and studied. It involves a way of looking that emphasises difference and reinforces a sense of superiority on the part of the European traveller. Through their descriptions of the people, places, and cultures they encountered, European travellers supported the idea that non-European societies were inferior and needed European intervention and control.

Pratt's argument highlights how travel literature played a crucial role in the project of colonialism and the importance of understanding how language and representation shape our understanding of the world. Travel literature during colonialism is engaged with the metropolis's obsession with presenting and representing its peripheries and its others to itself. In this, it constructs not only the space of the "contact zone" but also the metropolis

⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

itself.⁶ Also, given the significance of the Empire to the history and production of travel writing, which is still regarded as “an exemplary record of cross-cultural encounters between European and non-European peoples”, contact zones have proven to be popular and productive sites for travellers and travel writers⁷. I will try to draw connections between how the nation and its colonies are spatially constructed through travel narratives. I shall trace the fundamental underpinnings behind colonial travel as a scientific vocation, which frames and harnesses geographical locations to the metropolitan nucleus.

Subaltern studies emerged in the 1980s as a response to mainstream histories of colonialism, which focused on European colonisers’ experiences and perspectives rather than the colonised peoples’ experiences of subaltern groups or those marginalised and excluded from power within colonial societies. A critical insight of subaltern studies is that the colonial gaze played a crucial role in the subordination and marginalisation of subaltern groups. By objectifying and exoticising non-European peoples, the colonial gaze helped create a system of knowledge and power that privileged European perspectives and experiences while marginalising and silencing those of subaltern groups and treating them as specimens to be observed and studied. The colonial gaze helped reinforce colonial power dynamics, positioning Europeans as superior and non-European peoples as subordinate.

Subaltern studies have been influential in architecture, urbanism history, anthropology, sociology, and cultural studies and have been used to study topics including colonialism, nationalism, globalisation, and social justice. Architecture and urbanism have used subaltern studies to examine how

⁶ This composite concept is a key item in the postcolonial lexicon and has found widespread application in travel writing scholarship. Pratt describes the contact zone as a ‘social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today’ [below page 6]. It thus broadly refers to the space of colonial encounters, though the term’s origins are crucial to Pratt’s more nuanced understanding of those territories and experiences. The etymological roots of the word “contact”, from the Latin *contactus*, which means “touched, grasped, bordered on”, are also resonant. Linguistic roots reflect the intercultural dynamic and struggle, as well as the creative, transformative potential at stake in the contact zone. ‘Contact zone’ derives from one of the most important studies in travel writing scholarship. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*.
⁷ Steven Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London: Zed Books, 1999).

power relationships have been shaped, reflected and explored power relations and the experiences and perspectives of marginalised groups within the built environment. Therefore, subaltern architecture and urbanism is an emerging field of the built environment theory and practice that seeks to address how architecture and urbanism have been complicit in the marginalisation and exclusion of subaltern groups. It takes inspiration from critical theories and subaltern studies to challenge dominant narratives of architecture and urbanism and promote a more inclusive and equitable approach to design. One of its key insights is that architecture and urbanism have historically been complicit in the marginalisation and exclusion of subaltern groups⁸.

Finally, drawing as a historical and theoretical tool of architecture and urbanism portray the subaltern uncanny that can be found in the triad architecture and urbanism, colonialism and subalternity⁹. Examples include research on the impact of colonialism on today's built environment, which often houses marginalised communities and is often neglected or marginalised by mainstream architectural and planning practices.

In response to these issues, subaltern architecture and urbanism seek to promote a more inclusive and participatory approach to drawing. This includes working with marginalised communities to co-produce drawings and co-design architecture and urbanism that responds to their needs and perspectives. It also challenges dominant drawing narratives that reinforce inequality and exclusion.

Drawing is fundamental to learning, communicating, and creating information across various disciplines. It is exploratory and experimental, serving as a tool for outlining ideas and plans line by line. Production and examination of architecture as an object and cities as an artefact involve both drawing and fieldwork. Despite their importance, there has yet to be much critical analysis of how the field and the world at large significantly interact with the drawings and knowledge they carry¹⁰. Overall, subaltern studies, architecture and urbanism are committed to challenging dominant

⁸ For example, colonial architecture often reinforced the power dynamics of colonialism, while modernist architecture often excluded the needs and perspectives of marginalised communities.

⁹ Swati Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta. Modernity, Nationalism and the Colonial Uncanny* (London: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁰ An exception is Suzanne Ewing, Michael J. McGowan, Chris Speed, and Victoria C. Bernie, eds., *Architecture and Field/Work* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 4.

drawing narratives of power and promoting a more inclusive and equitable approach to knowledge production and design.

This chapter will contribute to closing that gap by examining fieldwork-related architectural drawing techniques emphasising marginalised populations settings. It will present methodological issues regarding the study and portrayal of marginal spaces by drawing on subaltern and postcolonial studies. It will explicitly challenge the ability of architectural drawing and orthographic mapping standards to discuss subaltern architecture and urbanism spatially.

Here, I explore the possibility of mimicry, a concept developed by colonial and postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, in “telling” the stories of populations and their locations that would otherwise go untold in academic study¹¹. Mimicry involves a complex process of imitation and subversion, in which colonised peoples simultaneously adopt and subvert European cultural practices. Mimicry is a form of hybridity that mixes different cultural practices and perspectives.

In the context of colonialism, mimicry represents a strategy of cultural resistance, in which colonised peoples adopt the cultural practices of their colonisers as a means of survival while also subverting and transforming those practices to suit their own needs and perspectives. Mimicry is not a simple process of imitation but rather involves a complex negotiation of power and identity. Through mimicry, colonised peoples can challenge and destabilise their coloniser’s power while also maintaining a sense of cultural identity and agency. Overall, mimicry represents a key strategy of cultural resistance within the context of colonialism and highlights how cultural practices and identities are shaped through complex processes of imitation, adaptation, and subversion.

By drawing on the ideas of the creator and theorist of postcolonial theory, Edward Said and the literary and postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak, the first section of the chapter analyses ethical issues that architecture and urbanism address. Both emphasise the significance of understanding the unequal power relations between the researcher and the researched in

¹¹ Mimicry, as discussed by Homi Bhabha in his influential essay “Of Mimicry and Man” is a concept that refers to the ways in which colonised peoples adopt and adapt European cultural and linguistic practices as a means of survival and resistance. Homi Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse”, *Discipleship: A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 28 (1984): 125-133.

different ways. They both contend this is a particular problem when working with vulnerable, underprivileged or subaltern people. They both argue distinctively for how this link affects the research in question. The chapter's first section addresses their inquiries about the researcher's role and reiterates the significance of these inquiries for spatial studies.

The second section focuses on the study methodologies, some of which were developed in direct reaction to the ethical concerns addressed, emphasising the use of orthographic drawing techniques. As previously stated, the locations under consideration are essential to the people but are frequently disregarded in the spatial study. This second section uses the concepts of mimicry and margin, the last coined by the social activist and scholar Bell Hooks as a space of radical potential, to argue for the importance of architectural drawing techniques, *albeit* modified, in offering an alternative way of representing the spaces of subordinate groups¹².

The final section of the chapter situates these approaches within a broader context by drawing on existing debates about architecture, urbanism and ethnographies. It thus offers a more comprehensive discussion of the use and potential of drawing as a research tool, highlighting the temporality of these practices. Overall, the chapter argues that a thoughtful and deliberate approach to architectural drawing provides an alternate means of "showing" the environments of marginalised and subaltern groups.

¹² The margin is a space of powerlessness and restriction. In her article "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness", Hooks suggests an alternate way of thinking about the margin. For Hooks, the margin is a "space of radical openness ... a profound edge" where "one can say no to the colonizer, no to the downpressor". It is a "position and place of resistance". Seen in this way, the margin is not a place one wishes "to give up or surrender as part of moving into the center-but rather [...] a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one's capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds". The margin becomes a position of strategy, not essence. A person in the margins is outside the usual categories, definitions, and binaries of society; not *Self* or *Other*. A person in the margins develops and articulates instead her own subjectivity and identity, her own highly personal sense of the world. Bell Hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness", in *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End, 1990), 145-153.

Fieldwork

The emphasised architectural locations and structures analysed in this chapter were primarily founded and built by Gujaratis in Diu, a former Portuguese colonial city located on the western coast of India.

Diu has seen significant and drastic changes since the 1960s, marking the end of Portuguese colonial rule on the territory, island and city in December 1961.¹³ The influx of people from different regions of Gujarat was one of these critical changes. The relevance of the resulting informal spaces goes beyond their use for transactions, as they serve as the primary sites for these communities' access to social spaces, services, and sources of income. These places are, therefore, essential and significant for the people who live there. These spaces, however, have not been the focus of spatial research, particularly in the context of architectural or urban studies, and are thus almost not included in Diu's official architectural and urban records.¹⁴ They are further rendered invisible due to the subaltern nature of the populations who inhabit these places.

In 2014, I undertook two months of fieldwork in Diu, India, to better understand the city's architectural spatial negotiations, urban history, and anthropological landscape. The importance and complexities of the city's places were highlighted during research by the unique spatial biographies of its inhabitants. The narrative of these biographies exemplifies the precarious status of a former Portuguese colonised subject within the larger Indian public sphere, as well as the general subaltern nature of the Gujarati population. Living in Diu was described as the creation of a home and a place in Diu while also pointing to a postcolonial house as an outcome in a fiercely contested urban area. The narrative of Diu's inhabitants pointed to India's post-annexation of the territory, whose promises of a space for education, freedom of movement, and access to the continent and the rest of the globe were enshrined in its constitution as a territory part of India by large; for Diu's population, these promises were realised through Diu's urban space.

The story and geographical experiences in Diu highlight the subaltern nature of the Gujaratis and their spaces, raising various problems concerning the population's voice, the academic researcher's claimed transparency and the

¹³ Nuno Grancho, *Diu: A Social Architectural and Urban History*, Unpublished PhD dissertation (Coimbra: University of Coimbra, 2017).

¹⁴ As an exception, see *ibidem*.

archive¹⁵. As stated, these were not spaces previously the subject of spatial research. This is owing to the character of these places as occupied informal sites, the contentious context in which they exist, and their recent formation in postcolonial Diu. As a result, the primary research strategy was based on ethnographic methods of participant observation techniques paired with in-depth interviews. Other sources turn to include news items, regulations, and relevant literature.

The field of everyday architecture and urbanism informed this approach¹⁶. These places, however, transcend the daily, owing to the backdrop's contested character and the inhabitants' subaltern nature. They are, instead, marginal areas, which maintain that the margin should be viewed as both a physical and a metaphorical space. While the margin is a place of actual hardship and oppression, it is also a place of resistance and opportunity¹⁷.

The contentious and complex character of these areas directly impacted the research. While our initial objective was photographing the locations, this proved to be generally undesirable on-site. As a result, the approaches were modified to include drawing and note-taking as a means to write and create these places—the unwillingness of many participants to be photographed generated severe ethical concerns regarding the research procedure. I had yet to learn how many cultural sensitivities, apprehension about being photographed and documented, and a general mistrust of researchers would influence my fieldwork.

Drawing and note-taking on-site can be valuable tools for conducting architectural fieldwork, which studies social and cultural practices and

¹⁵ The definition of the subaltern draws on Guha's understanding of the subaltern as a subordinate figure in comparison with elite populations, yet simultaneously recognises that subalternity is heterogeneous and a relative construct; Ranajit Guha, "On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India", in *Subaltern Studies 1*, Ranajit Guha ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 44.

¹⁶ See *inter alia*: Iain Borden, Jane Rendell, Joe Kerr and Alicia Pivaro, eds., *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000); Steven Harris and Deborah Berke, eds., *Architecture of the Everyday* (New York, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997); Margaret Crawford, John Chase and John Kaliski, eds., *Everyday Urbanism* (New York, NY: Monacelli, 2008).

¹⁷ The framing of these sites as marginal is also in opposition to an emphasis on the popular within the field of everyday architecture. See Bell Hooks, "Choosing the Margin"; Dell Upton, "Architecture in Everyday Life", *New Literary History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2002): 707-723.

beliefs within specific communities or groups. Architectural fieldwork involves a process of immersion in the culture or community being studied, and drawing and note-taking can help to document and interpret these experiences and observations.

Drawing is a tool for documenting the life of a culture or community, such as the layout of buildings or the arrangement of objects within a space. It can also help the architect better understand the spatial and material practices of the studied community and the relationships between people and objects within that space. On the other hand, note-taking can be used to document conversations, observations, and other forms of social interaction. It can help the architect better understand the studied community's beliefs, values, and social norms and how they are expressed through language and social interaction. Overall, drawing and note-taking on site can help to create a rich and detailed record of the experiences and observations of the architect, which can be used to develop a more nuanced and insightful understanding of the culture or community being studied. It can also help to highlight the complexity and diversity of social and cultural practices and to challenge dominant narratives and assumptions about those practices.

The question of representation is essential to postcolonial and subaltern studies. Spivak, in particular, has questioned the supposed transparency of academics and their institutions, arguing that it is critical to acknowledge the impact of unequal power relations on the research process.¹⁸ Spivak argued that there is a conflict in the academic's valorisation of subjugated populations' genuine experiences while remaining uncritical of the intellectual's historical role. Spivak claims that the merger of two distinct modes of representation, namely the proxy, or "speaking for", and the portrait, maintains this contradiction. While acknowledging that they are not mutually exclusive, Spivak contends that they are separate, as the first relates to political representation and the second to subject theory. Spivak argued that by combining the terms, the subaltern is considered an entirely "sovereign subject", while the researcher and associated institutions are assumed to be neutral and transparent. As a result, the subaltern has been given agency that he or she does not necessarily possess¹⁹.

¹⁸ Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan Education, 1988), 271-313.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, 69.

In *Representing the Colonised*, Said makes a similar point, arguing that no academic exists outside of the context²⁰. Said's concept refers to how colonial power structures have historically shaped the representation of colonised peoples in Western discourse and media. Said argues that colonialism is not only a political and economic system but also a system of cultural representation that shapes how the West views and understands colonised peoples. According to Said, representations of the colonised by architectural drawings, travel literature, academic scholarship, or popular media are often based on stereotypes and assumptions that reflect the interests and perspectives of the colonisers. Regardless of the form, however, these representations often reduce colonised peoples to simplistic and exoticised distortions that reinforce Western dominance and justify colonialism. These representations are not neutral or objective but rather reflect the power relations between the colonisers and the colonised.

Said states, "there is no discipline, no structure of knowledge, no institution or epistemology that can or has ever stood free of the various sociocultural, historical, and political formations that give epochs their peculiar individuality"²¹. He is referring to the concept of *Orientalism* which he developed elsewhere²². Yet in the text, he reasserts the importance of recognising the implications of the context of both the researcher and researched and that "epistemologies, discourses and methods" should not be brushed aside as irrelevant as they are often related to a worldview with an associated political force.²³ Said says that part of recognising one's position as a researcher is considering the research subject. He claims that a "kind of scrubbed, disinfected interlocutor is a laboratory creation with suppressed, and therefore falsified connections to the urgent situation of crisis and conflict that brought him or her to attention in the first place".²⁴

These problems posed by Spivak and Said were especially applicable concerning my positioning as an architect, urbanist, and researcher in Diu, Mumbai, Goa, Pondicherry, Tranquebar and Serampore. Encounters on site revealed that the position of an academic is not neutral. When I started fieldwork, I was instantly aware of my locus in areas that could be defined as under scrutiny from many publics due to looming evictions and violence.

²⁰ Edward W. Said, "Representing the Colonised: Anthropology's Interlocutors", *Critical Inquiry*, 15, No. 2 (1989), 205-225.

²¹ *Ivi*, 211.

²² Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

²³ *Ibidem*. See also Said, "Representing the Colonised", 210.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

Establishing a relationship of trust was critical to gaining access to specific areas and speaking with certain persons.²⁵ For Said, the “thunderous” silence of the author’s voice and position is essential to this critique. Said asks, “Who speaks? For what purpose and to whom?” note that these inquiries are not always pronounced or even requested.²⁶ However, as Said points out, the silent author speaks for the reader and acts as a bridge between the reader and the subaltern *Other* in a subaltern position.

These varied problems led to an adaptation of representation methods, including decisions about what to include and what to exclude in drawings and note-taking. Drawing locations and taking notes became more important than photographing places and recording people. Using drawing and note-taking on-site as critical approaches positioned me as an active participant in the field and research rather than an “invisible” author. They are closely connected to my personal experience with the sites.

Drawing and re-drawing was an initial response to fieldwork interactions. However, the drawings directly relate to my background as an architect and urbanist, although their general and imprecise nature retains their ambiguity. Drawings can serve as “sketch maps of an encounter.”²⁷ The drawings and their level of detail, or lack thereof, represent my relationship with the space and its inhabitants. To return to Spivak’s concept of distinguishing between different types of representation, the imprecision of these drawings defines them as “portraits” of the location instead of as a sort of “proxy”, or speaking for inhabitants.²⁸ Rather than being seen as distinct representations of the place, they should be interpreted as representative of the specific interaction between the researcher and researched, i.e. the interviewees and me.

The drawing style alludes to on-site encounters, tours of specific areas, and long-term connections with interviewees. Permission was secured for all images and interior spaces with no faces or names. In turn, the drawings are built on estimates, approximations, and mappings to generate a haphazard portrayal of these every day and yet contested architectures and cities. The drawing’s erratic nature mirrors the erratic nature of the places themselves. Any specific details that pointed to individuals were omitted in the drawings in response to the realisation, based on both Said and field experiences, that

²⁵ *Ivi*, 213.

²⁶ *Ivi*, 212.

²⁷ John Berger, *Bento’s Sketchbook* (London: Verso, 2015).

²⁸ Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”.

academic institutions are not neutral and that the dissemination of research that included personal details of individuals could have real consequences for those involved. Instead, the drawings are a combination of site sketches and handwritten notes.

Telling

In “Representing the Colonised”, Said expands his critique of academic encounters by questioning alternative “ways of telling”. He borrows this concept from the art critic, artist and novelist John Berger’s seminal essay *Ways of Seeing*, in which he contends that seeing is a politically engaged and social act.²⁹ Said, in turn, challenges whether crossing physical and disciplinary limits can lead to new narrative forms. Spivak, on the other hand, claims that the subaltern cannot speak. However, she, like Said, proposes that the silence of the subaltern does not have to be interpreted as detrimental to researchers. Instead, she suggests that researchers learn to “speak to” rather than “speak for” the subaltern. According to Spivak, “speaking to” is an active gesture involving a transaction between a speaker and a listener.³⁰

While Said draws attention to possibly alternate “ways of telling” these sites, Bhabha has similarly emphasised, in different ways, that the margin may be a site of promise. These tactics were used in Diu’s research process, where drawings and writings required an active exchange. As a result, drawing and writing became complementary to one another in portraying the sites. The drawings of the site were treated similarly to fieldwork notes and were later developed by thinking about the spatial processes on site. These, in turn, led to a conceptual spatial study of the places and hence a critical reading of these venues. This is crucial to a different method of “narrating” these subaltern everyday architectures and cities.

The technique of drawing both on and off-site is critical to this alternative form of “telling.” As a result, while the drawings are meant to be interpreted alongside the written accounts of these spaces, they also have a different function. The drawings are provided with an air of authority for they follow the architectural orthographic conventions of plans and sections, thereby simulating precision and logic.

²⁹ Berger, *Bento’s Sketchbook*.

³⁰ Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”.

Bhabha's concept of mimicry is fundamental here. Mimicry is the imitation of someone or something. According to Bhabha, mimicry was one of the strategies adopted by subaltern populations in colonial India to subvert the weapons of political power. This copying resulted in inherent ambivalence and doubling, the same but different.³¹ According to Bhabha, drawings can be considered a possible tactical tool.

They are detailed drawings that reflect the occupancy density of the areas and, as previously said, adhere to specific architectural standards. However, they have commonplace components rarely seen in architectural designs but common to interior design (in other words, goods, furniture, etc.). These similar items relate to the space's expected value to the inhabitants. The designs are hand-drawn, have not been correctly scaled or measured, and lack authoritative components that would provide legal weight to the drawing. Instead, they demonstrate a tension between detail and imprecision. In this regard, they might be viewed as mimicry because they use architectural drawing norms to write about locations overlooked and rendered invisible by these standards. This is directly related to the margin statement as a prospective site. Despite tangible deprivation, a margin is frequently a place for subordinate populations to envisage themselves. Despite the marginal peripheral status of the space, these drawings and their attention to commonplace detail indicate a space of home and refuge.

According to Bhabha, imitation displays no original presence and does not reveal a single reality. Instead, mimicry serves to undermine and highlight the ambiguity of colonial discourse.³² Following Bhabha, drawings are analytical and representational, not only of the locations but also of a specific posture. On the one hand, this stance articulates that drawings are contingent, hence a fragmented portrayal of a site encounter. On the other hand, drawings are part of an argument for recognising the relevance of these sites as spatial and as a subject of spatial research. This is especially relevant for Diu, Mumbai, Goa, Tranquebar and Serampore because these places are more frequently the focus of research in social sciences rather than architecture and urbanism.

To return to Said, the need for more research in the built environment academy can be identified. This, in turn, recognises the significance of Diu, Mumbai, Goa, Tranquebar and Serampore to the inhabitants. The description of other places elsewhere highlighted the value of these specific

³¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

³² *Ivi*, 131.

types of spaces to inhabitants. Because of the employment of architectural standards, drawings are perceived as generic while depicting a particular setting and meeting. While the specific places are extremely localised as informal sites, they are also strongly tied to other spaces.

Duality

The debate over the conflicting but constitutive temporalities of the modern nation emerges as a valuable paradigm for questioning the methodologies employed to historicise cities whose physical evolution has been shaped by colonialism. Non-western architectures and cities have frequently been the topic of drawings and historically inscribed on the premise of a binary system of antagonism between pre-colonial and European or, more recently, Euro-American modern and non-western architectures and cities. The dismantling of binary systems and the highlighting of cultural differences advocated by Bhabha provides an opportunity to overcome such antagonism and, more importantly, to examine the contribution of other (subaltern) groups participating in the constant reshaping of cities has been ignored through drawings.

Indeed, some theorists, like Bhabha, contend that more than binary analysis approaches are needed for adequately addressing the complex urban realities of cities whose formal structure has been heavily influenced by colonialism.³³ Brenda Yeoh is an academic who sharply criticised the dual

³³ We should note the pervasiveness of the *dual* city model in virtually all South Asian studies of the colonial city. While the ‘black town/fort’ dichotomy might seem correct on the surface, it actually occludes critical features of colonial space. We should focus on ‘ruptures’ in the fabric of binary oppositions, such as Europeans who resided in the ‘black’ town, mixed neighbourhoods, and intrusion of the suburbs. We seek not to destroy colonial dichotomies but instead, see a more nuanced approach, digging within that seemingly rigid and complete structure to find its interruptions, intrusions, and instabilities. Indeed, the ‘black town/fort’ paradigm, is a central and defining element for all studies of colonial urban areas. This paradigm figures prominently in a host of studies on Indian architecture and urban planning. For example, Swati Chattopadhyay notes the ubiquity of references to dual European and Indian cities, arguing that this perspective has obscured our understanding of colonial space. “By emphasizing the duality of black and white”, she observes, “one misses the idea that the critical aspect of colonial cities resided not in the clarity of this duality, but in the tension of blurred boundaries between the two”. See: Swati Chattopadhyay, “Blurring Boundaries: The Limits of ‘White Town’ in Colonial Calcutta”, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 59, No. 2, (2000): 154.

approach to studying colonial cities by claiming that depicting colonial city morphology as binary is inadequate and deceptive since it ignores the power and consequence of colonisation (the very violence of the process of colonisation). Through drawings made by architects and urbanists, the physical elements of cities that were substantially affected by colonialism cannot be understood apart from their function in establishing, systematising, and preserving colonial rule.

Yeoh refers to the fact that the ordering principles of colonial cities, as created and developed by the coloniser, accord with establishing a hierarchical society ruled by Europeans. In other words, the city layout is akin to the ideal social order that planners aim to impose or the desire to see themselves repeated in the colonised demand depicted by the drawing of the city established by Europeans with colonialism. As a result, the colonial metropolis's concept and reality must be conceived as an affirmation of colonial power and an iteration of colonial discourse. These drawings often minimise the architectural values of pre-colonial villages that are not frequently shown. The architectural elements of colonial cities must be distinct from their function as sites of colonial rule.

The drawings made by architects and urbanists imply that three characteristics distinguish colonial cities. The first is its unusual pluralism, or, as Yeoh puts it, the colonial cities' inclusion of

a diversity of peoples, including colonialists, immigrants, and indigenes intermeshed within a social matrix comprising newly constituted relations of domination and dependence between individuals and between collectivities of people [...] these social groups are derived from vastly different societies, each with its own ingrained cultural behaviour, civil traditions and institutionalised practices³⁴.

A drawing not only acknowledges the existence of various communities but also authorises their participation in constructing colonial cities. With a drawing, one can definitively demonstrate that the history of cities influenced by colonialism cannot be depicted in terms of a binary social or morphological development system.

The second distinguishing aspect is that the system of social classification in colonial city designs does not mirror either the European class structure

³⁴ Brenda S. A. Yeoh, *Contesting Space: Power Relations in the Urban Built Environment in Colonial Singapore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1.

or the pre-colonial systems of social stratification of colonised peoples. This representation of colonial cities through drawing demonstrates that colonialism causes changes in the socio-political and cultural systems of all populations involved. None of these groups can revert to their pre-colonial state, nor can anyone ever realise their ambition to become like the other; neither the coloniser nor the colonised can be drawn as the coloniser. The drawings of the colonial city depict a hybridisation process that exacerbates itself exponentially as they interact. And, of course, when the other components of colonialism acquired traction (trade, demand, consumption, capital flow, etc.), the contact between colonisers and colonised cannot be stopped; neither can the hybridisation process: all can be the subject of a story through drawing. The third trait is an imbalanced allocation of power, predominantly concentrated in the hands of the coloniser, resulting in a constant struggle for authority.

Thus, through drawings, the colonial city is a territory of contestation. Despite the detailed analysis of historical documents, statistics, laws and planning regulations that I performed in Diu, Mumbai, Goa, Tranquebar, and Serampore, the physical – as well as the socio-political and cultural – fabric of the city reflects the power struggle of many actors (individual and collective) whose interventions have helped to shape cities, even when they are at the bottom of the power structure (i.e. enslaved people, indigenes, and so on). By this means, I strongly refute the idea that colonial cities, whether in South East Asia or elsewhere, are the creation of the European ruler alone. As Yeoh affirms, “the built spaces of the colonial city were not simply shaped by dominant forces or powerful groups, but were continuously transformed by the process of conflict and negotiation involving strategies and counter-strategies of colonial institutions of authority and different ‘colonised’ groups within the society [...] the built spaces of the colonial city were construed as sites of control and resistance, simultaneously drawn upon by, on the one hand, dominant groups to secure conceptual or instrumental control, and, on the other, subordinate groups to resist exclusionary definitions or tactics and to advance their own claims”³⁵.

I obviously apply a postcolonial method of critique through drawing to dispute the univocally of European historical accounts that colonial towns are the product of a dualism between European and non-European norms. In conclusion, I advocate for establishing more acceptable means of historical inscription through architectural and spatial studies drawings that consider all parties involved in the foundation and development of cities in

³⁵ *Ibidem*, 313.

formerly colonial nations. As a result, many of the problems addressed by drawings in Diu, Mumbai, Goa, Tranquebar, and Serampore apply to Western cities, which are similarly numerous, complicated, and historically layered.

Ethnography

Ethnographic research methodologies are not new to architecture and urbanism. The scholar and architectural theorist Suzanne Ewing identifies a broader late-20th-century ethnographic trend in architecture. According to Ewing, architecture is a “gleaning discipline” historically absorbing habits and repertoires from other disciplines. In a book edited by Ewing entitled *Architecture and Field/Work*, the overlap and discussion between ethnographic fieldwork and architectural site work are examined and highlighted similarities and distinctions³⁶. According to Ewing, fieldwork indicates a sense of fluidity and unfixed situations. Ewing proposes that “site” in architecture and urban planning relates to established modes of acting, recording, building, and concepts of fixed conditions. “Field” suggests, in contrast, “a place to learn from, research, to draw from”³⁷. On the other hand, Ewing ignores the older and more critical history of this method and the power dynamics that accompany it. The adapted research methods addressed here build on the architect’s long history of ethnographic approaches while remaining critical and mindful of the unequal relationships in ethnographic research processes.

The work of the architect Wajiro Kon is an example of the ethnographic shift and its unique relationship to drawing. Kon pioneered the area of *Modernologio*, which used drawing to illustrate and chronicle numerous aspects of Japanese life³⁸. These ranged from depictions of the private sphere and domesticity to catastrophe scenes or drawings of objects concerning personal details of daily living³⁹. *Modernologio* aspired for a

³⁶ Paul Emmons, “Drawing Sites: Site Drawings”, in *Architecture and Field/Work*, eds. Suzanne Ewing, Michael J. McGowan, Chris Speed, and Victoria C. Bernie (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 119-128.

³⁷ Suzanne Ewing, Michael J. McGowan, Chris Speed, and Victoria C. Bernie, eds., *Architecture and Field/Work* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 4.

³⁸ Izumi Kuroishi, “Visual Examinations of Interior Space in Movements to Modernize Housing in Japan c.1920–1940”, *Interiors*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (2011): 95-123.

³⁹ The concept of the private sphere has been discussed and written about by various thinkers and philosophers throughout history. One notable figure who extensively wrote about the private sphere is the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas. In his

complete record of the “present” as well as a methodical study of material culture in a quickly changing Japan, notably after the 1923 earthquake⁴⁰. Kon’s drawings were intended to be complete and accurate documentation as such. Kon’s drawings, on the other hand, offer a record of a particular moment and place, and the drawings use a combination of text and depictions to document the places. Clothing, furnishings, and utensils are items related to everyday living, and Kon’s drawings emphasise their significance to the spatiality of everyday life.

Another example of the usage of site hand drawings may be found in the studies of the architectural historian Swati Chattopadhyay⁴¹. She documented buildings and subaltern spatial practices using measured hand drawings in Kolkata, India⁴². Her body of scholarship marks a shift from Eurocentric views on modernity and a focus on the dominant structures of colonialism to paradigms that consider the coloniser’s experiences alongside the colonised. While bound by shared concerns, sympathetic drawings (mine and Chattopadhyay’s) of the colonial city appeal to divergent methodologies and frameworks partly by necessity. The particularities of Diu’s history, culture and resources, as well as its significance in the Portuguese (also particular) Empire, ensured that urban change in colonial India was not a monolithic process. That Calcutta (Chattopadhyay’s object) was the capital of the Raj and a Presidency city, while Diu had been reduced to a colonial city in a *borderland* in western India during Portuguese rule, meant that their physical canvas developed differently. Moreover, as Chattopadhyay explained, modernity, as introduced through the colonial encounter, was not drawn along simple lines of coloniser and colonised. Instead, local responses were shaped by various social and anthropological factors. Finally, Chattopadhyay dismantled the

influential work “The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere” (1962), Habermas explored the historical development of the public sphere and its relationship with the private sphere.

⁴⁰ *Ivi*.

⁴¹ Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*; Idem, *Unlearning the City: Infrastructure in a New Optical Field* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

⁴² I share with architectural historian Swati Chattopadhyay the interest about the city under colonialism shaped by local population. Chattopadhyay has an abiding concern with contested, mediated, and adapted modernity, as introduced to colonies (Chattopadhyay, *Representing Calcutta*). On Chattopadhyay’s work, see also: “Introduction: The subaltern and the popular”, *Postcolonial studies: Culture, Politics, Economy*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2005), 357-363; “Urbanism. Colonialism and Subalternity”, in *Urban Theory Beyond the West: A World of Cities*, eds. Tim Edensor and Mark Jayne (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 75-92.

paradigmatic image of the racially partitioned colonial city as more a figure of political desire by colonial administrators than an accurate description of urban cultural geography.

Chattopadhyay produces a record of spaces that need to be added to formal spatial archives through her drawings and narration of these places. While they have certain similarities and have served as essential precedents, the drawings differ from both techniques in that they do not aim to recreate missing spaces or provide a comprehensive portrayal. Instead, via writing, drawing, and redrawing, the drawings highlight the unstable character of spaces while recognising their spatial qualities' worth for their inhabitants. Returning to Spivak, they should be viewed as a partial and placed record rather than a complete or "sovereign" portrayal of the subaltern or their spaces⁴³.

Time

The timing of these drawings lends itself to interpretation as an incomplete chronicle. The act of drawing and writing on the spot took time and thus necessitated a level of interaction with the inhabitants. As a result, drawing and handwriting as primary research approaches incorporated an alternate time or temporality into the research process in architecture and urbanism. The "long" and "short" times, "spaces in-between" (literally, "intervals"), "before" and "after" — are all implicit metaphors that rely on the idea of time as a linear continuum. The experience of simultaneity or discontinuity imposed on buildings, architecture, urban planning, and the city's spatial organisation is based on different kinds of spatial images from those involved in continuous, sequential experiences of time. Continuity and sequentiality are spatial images based on the unbroken line or surface schema.

An image may be taken in a matter of seconds, yet even the most detailed hand annotation is a more conspicuous gesture that necessitates a lengthier presence in the location. This was especially true for the drawings. Drawing on the spot, therefore, resulted in several dialogues and queries regarding my research with Diu inhabitants, and it became a technique of actively "speaking to" inhabitants, as Spivak suggests⁴⁴. As a result, this was an active gesture that required my presence on-site.

⁴³ Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", 69.

⁴⁴ *Ivi*, 91.

Berger, Michel de Certeau, a religious historian and cultural critic and Tim Ingold, an anthropologist, have all argued for the significance of identifying spatial acts as transitory and temporal practices. De Certeau states that mapping spatial practises can only speak to what happened.⁴⁵ According to De Certeau, mapping the routines of everyday life is impossible. Drawings, on the other hand, according to Berger, have the power to directly respond to this ephemeral character, as they can “map an encounter.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Ingold contends that drawing is a “following the world” method. Drawing, for him, unites three diverse aspects of ethnographic research into a single gesture: observation, description, and participation. Unlike written reports, drawings are “open to the changing present”, according to Ingold.⁴⁷

The historian of ideas between archaeology and architecture, Lesley McFadyen, takes Ingold’s argument into the realm of archaeology, arguing that archaeological site drawings should be viewed as a creative practice rather than a simply record-keeping technique⁴⁸. Similarly, the drawings from Diu might be viewed as a personal experience with the materiality of the place and its inhabitants, with the outcome being a partial portrayal of the site rather than an impartial or direct record.

Similarly, the methodology outlined in this chapter acknowledges the creativity needed to create these spaces and the general improvisational aspect of site research. For McFadyen, drawing and excavation are inextricably linked, and archaeological drawings are both about the act of

⁴⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).

⁴⁶ *Bento’s Sketchbook* is an exploration of the practice of drawing, as well as a meditation on how we perceive and seek to explore our ever-changing relationship with the world around us. John Berger uses the imaginative space he creates to explore the process of drawing, politics, storytelling and Benedict or Bento de Spinoza’s life and times taking his inspiration from the philosopher’s vision. Berger, *Bento’s Sketchbook*, 10.

⁴⁷ Tim Ingold, “Drawing Together: Materials, Gestures, Lines”, in *Experiments in Holism: Theory and Practice in Contemporary Anthropology*, eds. Ton Otto and Nils Bubandt (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 299-313. Research in architectural fieldwork engages very much with drawing, however and mainly, through photography. Exceptions include: Anna Grimshaw, *The Architect’s Eye* (Cambridge, CA: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Ana Isabel Afonso, Laszlo Kurti, and Sarah Pink, eds., *Working Images* (London: Routledge, 2004).

⁴⁸ Lesley McFadyen, “Practice Drawing Writing Object”, in *Redrawing Anthropology*, ed. Tim Ingold (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 33-43.

excavation and about tracking the material in the dig. As such, McFadyen, like De Certeau, articulates the possibility of drawings as “something for the future as well as something for the past”⁴⁹.

Diu is a highly mobile place in Gujarat with continually shifting people, and the generic form of the drawings aims to reflect this. Drawings follow and document the objects that comprise these places, highlighting the importance of sites as spaces of care and refuge. Furthermore, drawings are open-ended since another line could be added at any time.⁵⁰ My redrawing process stresses that these drawings are merely one possible interpretation of these sites: an understanding strongly tied to my connections with the site and its inhabitants.

Off-site redrawing, first in Diu, then in Goa, Mumbai, Pondicherry, Tranquebar and Serampore, introduces an additional temporality into the drawing process, interrupting the linearity of the research process. Drawings of the site can be interpreted similarly to fieldwork notes in this sense. Redrawing provides an analytical distance, literally through the displacement to Diu, Goa, Mumbai, Pondicherry, Tranquebar and Serampore and temporally by the redrawing. The technique was not intended to remove oneself from the setting and association with the inhabitants but rather to allow for an analytical spatial understanding of the sites due to the physical and temporal distance. According to Said, this “crossing of boundaries”, both physical and material, provided an alternate method of seeing and hence “telling” about these areas⁵¹.

However, drawing was complementary to writing practice. The illustrations corresponded to precise descriptions of the spaces. While the drawings, by their use of conventions and as black and white works, represented the generic nature of the settings, the writing, on the other hand, emphasised the material and social individuality of these spaces as related by individuals. By investigating subaltern architecture, urbanism, and spatial practices, I am not working within anthropology but developing my thought and analysis through writing and drawing. As previously stated, a fundamental component of these sites’ invisibility is their absence from architectural and spatial archives.

⁴⁹ *Ivi*.

⁵⁰ Ingold, “Drawing Together”.

⁵¹ Said, “Representing the Colonised”, 225.

Conclusion

Drawing and writing about former European colonial sites in India, such as Diu, Bombay, Goa, Daman, Pondicherry, Tranquebar, and Serampore, have been a process of building a fragmentary archive while being aware of the larger context. This is not an objective response but rather a process of extracting meaning from numerous settings, objects, people, and spatial behaviours. Drawings depict marginal sites as complex settings where, despite material lack, they remain vital to their people as places of care and refuge. These representations provide a translation of the active process of ‘speaking to’ populations in these sites and paying close attention to what is happening.

They also contribute to recognising these marginalised, neglected areas and spatial activities as relevant to geographical and spatial studies. In this vein, I propose that the complementary emphasis on drawing and writing as a means of ‘telling’ these sites may offer a plausible response to Said’s critique. As Ingold points out, these representations track not only an observing act but also a memory gesture of the encounter with the environment. As a result, they overtly place me as a researcher in the field by showing my architectural expertise while providing alternate ways of inhabiting the city, pointing to “something for the future”, as McFadyen suggests.⁵²

⁵² McFadyen, “Practice Drawing Writing Object”, 42.