



RAHUL MEHROTRA

Rahul Mehrotra is Professor of Urban Design and Planning and Chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Design, Harvard University, USA. He is a practicing architect, urban designer, and educator. His firm, RMA Architects, was founded in 1990 in Mumbai and has designed and executed projects for clients that include government and non-governmental agencies, corporate as well as private individuals and institutions. RMA Architects has also initiated several unsolicited projects driven by the firm's commitment to advocacy in the city of Mumbai. The firm has designed a software campus for Hewlett Packard in Bangalore, a campus for Magic Bus (a NGO that works with poor children), the restoration of the Chowmahalla Palace in Hyderabad, and with the Taj Mahal Conservation Collaborative, a conservation master plan for the Taj Mahal. The firm is currently working on a social housing project for 100 elephants and their caretakers in Jaipur as well as a corporate office in Hyderabad and several single family houses in different parts of India.

Mehrotra has written and lectured extensively on issues to do with architecture, conservation, and urban planning in Mumbai and India. His writings include coauthoring *Bombay—The Cities Within*, which covers the city's urban history from the 1600s to the present; *Banganga—Sacred Tank*; *Public Places Bombay*; *Anchoring a City Line*, a history of the city's commuter railway; and *Bombay to Mumbai—Changing Perspectives*. He has also coauthored *Conserving an Image Center—The Fort Precinct in Bombay*. Based on this study and its recommendations, the historic Fort area in Mumbai was declared a conservation precinct in 1995—the first such designation in India. His other publications include books on the Victoria Terminus Station, a world heritage site, in Mumbai; on the impact of conservation legislation there; and most recently, on that city's Art Deco buildings. In 2000, he edited a book for the UIA that earmarks the end of the century and is titled *The Architecture of the 20th Century in the South Asian Region*. Mehrotra has also edited the first of the three books that document the 2004 Michigan Debates on Urbanism, and in 2011 wrote *Architecture in India – Since 1990*, which is a reading of contemporary Architecture in India. (see list - http://RMAarchitects.com/content_type/book/).

He has long been actively involved in civic and urban affairs in Mumbai, having served on commissions for the conservation of historic buildings and environmental issues, with various

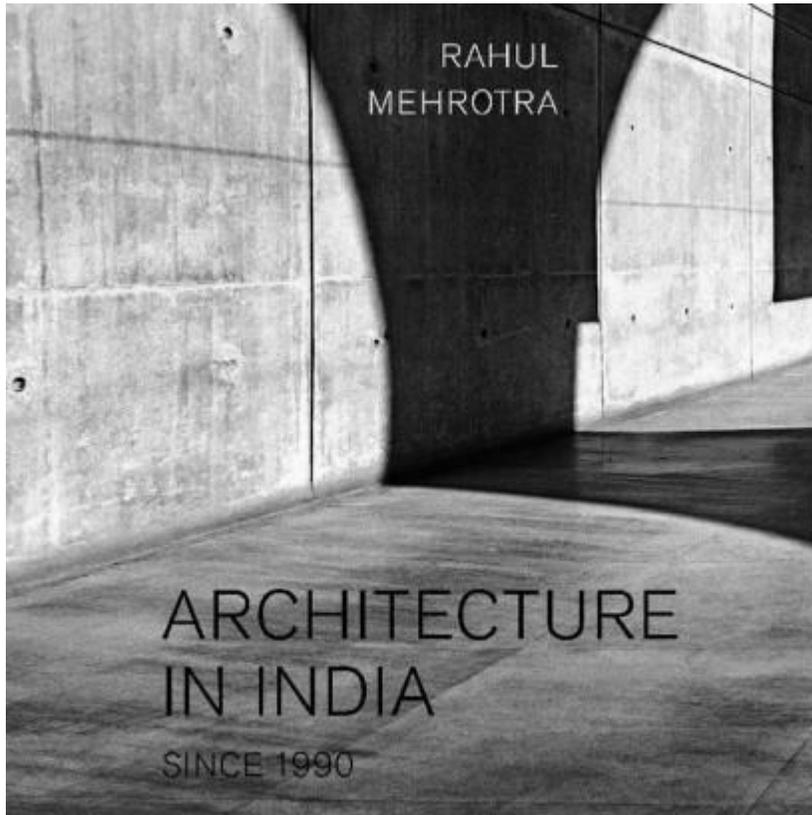
neighborhood groups, and, from 1994 to 2004, as Executive Director of the Urban Design Research Institute. He studied at the School of Architecture, Ahmedabad (CEPT), and graduated with a master's degree with distinction in Urban Design from the GSD. He has taught at the University of Michigan, USA (2003–2007) and at the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at MIT, USA (2007–2010).

His current research involves looking at India's medium size cities and the broader emergent patterns of urbanism in India. Mehrotra's ongoing research is focused on evolving a theoretical framework for designing in conditions of informal growth – what he refers to as the 'Kinetic City'. He has run several studios looking at various aspects of planning questions in the city of Mumbai, under the rubric of "Extreme Urbanism" (see video - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xb63qjz2jzE>).

Mehrotra is a member of the steering committee of the South Asia Initiative at Harvard University, USA, and curates their series on Urbanization. He currently is leading a university wide research project with Professor Diana Eck, called *The Kumbh Mela – Mapping the Ephemeral City*.

Exemplos de livros publicados

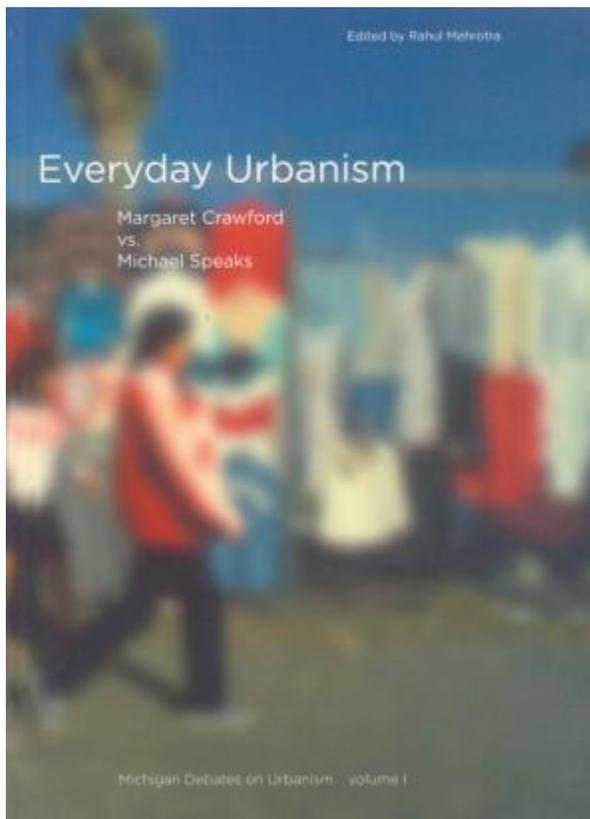
(lista completa em http://RMAarchitects.com/content_type/book/).



Architecture in India since 1990 (2011)

Architecture in India since 1990 charts the complexity of India's contemporary architectural scene over a crucial period marked by economic liberalization and the contradictions, glamour and displacement wrought by globalization. In twenty-first-century India, hybridity, pluralism and fusion reign over singular identities, the resultant architecture mirroring the socio-economic and political fabric of one of the world's largest and most populous nation states.

This study presents four distinct genres of architectural expression and introduces the proponents of each with a bold, incisive text supported by exceptional examples of projects that showcase the disparity and coexistence of multiple approaches. Featuring the work of more than 60 contemporary architects, and lavishly illustrated with over 500 stunning photographs, this book will interest a vast readership of academics, architects and students, as well as exponents of multiple design disciplines and the general reader with an interest in contemporary India.



Everyday Urbanism (2004)

In a series of three debates which led to three books, we explore contemporary urbanism. The first debate and first volume of the trilogy focuses on Everyday Urbanism. Let me try to put it in context.

There is the conventional urbanism that is quickly and randomly changing the face of the American metropolis. Their downtowns are now being transformed by new office towers, sports arenas, convention centers, and shopping / entertainment complexes, as well as the conversion of warehouses to lofts and of old office buildings to hotels. Their peripheries are developing with Greenfield sprawl, while first ring suburbs languish. This development is market driven and laissez-faire; so it is not self-conscious or doctrinaire. Nor is it particularly coordinated or coherent. And, the quality varies widely, often low or mediocre but is sometimes high, as seen in Volume III, where we introduce the term ReUrbanism to describe its best exemplars.

In addition, there are several intentional, more self-conscious urbanisms being practiced, theorized and written about. In my opinion there are three: Everyday urbanism, New Urbanism, and Post Urbanism. There are other urbanisms to be sure, such as landscape Urbanism, but I think that these three cover most of the cutting edge of theoretical and professional activity. All three, I would argue, are inevitable paradigms in the contemporary human situation and necessary models for the evolving metropolis.

Margaret Crawford and John Kaliski popularized and valorized the term Everyday Urbanism with their book of the same title. Everyday Urbanism celebrates and builds on the richness

and vitality of daily life and ordinary reality. It has little pretense about the perfectibility of the built environment. Nor is it about utopian form. But it is idealistic about social equity and citizen participation, especially for disadvantaged populations. It is grass-roots and populist. Everyday Urbanism delights in the spontaneous and indigenous; in the ways that migrant groups, for instance, appropriate and adapt to their ad hoc conditions and marginal spaces. There are the flea markets in parking lots and the garage sales in private driveways and front yards, even drinking fountains for dogs in public parks. The city is shaped more by the forces of everyday life than by formal design and official plans. It champions vernacular architecture in vibrant ethnic neighborhoods, like the barrios of Los Angeles. Everyday Urbanism prefers street murals to fine art, local street vendors to national chain stores, although it is sympathetic to the people who hand out in malls. It is the bottom demographic sector of the economy, a sort of community capitalism without much capital.

The other two debates/books are on New Urbanism and on Post Urbanism and ReUrbanism. New Urbanism is the most civic and idealistic; it can be utopian in its aspirations and claims, maintaining there is a structural relationship between physical form and social behavior. The connection between form and function, however, is not thought to be as strong or as determinant as it was in early Modernism. Good form is considered to be essential but insufficient for good urbanism. The urban model is a compact, mixed use, walkable town or city with a traditional hierarchy of public and private architecture that is street-oriented and conducive to face-to-face encounter and interaction. The architectural hierarchy attempts to run the gamut from quiet, supporting roles for background buildings to prima donna solos for civic and institutional buildings foregrounded in a well-defined public realm.

Post Urbanism is the most heterotopian and least idealistic of the three paradigms. In some sense, it is anti-urban, just as postmodernism was anti-Modern. It is inherently critical, promoting or at least accepting Post structuralist theories of knowledge and new hybrid possibilities and programs. Form is predictably unpredictable. (Although the dominance of figural form and object buildings has morphed into a pre-occupation with pattern and field.) It attempts to wow an increasingly sophisticated clientele and public with provocative and audacious architecture and urbanism.

Zaha Hadid's proposal for Hong Kong or Rem Koolhaas' Eurolille are early, well known examples. Like Modernism, its design language is abstract, with little or no overt reference to surrounding physical or historical context. It is beholden to non-local, exogenous forces, such as international finance, banking, corporate branding and politics. In the case of Koolhaas' junk space, it can be quite cynical.

The three paradigms lead to very different physical outcomes. New Urbanism, with its Latinate clarity and normative order, achieves the most aesthetic unity as it attempts to mix different uses at a human scale in familiar architectural types and styles. However, it can be banal and trite at the architectural scale, accommodating as it is to consumer taste. Its grids of pedestrian-friendly streets look better on the ground than in the air, from which they often

look neo-Baroque in their symmetries. Everyday Urbanism, which is the most adhoc and least driven by aesthetics, is not so concerned about physical beauty or coherence at either the micro or macro scale, but it is egalitarian and lively on the street. Post Urbanist site plans and perspectives look the most exciting, with their fragmented or wavy fractal geometries, bold architecture, and dynamic circulatory systems. But if developed, many would be over-scaled, windswept, and empty of pedestrians. Tourists in rental cars experiencing the environment through their windshields might well prove a better served audience than residents for whom there is limited human-scale nuance and architectural detail to reveal itself over the years. Their reputations also vary widely. Everyday urbanism is seen as community based, race-savvy, bottom-up, unpretentious, and democratic. Post Urbanism is viewed in the academic world and the media as hip, avant-garde, or post avant-gardes. And New Urbanism is generally perceived as civic, traditional, and nostalgic. It is considered boring and uncool in architecture schools, but often respected in urban planning programs and popular with developers, elected officials and the middle class.

These groups represent genuinely different values, sensibilities, and modalities. Each is related to a time and place. What makes sense in North America may not in Western Europe, Asia or other parts of the developing world. It is very unlikely there is one urbanism that fits all peoples, not even all Americans. For instance, Every urbanism may make sense in ethnic communities in Chicago or Los Angeles, New Urbanism in their suburbs, and Post Urbanism and ReUrbanism in their downtowns.

Everyday Urbanism may take deeper root in the mushrooming megacities of Africa, South America, Southeast and South Asia, or the Middle East. New Urbanism is already a factor in the USA, Canada, Australia, England and in some northern European countries. Post Urbanism seems most appropriate when there is enough existing urban fabric to act as a foil, as this modality seems to work best when there is tension between the old and the new. The denser capitals of Europe can best accommodate and absorb these interventions.

Everyday urbanism seems also to make sense in developing countries where global cities are mushrooming with informal squatter settlements that defy government control and planning, and where underserved populations simply want a stake in the economic system and in the city. But does it make as much sense in the traditional cities of Europe, where there is the luxury of fine-tuning mature urban fabric and punctuating it with Post Urbanist projects as counterpoint to the traditional urbanism? In American cities, which lack the continuous fabric of European cities in their sprawling metropolitan areas, does New Urbanism offer the density and mixing of uses they presently lack?

In the ecology of cities, it may be that Everyday Urbanism in the developing world and in neglected American neighborhoods might be likened to early successional growth in a forest. Middle-aged American cities that are thickening their stand with mid-successional growth might need New Urbanist and ReUrbanist projects. And European cities, where there is little room for growth except on the periphery or in urban clearings made for Post Urbanist

interventions, are more like late successional or climax forests.

A healthy ecosystem will simultaneously host the full range of forest types. Likewise, a healthy metropolis may encompass all of these urbanisms, with Everyday Urbanism taking root in informal settlement on the margins. New Urbanism and ReUrbanism infilling the downtown, commercial centers and neighborhoods; and Post urbanism exfoliating in exceptional places like the convention center, entertainment district, the sports arenas, airports, etc. Indeed, this messier cross-section of the metropolis may be more accurate than Andres Duanys Transect. At least it might form the opposite and complementary half of his compelling, if oversimplified, diagram. In any case, a mature metropolis needs and benefits from multiple urbanisms.

These are the kinds of comparisons and questions that the three volumes of the Michigan Debates on Urbanism attempt to refine and explore in greater detail. Although several of the participants questions or disagree with this typology of urbanisms, I hope the taxonomy will be helpful to readers. And I hope the series produces more light than heat on our urban situation and its future.

Videos:

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Vimeo video. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://vimeo.com/37802534>. The Vimeo logo and navigation links (Join, Log In, Create, Watch, Upload) are visible at the top. The video player shows a man with a beard, identified as Rahul Mehrotra, looking out over a cityscape. Below the video, the title "Rahul Mehrotra in South Mumbai" is displayed, along with a description: "Rahul Mehrotra is a practicing architect and urban designer in Mumbai. He is also a professor at Harvard University's GSD, and serves as the Chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Design. He took U-TT on a quick sight-seeing tour of South Mumbai in October of 2010. This short film is a brief look at one of the most highly contested segments of land (and water), in the city, and how it represents both a major planning failure and an exciting opportunity for urban improvement. Mehrotra's expertise and knowledge is unparalleled, and the place description he weaves shines a light on the convoluted history of India's largest city." The system tray at the bottom shows the date and time as 15:46 on 19-04-2013.

The screenshot shows a YouTube video page. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vb63qz2j2E>. The YouTube logo and search bar are at the top. A notification banner at the top reads: "Definimos a sua preferência de idioma automaticamente. Definiemos a sua preferência de idioma para Português. Pode atualizar esta preferência abaixo." The video player shows a man speaking, with the title "Extreme Urbanism 1: Reimagining Mumbai's Back Bay" and the channel name "TheHarvardGSD" (338 videos). The video has 4,164 views and 27 likes. Below the video, the upload date is "Carregado em 16/12/2011" and the description reads: "A Collaborative Studio and Research Project, Spring 2011. Rahul Mehrotra, Chair of Urban Planning and Design at Harvard." A list of related videos is shown on the right, including "Urbanization Seminar Series: Rahul Mehrotra, 'The Future of South Asia'", "The Urbanization Question, or, the Field Formerly Known as Urban", "Sahel Al Hiyari, 'Strict Borders'", "GSD 75th Anniversary - Faculty & Student Pecha Kucha", "TEDxNairobi - Laila Macharia - Sustainable Urban Planning and Real", "My Harvard GSD Studio Critic with Rem Koolhaas (part 2)", "2012 Global Practices in Architecture Lecture Series | Rahul Mehrotra", and "Medical Philology in the 'Second Rome': Ancient Learning & Attack on". The system tray at the bottom shows the date and time as 15:48 on 19-04-2013.