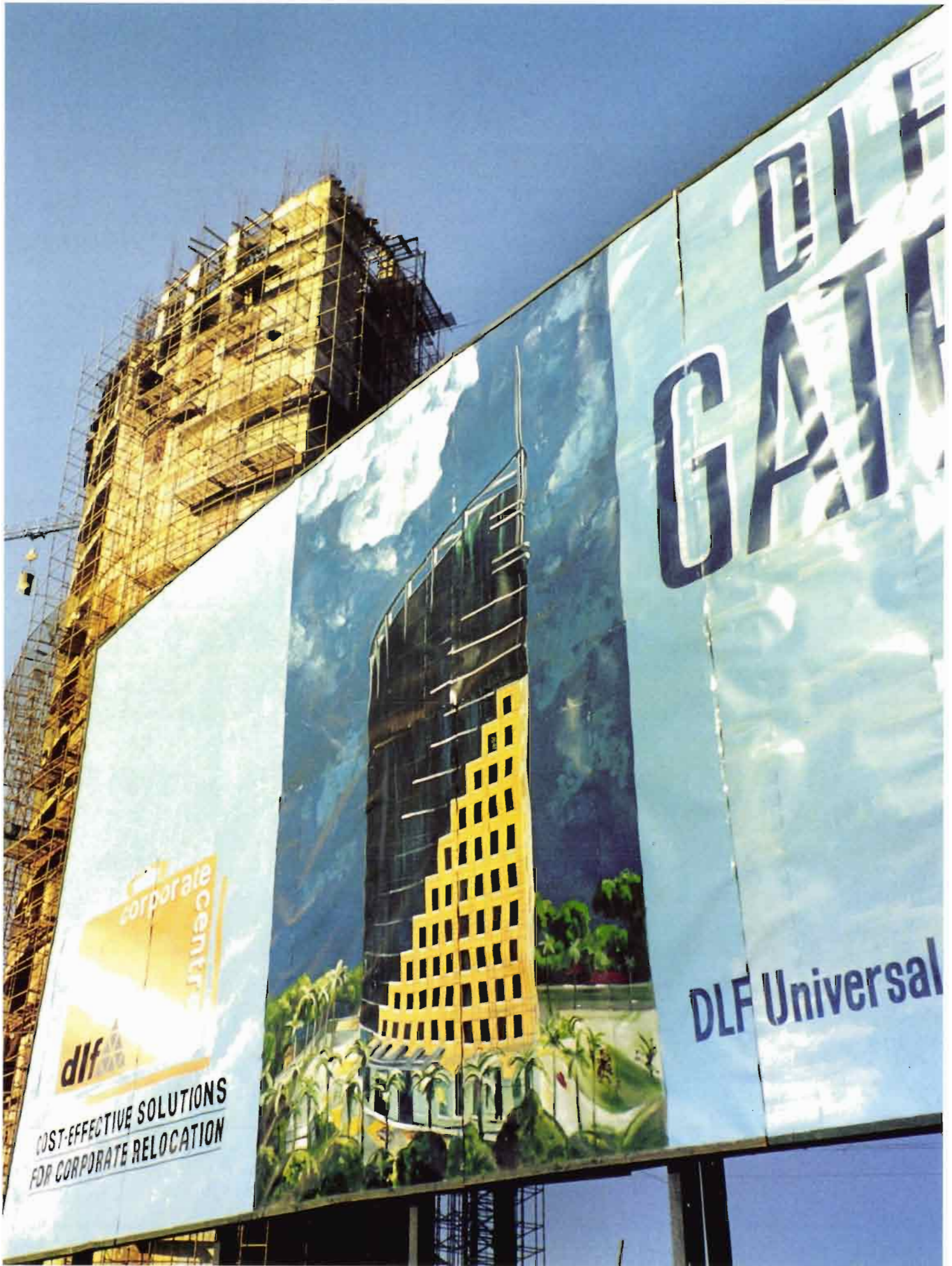


DUPONT VÉRONIQUE. The idea of a new chic Delhi through publicity hype. In : Koshla R. (ed.), *The Idea of Delhi*. Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2005, p. 78-93.



The Idea of a New Chic Delhi through Publicity Hype

The great escape. Get away to a whole new experience.

The Zodiac of your life. A whole new world of gracious living.

At first glance what is the connection between these two promotional slogans? The first, exhorting the reader to make a “great escape” as the start to a “whole new experience”, could be an invitation to travel to a distant and exotic land. The second seems to be addressing believers in astrology – “the Zodiac of your life” – whom “a whole new world of gracious living” awaits, and reads like an invitation to consult a good astrologer. In fact, the true answer lies elsewhere. Both are slogans created by developers of large residential complexes situated on the outskirts of Delhi for the benefit of a wealthy clientele in search of a better quality of life.

The language that the developers of these new “chic” residential “colonies” use, the names given them as part of the sales hype, outline the shape that dream cities will take – a blend of ecological utopia and modernist projections, reveal the fantasies, aspirations, and preoccupations of their potential residents, and uncover the constructions of identity accompanying these projects. Yet, it is necessary to compare the projects with the end result, and the promises conjured up by the words with the reality of the urban spaces thus created.

The neighbourhoods that have come up as a result of the residential deconcentration of the privileged to the outskirts of the Indian capital are only one form of spatial expansion highlighting the process of metropolization that is taking place (Dupont, 2000). These high-standing residential estates contrast with other forms of suburban extension such as illegal colonies that are more frequently observed in Third World cities, including Delhi. As it will be shown, the logic of their foundation and *modus vivendi* contribute to an urban pattern based on social segregation and spatial fragmentation, that also reflects a trend common to the process of metropolization in the developing as well as developed world (Davis, 1990; Navez-Bouchanine, 2002).

Dream Towns: the Language of Promoters of Residential Complexes on the Outskirts of Delhi

The evolution of Delhi and its region fits into a proactive town and country planning policy, initiated in the late 1950s. Within the capital itself, this led to the formulation of an urban land policy in 1961 – the scheme for large-scale acquisition, development, and disposal of land – and to the elaboration of a Master Plan, executed by the Delhi Development

1

The Delhi Land Finance (DLF) company – a leader in promoting the Dream Towns of a new residential Delhi in the outskirts of earlier Delhi. Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.



2
 Tracts of land developed and ready to be built, near Gurgaon. Road traced in an arid landscape.
 Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.

Authority (the central administration created in 1957). Consequently, all lands within the urbanizable limits of Delhi were placed under the control of this administration, hence creating government monopoly both in land acquisition and supply. The Delhi Development Authority further launched various land development and housing programmes, including the construction of blocks of flats and the allotment of plots to private households or cooperative group housing societies, whereas private builders were excluded from the formal land market. This situation has induced some of the bigger private real estate developers to build residential complexes outside the administrative boundaries of the National Capital Territory, in the neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Here building societies can acquire large tracts of land, in keeping with the development plan of the metropolitan area, seeking to favour population deconcentration. The emergence of residential estates in distant rural fringes was allowed by the tremendous increase in private cars,¹ that illustrates the rising of the middle classes in Delhi. These new residential complexes, some in the implementation stage and others still in the project stage, are firstly designed for well-to-do city dwellers, looking for a better life environment. Accordingly, their promoters combine references to nature and modernity in the names chosen for their urban creations and their advertising copy.

Veritable Townships...

These are often presented as independent urban entities, complete with all the requisite amenities and infrastructure. Thus the words *township* and *mini-city* are commonly employed, qualified by adjectives like *self-contained* or *integrated*. To drive home this idea, the word *city* or *town* is added to the name selected for these colonies or residential complexes, as for example: South City, Heritage City, Sentosa City, Malibu Towne, DLF City, etc. The aim of the larger development projects which encompass the whole range of real-estate operations from

constructible plots and individual villas to apartment blocks, is to attain the dimensions of a veritable township. So it is that DLF Qutab Enclave, situated on the outskirts, 23 kilometres from the centre of the capital, boasts of being *Asia's largest private township*. In the Delhi region, it is incontestably the biggest residential complex planned by one single developer (Delhi Land & Finance),² covering an area of 1,000 hectares, with a planned housing capacity of 60,000 units, including 46,000 individual houses. The complex will ultimately provide housing for an estimated 2,70,000 residents (DLF, 1993). In comparison, the biggest projects of rival land developers may be likened to "small" townships. For example, Sushant Lok covers an area of 280 hectares, and Sentosa City had planned 152 hectares for building 7,000 dwelling units.

...in the Countryside...

Despite the enormous scale of certain housing projects, the promoters spare no effort to expunge the urban dimension and play down city life by highlighting the rustic/pastoral and ecological/environmental aspects, giving them names reminiscent of natural spaces (Riverdale, Valley View Estate, Spring Fields, Sunbreeze Apartments, Green Meadows, Neelpadm Kunj – blue lotus pond); of greenery (Greenwoods City, Residence Greens, Charmwood Village, Ridgewood Estate); of trees and flowers (Gulmohar Park, Rosewood City, The Palms, Mayfield Gardens, Oakwood Estate); or simply calm and quiet (Sushant Lok – peaceful world, Royal Retreat). Even when the name of the residential complex does not directly evoke nature, this reference is a quasi-constant feature of the publicity and sales spiel handed out by the promoters, with certain recurring key words: *open space, nature, air, green, clean and healthy environment*, in opposition to the words and woes associated with Delhi: pollution, noise, traffic jams. The two biggest real estate developers have thus directly integrated into their slogan or logo expressions such as: *The most environment friendly*

3
Hoarding for Sushant Lok (Ansal Group), "The greenest township south of Delhi", in a particularly arid natural environment. Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.



township (the DLF group for its Outab Enclave project) or *The greenest township south of Delhi* (the Ansal group for its Sushant Lok complex). Advertisements combine idyllic images and lyrical expressions in order to touch the environmental sensibility of the urbanites, tired of the pollution and congestion of Delhi. There is no dearth of examples:

. Royal Retreat: *The enchanting burst of profuse greens.... This amazing cluster of natural bounty....* (Eros Group).

. Farmlands: *Dream of a child ... air as pure as nature, trees and gardens, with a thousand birds singing* (Ansal Group).

. Sushant Gardens: *Where life nestles in vast green expanses. Broken only by a beautiful landscaped garden. Bringing with it the long forgotten chirping of birds and humming of bees. Glorious sunshine filtering into your home. Warming your life. Clean, fresh air for healthy, good living* (Ansal Group).

The illustrations, designs, photographs, logos, or even the choice of colours and typeface reinforce the images suggested by the words. The references to ecological and naturalistic utopias were used in a similar manner in the publicity campaigns in Western countries like France of the 1960s and '70s to promote residential projects outside the cities, the new townships and the "new villages" (Brun, 1985).

4
Hoarding in DLF Outab Enclave,
Phase I: Valley View Estate.
Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.





...Modern and Futurist...

The return to nature, “take the cities to the countryside” – as the 19th-century French writer Alphonse Allais had recommended long ago, does not signify the rejection of modernity. Quite the contrary. Modernist and futurist ideology constitutes the second major referent of promotion campaigns of the new suburban residential complexes. Taking advantage of the timing, this tenet in the late '90s was often associated with the metaphor of entry into the third millennium. These references were explicit in slogans such as: *DLF Qutab Enclave – Modern times, Sun City: Metropolis for the next millennium*,³ or referred to in advertisements:

- . *At Ansals, we don't just stay in step with the times – we like to stay ahead of the times!*
- . *DLF Qutab Enclave: It's here. Your opportunity to get into Phase V. The phase of the future!*
- . *Ardee City: We have made plans for the next millennium. Have you? Step into the next millennium with an accommodation that is only 15 minutes drive from Indira Gandhi International Airport, New Delhi.*⁴

The modernity argument is also used in the specifications of infrastructure and amenities provided by the developers, often in superlative terms: in DLF Regency Park the infrastructure is *the most modern*, in Rosewood City the commercial complex is *ultra modern*, in Green Meadows the space is *scientifically* planned. As for the business centres that generally come up in the vicinity of new residential districts – as part of integrated township projects and not mere dormitory towns – they are also resolutely turned towards the future: *The Gateway Tower: The place for your future, Millennium Plaza: 21st century corporate park*.

In the context of a developing country like India, the notion of modernity is also implicit in certain geographical referents. First is the reference to the American model, but references to other industrialized or newly industrialized countries, or to international standards, are also highlighted in the descriptions of building and apartment blocks.

5

Gateway Tower under construction in DLF City, Phase III. Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.

6

Abandoned mosque near DLF Corporate Park, Mehrauli–Gurgaon Road. Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.





7

Hoarding for Sun City: "Metropolis for the next millennium", in a "future environmental zone coming up", still rather desertlike. Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.

...Imported from the United States, England, and Elsewhere...

The use of foreign toponyms for new housing colonies and residential complexes is frequent: some incorporate names of North American towns and districts (Malibu Towne, Riverdale, Manhattan Apartmansions, Beverly Park, Sun City, Sterling Apartments), English towns (Windsor, Richmond), Canadian (Kingston), Australian (Hamilton Court, Wellington Estate, Clifton Apartments), and even from Singapore (Sentosa City, A mini-Singapore in India). More than a mere geographical referent, often it is also a social referent signifying status and prestige. For the potential buyer who would not have grasped this double referent, the sales talk is generally quite explicit, as the following *advertisements* perfectly illustrate:

. Malibu Condominiums: *American-Style Luxury Apartments.*

. Malibu Towne: *Planned and developed by ex-NRI Californian.*

American suburban ambience. Malibu Towne has been designed to include cul-de-sacs and extensively landscaped to create the ambience of a typical lush green American housing development.

. Sagar Estate's Riverdale: *America – East of Delhi: Citizenship opens today.*

Today we are laying the foundation of a New America, east of Delhi.

The all-America condominium style of life now comes to India....

Riverdale is planned and designed by the Canada-based architect, Ramesh Khosla....

Citizenship is open today to all who like to live in America. ...this condominium captures the spirit of liberty like no other.

Luxury and comfort, till now only seen west of the Atlantic. Now, east of Delhi.

The objective here is to sell the American model as a package, guaranteed, moreover, by the architects who live or have lived in North America; the sort of habitat where everything is American in spirit, atmosphere, type, and style, from the organization of the external spaces and buildings, to the services and equipment provided, the shopping centre, interior design and comfort of the apartments, and even the bathtubs! The builders of these residential complexes "à l'américaine" however, have distorted the reference model. Thus the typical lush green terrains found in the Californian city of Malibu, and more generally in Los Angeles, have individual villas with gardens – symbolizing the ideal lifestyle so dear to the Americans (Ghorra-Gobin, 1993) – or small-sized jointly-owned buildings, not more than three storeys high. Much more rare are the fifteen-storey high-rise residential blocks situated in a wooded park, as the model of Malibu Towne shows!

The English style with its old-world charm is also back in fashion:

.Rosewood City: *The luxurious English style township.*

This township will bring back memories of the splendid old world charm of England with scores of bungalows on 115 acres of land.... The club will have distinct British features with a swimming pool, tennis courts and gymnasium for you to relax and unwind.

Such publicity is primarily directed at Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who want to invest in their home country or are planning to return home one day or another, and who need to be reassured that accommodation and comfort of international standards, such as they are accustomed to, is available in India. This also illustrates how international migration has helped to diffuse architectural standards. Certain housing projects even go to the extent of separating the buildings reserved for the NRIs from the others, thus creating a new form of residential segregation: *Sentosa City will also have exclusive condominium clusters for NRIs with penthouses.* Promoters are able to reach potential clients residing abroad by renting sites on the Internet and participating in international exhibitions.

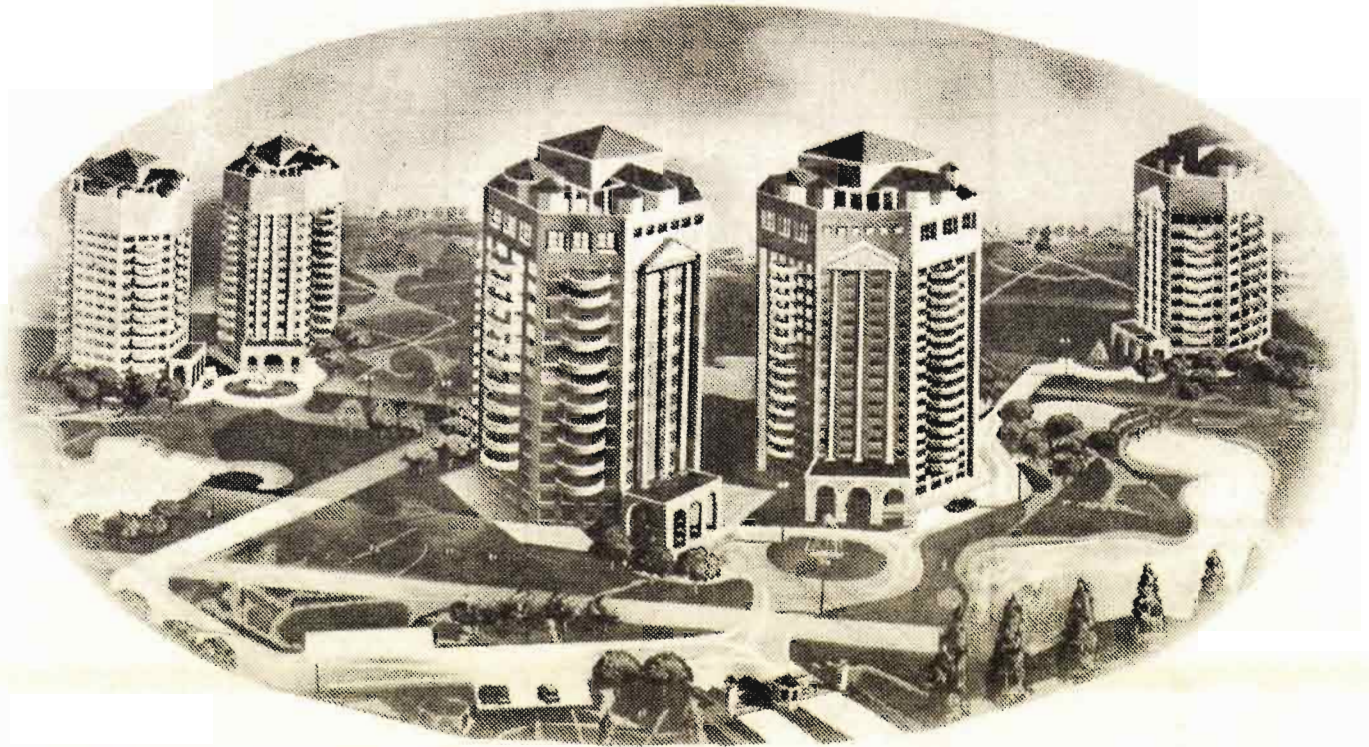
8 *opposite*

The model of Malibu Towne, newspaper advertisement, January 1995.



MALIBU CONDOMINIUMS

American-Style Luxury Apartments



Planned and developed by ex-NRI Californian

American Suburban Ambience Malibu Towne has been designed to include cul-de-sacs and extensively landscaped to create the ambience of a typical lush green American housing development. With openness and freshness one would love to breathe!

The condominium complex itself has water lagoons, fountains, downs and meadows, and is surrounded by jogging, walking and cycling trails amidst a forest environment.

The condominiums also have uniquely controlled and breathtakingly beautiful surroundings.

Maximum – security colony • Entire colony behind the gates and fully-fenced. • Restricted entry into the colony • Condominium-complex doubly-secure with world-class security devices, electronic locks and CCTV!
• Mobile patrol cars equipped with the latest communications devices and linked with a central communication system.

Facilities • Preferential membership in Malibu Country Club across the road
• American-style shopping complex also across the road. • Nursery, Primary and High Schools within the colony • Playground for children within the complex itself • Convenience store within the complex. • Pubs and restaurants.
• Theatre actively operational for cultural activities. • Meadows golf club just 2 kms. away. • 'Fireball' disco within 5 minutes drive!

World-Class Design and Conveniences • Entrance lobby is embellished with granite flooring and spectacular atrium! • High-speed super-efficient elevators. • Garbage chutes on each floor • Laundromat in the basement.
• Underground parking for each apartment. • Standby generator for all common services. • American-style bathtub and shower sliding glass panels. • Marble in foyer, drawing room, dining room, family-room, kitchen and bathroom; granite counters in bathrooms and kitchen. • Built-in bedroom wardrobes and walk-in closets.

Convenient payment plans

Malibu Plan

- The Full Payment plan allows an attractive discount
- The 3-year payment plans is interest-free

CITIHOME
Home loans from Citibank
The 5 to 15 year Citihome Plan make your apartment/property purchase more convenient than ever before!



MALIBU TOWNE

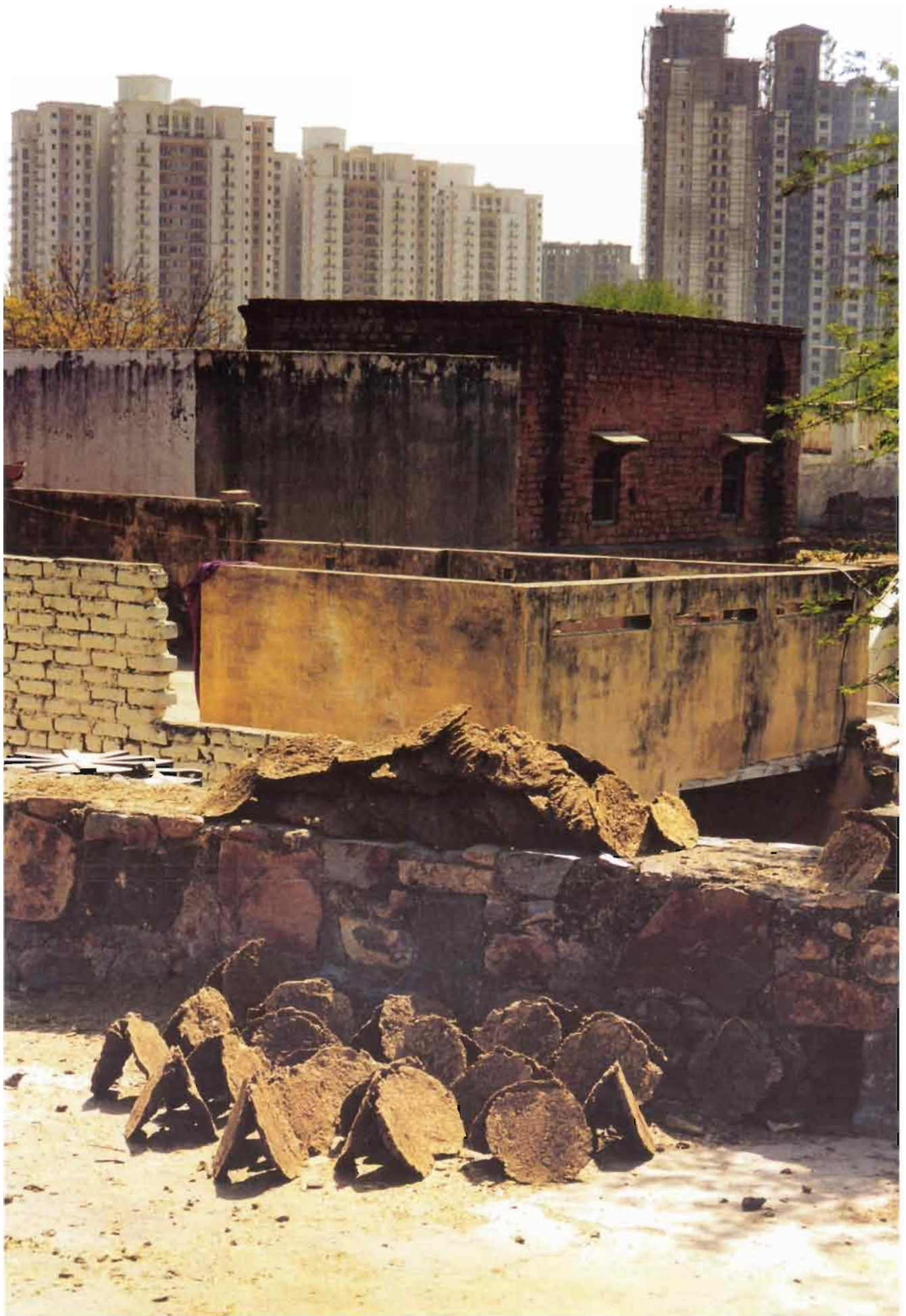
Govt. approved
freehold residential
township

Condominium
construction
started

Call Sales Office: 1001, Ambadeep, 14, Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi-110 001. Ph.: 3329414, 3721852

Corporate Office: MALIBU HOUSE, 38 DDA, Commercial Complex, Kailash Colony Extension, New Delhi-110 048. Ph.: 6431573, 6419969. Telex: 031-70105 UKPI IN. Fax: 91-11-6447864

DMS/MT/5



...Reserved for an Elite...

Besides the toponyms reminiscent of American or English urban lifestyles, their reputation conferring distinction and status to the residence and thereby to the residents, other names for residential complexes have been selected from words which are symbolic of prestige and elitism. There are names that evoke royalty: Royal Medici, Royal Retreat with its set of apartments The Kings, The Queens, The Princes; others evoke high office: Regency Park with its set of apartments Chancellor, Diplomat, Senator; or precious metals: Platinum, Golden Heights; and luxury sports: Golf Links. The specifications of sites, apartments, infrastructure and services, leisure time activities (exclusive club, swimming pool, tennis courts, golf course, etc.) reinforce the image of luxury, excellence, and class. The epitome of luxury, Hotel Oasis, situated in the vicinity of residential complexes that have come up south of the Territory of Delhi, envisages building a heliport in order to provide a shuttle service for its clients and golfers between the hotel and the international airport! There are also instances when elitism is openly advertised. The publicity brochures of Royal Retreat refer to its *elite residents*, Rosewood City presents itself as an *elitist colony*, and Golf Links as a complex of *residential colonies for the elite*, while Ansals-Anushruti promises *a distinctive neighbourhood of elite homes*, and the promoters of Kant Enclave wax lyrical: *And soon Delhi's most elite neighbourhood will unveil in all its grace. And you the chosen ones will acquire possession of Delhi's most sought after property.*

9 opposite

Cowdung cakes drying on a terrace, village enclave in a concrete jungle of high-rise buildings (Chakarpur village). Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.



UNITECH
Better Life. Better Value.

PRESENTING

RESIDENCY GREENS

ONE EXCLUSIVE RESIDENCE PER FLOOR

Live in a city
where traffic jams are
a pure delight.

Residency Greens will pamper you with the rare luxury of a home spread over an entire floor. Ideally located in Greenwood City, these homes offer you all the privileges that everyone living in this minicity will enjoy:

BOOKINGS OPEN		
Plot area	Size of unit	Accommodation
200 sq. mt.	1145 sq. ft.	Living/Dining/Lobby/ 2 Bedrooms/Study
240 sq. mt.	1382 sq. ft.	Living/Dining/ 3 Bedrooms

PRICE: Rs.10.99 LACS UPWARDS (Down payment cost)
Escalation-free prices

* Loans at the sole discretion of ANZ Grindlays Bank.

- No highrises in entire minicity, enhancing feeling of openness.
- Located on 200 ft. sector road and broad avenues.
- Landscaped parks already in place. Several thousand trees planted.
- 70% built-up units, thus accelerating pace of development.
- Designed around the unique 'cluster' concept for added security.
- More and more families moving into Greenwood's every day.

FINANCING: The highest available housing loan (up to 85%*) by ANZ Grindlays. *Interest charged on daily reducing balance basis.

- Special offer - part loan for booking amount, also.



ANZ Grindlays Bank
Ph: 3721435, 3320147, 64268610, 6465432



Pioneer Profin Limited



GREENWOODS CITY

For details, contact: Unitech House, 27, Community Centre, Saket, New Delhi - 110017. Ph: 6857331, 6854550, 6965169. Fax: 6857338. Site Office - Ph: 91-380304, 351849. Branch Office: 612, Anand Bhawan, Kasturba Gandhi Marg, New Delhi. Ph: 3711839, 3326192. Telefax: 3718050.

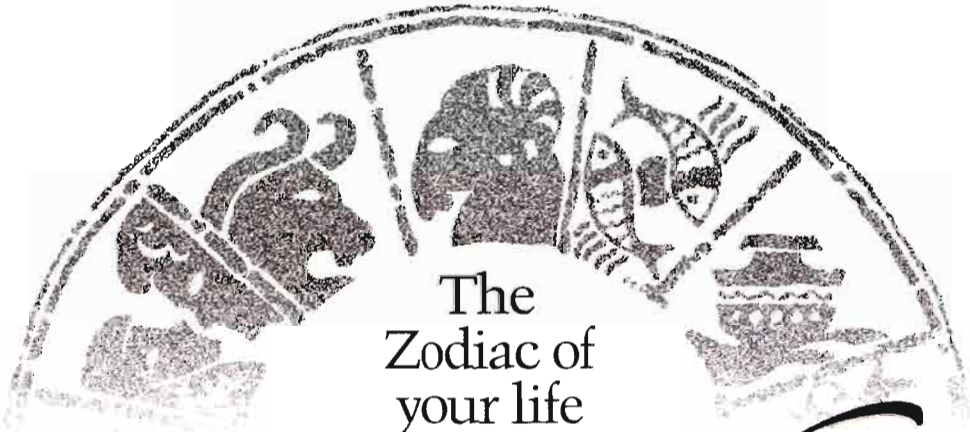
10 Greenwood City, newspaper advertisement, March 1999.

...Indian nevertheless?

The names given to the new residential complexes, the slogans and publicity hype of their promoters, are enough to make us forget the geographical and cultural context of their development: Delhi, capital of India! The signs of Indian-ness are rather rare, and in the case of Manhattan Apartmansions they have deliberately been expunged, for its promoters unashamedly proclaim: *The only Indian thing about them is their address*. In the universe of Greenwood City, the residents shot for publicity photos in joyful familial picnics or outing scenes have definitely abandoned all Indian sartorial habits. Very few names refer to any Hindi or Sanskrit terms: Sushant Lok, Anushruti, Neelpadm Kunj, and Gulmohar Park. A single Indian toponym was noted: Kanchanjunga, after a Himalayan mountain; a sole allusion to one of Delhi's more well-known historical monuments was recorded: DLF Qutab Enclave, referring to the Qutb Minar, the famous minaret built at the end of the 12th century on Delhi's southern periphery, relatively close to the DLF residential complex. The slogans have practically no Hindi words or endogenous cultural references, in fact, only two cases have been identified where promoters have borrowed from the register of "tradition".

The first example is from a hoarding in which the cultural referent to Indian classical music has been combined with a rustic image: *Morning Raga at DLF* is illustrated by the picture of a cock crowing. The second, an advertisement spread over two whole pages of a national daily, is a remarkable blend of references to the modern cosmopolitan city with endogenous architectural traditions. Sentosa City firstly projects itself as a "mini-Singapore in India", a futurist city illustrated by the picture of a group of brilliantly lit skyscrapers,

11
Sentosa City, doublespread
newspaper advertisement,
December 1996.



The
Zodiac of
your life

SENTOSA CITY

A whole new world of gracious living

The graphic features a semi-circular arch containing stylized zodiac signs: a bull, a lion, a scorpion, a goat, a fish, and a crab. Below the arch, the text 'The Zodiac of your life' is centered. The main title 'SENTOSA CITY' is written in a large, elegant, black serif font. Below the title, the tagline 'A whole new world of gracious living' is written in a smaller, black serif font.



conceived according to international standards and equipped with the most modern facilities. But this city of the future also advertises itself as the *Zodiac of your life*, built according to the *vastu* principles, as set down in this ancient science on architecture:

Vastu approved: The entire city is conceived on the auspicious circle of the zodiac, and appropriately its residential condominiums are named after the various signs of the zodiac. Residents of each condominium are assured of protection against all evils by the star it is named after. Our cosmic consultant Mr Rajesh Rya made a critical "vastu" assessment and ensured that lady luck smiles on its residents from the moment they step into Sentosa City.

The first group of buildings in the new city is thus named *Sentosa Capricorn*:

. Sentosa Capricorn: Born today under the sign of the Capricorn we have proved an ancient science right.

The 10th sign of the Zodiac Capricorn stands for power and authority, brilliance and innovation, makes rapid headway and assures success. Sentosa Capricorn is perfectly positioned to achieve this.

The finality of the message could also be the conclusion of its content analysis: *Reality beyond imagination.*⁵

A careful reading of the sales pitch also reveals other signs of the Indian city, not the traditional city but the metro city of today, with its everyday problems: *24 hour water and power supply*. Could this ever be used as a sales gambit in the European or American urban context? Probably not, such trivial commodities would not be considered worth mentioning in an advertisement, and even less so where posh residential complexes are concerned. On the other hand, constant electricity cuts and water shortage, that are a serious handicap for Delhi's residents, make the regular and guaranteed supply of these two basic services a rare luxury, necessitating their mention in a publicity brochure. As for details on the caretaking facilities offered, they highlight the growing security phobia of Delhi's well-to-do citizens. This is a concern common to other large metropolises of the world, and reflects the glaring inequalities in the economic conditions and habitats of the different sections of urban society.



12
DLF City Phase V: hoarding on the Mehrauli–Gurgaon Road, near Sikandapur village. Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.

13

On the left-hand side of the wall, nature reconstituted: a park landscaped in DLF Qutab Enclave Phase III. On the right-hand side, the adjoining village of Nathupur: fallow land in its natural condition. Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.



The proximity of the Indra Gandhi International Airport, a factor which is systematically emphasized by promoters of all new residential complexes situated on the rural fringes south of the Territory of Delhi, is also a reminder of the geographic context. But this reminder is ambiguous: is it a simple indicator of location? or is the message also meant to convey the international dimension, an easily accessible gateway to foreign countries?

From the Project Stage to the Realization Stage: a Disillusioned Lot of Residents

Do these new high-class neighbourhoods, these futurist and ecological residential complexes, fulfil the promises made in the advertisements? Does reality conform to the dreams conjured by the words?

A simple visit to the rural fringes undergoing urbanization in south Delhi, where many of the residential complexes are to be found, is sufficient to sow some doubt. The parks and green areas marked in the site plan are an essential component of the proposed lifestyle, the ecological and environmental alternatives advanced by the promoters, whereas the natural environment here is arid, the vegetation very poor with vast stretches of denuded land; no oaks (a species in any case alien to the local plant habitat), no palm trees, no hawthorn bushes, no forests, no lush green prairies.... As for the parks and plantations laid out by the developers, they are very unequally developed depending on the different residential complexes and the age of the plantation; in certain zones, the tree cover is at best very sparse.

To listen to the residents' complaints on these new satellite townships, through interviews conducted in the DLF Qutab Enclave or from shared experiences in newspaper articles, it seems that the utilities and services announced are often still inadequate and at times even absent several years after the first residents moved in. In other residential complexes, all the promised hallmarks of elegance and luxury have remained on paper. The poor quality of the finish in no way corresponds to the proclaimed international norms, and no vegetation worth the name greens the outer areas of the buildings.

Attractive hoardings, enticing advertisements, exaggerated language...a complete dupe: classic violations and sales strategies that mark publicity campaigns the world over! The question is whether the sales talk should be interpreted as a straightforward publicity gambit, or also as an answer to the real needs and desires of urbanites.

In this context, the example of DLF Qutab Enclave has many lessons to offer. As shown by the investigation conducted in this vast residential complex, property ownership is the principal motive quoted by the inhabitants to explain their change of domicile within the metropolitan area of Delhi. For these new property owners, the choice of residence is firstly a matter of financial consideration, the cost of plots or dwelling units being more affordable here than in the capital, where the shortage of constructible land for development is acute. In particular, despite the inflationary prices of land and housing in DLF Qutab Enclave, the prices are definitely lower than those commanded in south Delhi, a zone much sought after by the rich because of the social status that it confers on its residents. The prestige and status attached to the new residential complexes render them an attractive alternative for the middle and upper classes.

However, the environmental considerations advanced by promoters in their publicity campaigns are also present. Thus the search for a better quality of life and more space are reasons often cited by the residents, particularly amongst those who had lived in Delhi earlier (and represent a large majority group). No doubt, this new localization means longer distances to the work place but this inconvenience is compensated for by the prospect of a more peaceful and less polluted environment than if they lived in the city proper. For those who were already owners of a house or an apartment in the capital, these comparative advantages constitute the principal reason for the new acquisition. The environmental factor can also be a major consideration for the richer, who can afford to invest in real estate in south Delhi, but choose to settle in DLF Qutab Enclave, which they believe offers a better quality of life. In addition, the environmental factor has played a crucial role in families deciding to leave Delhi and settle permanently in the new locality. Despite complaints about the inadequate utilities and services in their present residential complex, they in no way envisage returning to a more central – but perforce a more congested – part of the capital.

14
Luxurious villas in DLF Qutab Enclave Phase I, on Gurgaon-Faridabad Marg. Photograph: Surendra S. Rajan 1995.



15
Façade of luxurious villas in
DLF Qutab Enclave Phase II.
Photograph: Ruchir Joshi 1999.



If economic reasons predominate in the choice of a decentralized residence, environmental awareness and considerations of status are also present. These themes, fully exploited in promotional campaigns, seem also to correspond to the expectations of well-off urbanites, tired of an alienating urban environment.

Conclusion

The vocabulary of the private promoters, with their very positivist and ambitious tone, their symbolic and evocative names and lyrical descriptions, project the new residential complexes as fully independent and modern urban entities, yet in a bucolic environment. Environmental referents, the “hygienist” utopias (clean air and nature), are part of quasi-universal recurrent arguments, lauding the merits of urban decentralization. References to modernity – implicitly conveying that this modernity is not obvious in the geo-cultural context in question, and, in a related register, the reference to the American model, seem more specific to the context of a developing country. The large Indian community residing abroad, especially in the United States, constituting a potential clientele for real-estate investments in the home country, probably inspires promoters of residential complexes on the outskirts of the Indian capital to multiply the symbols of a habitat and lifestyle imported from the West.⁶

Identity-related constructions concurrent with the promotion of these residential projects for the well-to-do also reflect a phenomenon of greater socio-spatial fragmentation. The search for selectivity and elitism, conveyed by these names, the descriptions and sales hype so typical of this trade, reflect the glaring divide between rich and poor in the great metropolises of the Third World, and reinforce a tendency towards ghettoization with the former seeking to “protect themselves” from the latter.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This text is partially based on my paper written in French, “Les nouveaux quartiers chics de Delhi. Langage publicitaire et réalités périurbaines”, in H. Rivière d’Arc (ed.), *Nommer les nouveaux territoires urbains*, Paris, UNESCO/Maison des Sciences de l’Homme, 2001, pp. 39–61.

NOTES

1. In 1995, the number of registered cars in Delhi reached 5,75,762, which was more than the aggregated number of registered cars in Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai altogether (source of data: *Motor Transport Statistics of India*, 1996, Transport Research Wing, Ministry of Surface Transport, Government of India, New Delhi).
2. DLF had already been a prime land developer of Delhi in the 1950s, with several residential colonies to its credit, including Model Town, Greater Kailash, South Extension, etc.
3. Slogan recorded in 1999.
4. Slogan recorded in 1999.
5. Eventually, the heavily advertised Sentosa City project did not come up, as the Ghaziabad Development Authority cancelled the agreement with the project's developer in 1997.
6. As part of his research project on "The spaces of transnational cultures", A. King (2002) shows that, although "the international advertising and marketing of substantial 'Western-style' suburban residential property has...increasingly become a form of globalized practice", the existence of a large NRI diaspora "gives the new suburban phenomenon [around Indian metropolitan cities]...distinctive characteristics"; in particular "it helps to explain the culturally distinctive visual, spatial, typological, architectural, and naming practices of new suburban development" (pp. 79–80).

SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND DATA

Advertisements in the Delhi edition of the mainline English dailies (mostly *The Times of India* and *The Pioneer*) from end-1993 to mid-1998 as well as press reviews, with partial updating till 2002.

Publicity hoardings observed in the Delhi region from end-1993 to mid-1998 with a renewed visit in March–April 1999.

Publicity brochures prepared by the promoters for distribution to potential buyers, as well as their official reports.

Websites of four major real estate developers operating in the Delhi region (Eros Group, Delhi Land Finance, Ansals, Mittals Property), each group presenting a number of its development operations and projects.

This writer's migration survey conducted in DLF Qutab Enclave in 1995, covering a representative sample of 164 households, completed with in-depth interviews by Mriga Sidhu in 1997.

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