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A Relative Study of Contemporary Residential Landscape Architecture: From the Local to the Global Aspect

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Abstract

The location of residential quarters has a deep connection with the pattern of everyday life. It is not always significant for social activities; however, it is the main component in city planning. Along with the improvement of the society and economy, the landscape of residences is likewise changing. This paper aims to discuss the planning strategies of residential landscape from a socio-technical perspective. A diverse approach was implemented for collecting data due to the uncertain situation around the world because of COVID19 including personal archival data, LDA authority, building regulations, research articles and interviews. The variables adapted for the current research are: drift from outdoor spaces to indoor spaces, orientation of design and spatial layout and practices diffusion. The study suggests that the dynamics of space and practices can normalize the unsustainable arrangements rooted in social organizations. The increased consumption of electrical appliances and specification of spaces has changed the culture into an unsuitable indoor layout planning and has neglected the use of outdoor areas in contemporary societies. This study can help to bring the implementation of house planning into a broader perspective globally as there is a comparison drawn between the local and international landscaped signing by a renowned landscape architect "Geoffrey Bawa".

Keywords: architecture, contemporary and landscape, open spaces, orientation, residential planning

Background

'Shelter' is a basic human necessity. For human beings, it is the most significant living component. Therefore, human development has a strong link with the improvement of residential regions (Ye, [2009](#)). Urban

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residential spaces also have a vital role in the field of urban landscape design. When people come home after a busy day at work, residential areas act as a natural harbour where people can live, worship, work, and entertain themselves. Gradually with time, the standard of living for urban residents rose drastically. They require more than just comfortable residential areas and desire a luxury gated community. Urban residents demand comfort, luxury, and privacy since they spend more than half or two-third part of a day in their residential areas. For this reason, the demand for better environmental landscape designs and planning systems has increased. The increase in demand is also the result of people seeking better facilities that cater to their mental, physical, and spiritual needs. It is suggested that residential landscapes in outdoor areas are given more attention (Hammadi, [2017](#)).

This research aimed to analyze and compare the current landscape designing approach of residential houses in different regions/cities of Pakistan. Through this study, suggestions are given to improve the quality of landscapes and sites that have an existing natural habitat. One sample analyzed in this study was the famous residential project of Geoffrey Bawa, an influential Asian architect, who utilized the approach where climate and landscape blended with modern architecture. He employed the principle of ‘Tropical Modernism’ in combination with the principles of modernism in his design movement (Kunkel, [2019](#).) His creations blur the boundaries between indoor and outdoor spaces and also play with the spacing and lighting of an area. (*Geoffrey Bawa – Essence of Sri Lanka | A+u Architecture and Urbanism Magazine*, n.d.) Bawa’s architectural practice was based on specific aspects of architectural design. When starting a project, he respected a site’s surrounding context and fused vernacular architecture with modern concepts. The flow of spaces, forms of the roof, and water bodies were also essential elements in his architectural practice. Most of his projects were in Sri Lanka due to his background that’s why he had the sensibility towards the essence of Sri Lanka with modern practice which made him unique in his style. (*Geoffrey Bawa: The Father of Sri Lankan Architecture*, n.d.)

Methodology

A diverse method approach was implemented for assembling the data

because the paper was written during the peak of the COVID'19 Pandemic. It was unable to approach the data directly. Most of the theoretical data was obtained through research articles and web links that were available online. House plans were obtained through a personal archival (office). Five of the projects that are discussed below in the comparison section were designed by my own firm, which is why there is a variation in size and designing concepts. All five projects were visited and photographed. Families were interviewed to obtain data for the analytical part.

Next, data was compiled to help in configuring the spatial understanding of the houses easily. Through the compilation, we were able to know how the house was being used. Afterwards, a qualitative method was used to observe and analyze the houses. Each house used in this case study was observed to determine its daily household practices, routines, and furnishing placement.

Results and Analysis

First, two houses were carefully studied and analyzed. One of the local houses was situated between two empty plots, which had wild natural plantations and trees that could not be demolished. To blend in the house with the surroundings, the architect tried to develop a rough landscape on the lawn that made the area look more congested. However, if one was standing in the middle of the lawn, then the design of the landscape looked well-balanced. There was ample space where one could sit and enjoy the serenity of nature. There was a triangular edge that can be seen on the mezzanine floor of the drawing room. It separated the lawn space from the porch. The drawing room's window opens in the centre of the lawn making the room well-lit in the daytime. It also allowed the residents to keep an eye on the outdoor spaces.

The plants placed outside the lounge window (below drawing room) were so huge that they blocked the window view. They also obstructed sunlight and the flow of wind in the lounge. These plants had a significant impact on biodiversity since under these wild plant's, cats had made their home. They came here whenever they wanted to sleep since it was a safe refuge from other animals and the climate. Similarly, there was a hidden nook for birds near the window sill where birds could eat food, drink water,

and rest during the daytime. The patio located at the centre of the house made the entire house lighten up during the daytime. Furthermore, at sunrise, the whole house could listen to the bird's chirp since the patio connected both the ground and first floor. One issue noticed during the site visit was that there was no direct sunlight falling on the lawn area due to its placement. For this reason, the lawn grass couldn't grow properly at all times of the year. In summers, this could prove beneficial for people because of the climate in Pakistan, but in winters the space had low temperatures that were not favorable for plantation growth.

Figure 1

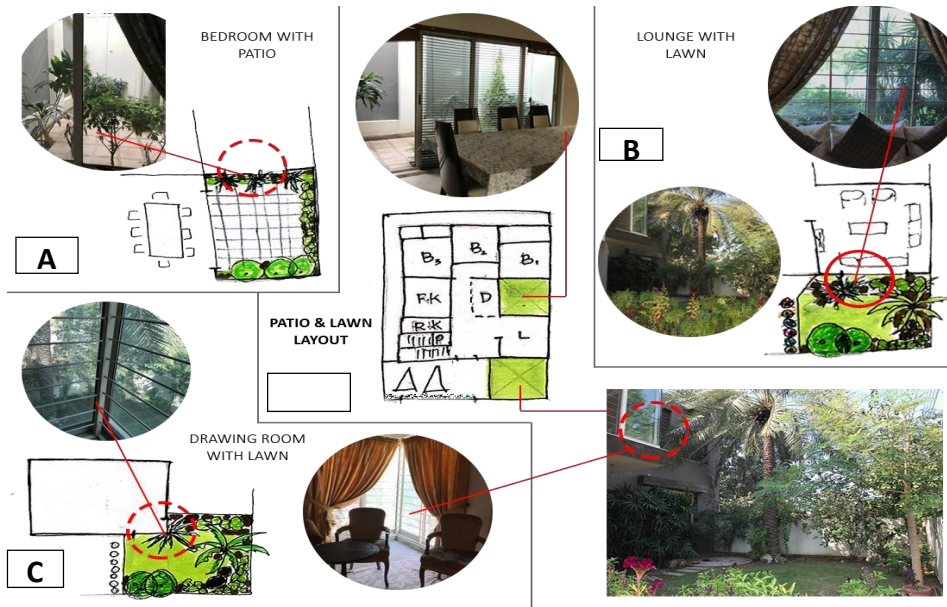
House -1Landscape



The second local house that was analyzed was a 10 marla house located in Lahore, which was constructed for commercial selling. Its design was planned to serve the same purpose causing it to stand out from its surroundings. The front lawn of the house showed potential and could be transformed into a well-designed outdoor space. The front lawn was being used for parking but the family who owns this house wanted to make it a lawn. There was just one window in this area so during daytime it provided sunlight directly to the lounge. There was no other natural light source or patio on the ground floor.

Figure 2

Landscape Options in The House at Various Levels



During the survey, it was witnessed that there were two trees next to the house where many birds could be seen and heard. Unfortunately, there was no area in the house where birds or animals could interact with the landscape. The occupants of the house were using the boundary wall to feed and water the birds that were using the trees as a shade. Thus, the habitat could be incorporated into the lawn space. As mentioned above, this house requires a lawn. Although it has been made for commercial selling, in today's day and age, landscapes are a requirement for families that come to buy a house.

Keeping in mind the above mentioned points, a proposed sketch is drawn to show the transformation of the paved parking space into a lawn having a paved area. The area where the swing was placed is drawn to have a 6" raised paved area that can be used for sitting and placing the swing. Whereas, rest of the area can be used as a lawn with different plantations.

Figure 3

House -2 Space Treated for the Front Lawn

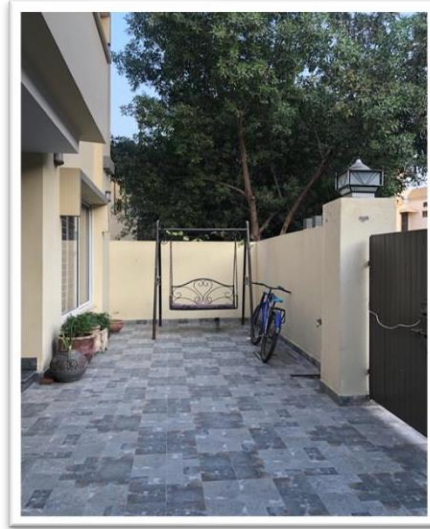
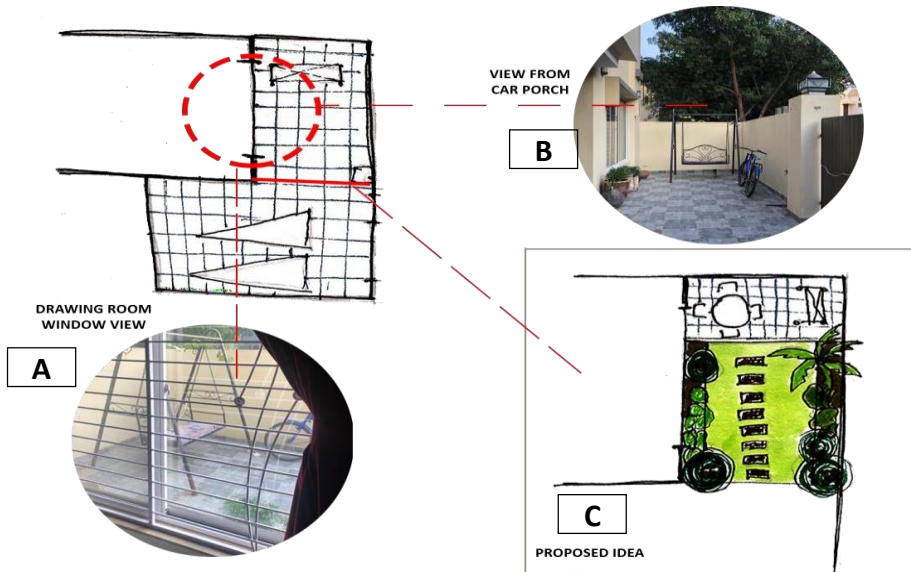


Figure 4

Landscape Options in the 10 Marla House at Various Levels



The third house analyzed in this study was a 5 Kanal house located in Faisalabad, it was made to be a farmhouse. They built residence only on 2 Kanal land, and the rest of the land was used for landscaping purposes such as lawn and the paved areas. One interesting aspect of this project was that all the indoor spaces were connected to the outdoor spaces through the use of huge windows, which provided an outdoor view, ventilation, and sunlight to the indoor space. The concept behind such landscaping is to have ample space for huge gatherings or private events in the lawn area. This planning generated the shady areas that were not being utilized for sitting in the daytime. Similarly, looking into the sketch and pictures of the pool and barbeque area, it can be seen that they were not located in a secluded space and anyone standing in the outdoor lawn space could easily view that space. Due to unplanned and haphazard landscaping, the space was less attractive. Furthermore, proper plantation or pavement was not used, which showed a disconnection between the landscape and the natural flora and fauna.

Figure 5

House -3 the Front Lawn



Figure 6*Landscape Options in the 5 Kanal House at Various Levels*

The fourth house analyzed in this study was a big farmhouse, whose area was approximately 16 Kanal. It was located in Faisalabad. The layout of this house equally distributed the land into open and built areas. Architects planned the house in such a way that there were three house units; one house was in the centre (parents' house), and the other two houses (children house) were located on the left and right of the parent's house. Common outdoor space was shared between the three houses as can be seen in the sketch below. Taking a closer look at the design layout, it can be seen that they had extensively planned the indoor and outdoor spaces, both of which makes were found to be aesthetically appealing. This beautifully designed outdoor space was not just for the benefit of humans, but for the birds, animals and insects could find comfort in the space as well. They had pre-defined spaces for animals and birds to eat, sleep, and rest. During the visit, it was seen especially in the 'Bara-dari' area that special areas were constructed for birds. Similarly, cats could enjoy their separate space under

the camouflage of the plantation. Beautiful butterflies were sitting on the flowering plants making the ambience very eco-friendly. Conversely, the front lawn was occupying a lot of area and was not being used to its full potential. Generally, outdoor spaces in such houses are built to have privacy and avoid direct sunlight. In the absence of shady trees that provides the privacy, this space is used just for enhancing the beauty of the house.

Figure 7

House -4 the Front Lawn



The fifth house analyzed in this study was an 8 Kanal house located in Faisalabad. It had the same concept as the previous project and equally distributed land into indoor and outdoor spaces. The three units were sharing a lawn. The difference lies in the planning and designing of the landscape. Rather than planning the outdoor spaces/lawns, they were left unattended. Connectivity could be seen in spaces through curvilinear pathways which were running along with the houses and the lawns. There were beautiful plantations in the negative areas between the house and the pavement. It was also noted that taking a stroll in this area makes one feel closer to nature.. These walkways were so long that the family members

hardly took a stroll on them. They preferred to take a shorter route rather than walk on this pathway.

Figure 8

Landscape Options in the 16 Kanal Farmhouse at Various Levels



Along these pavements, there were small corner spaces created for birds and animals so they could interact with plants or rest under the trees. While taking a walk, one could see and hear a lot of birds chirping and cats enjoying the food and the space for themselves. Although the central designed lawn space turned out to be useless since it lacked a sitting space, gazebos, and shaded area, which could be used by servants or visitors for sitting. The house's design was appealing at first glance, but through a closer look, it could be seen that humans and animals could not interact and live harmoniously in such spaces.

Figure 9

House -4 Entrance Driveway



Figure 10

Landscape Options in the 8 Kanal Farm House at Various Levels



The sixth house analyzed in this study was the iconic Geoffery Bawa House (33rd Lane) constructed on four plots which he transformed into one single mansion. The site overall shape turned out to be rectangular (50 to 52 feet wide and 120 feet deep). (*33rd Lane / Archnet*, n.d.) This house carries great influence from Sri-Lankan architecture tradition, which often uses elements like; deep verandahs, crafted artefacts, the closeness of outdoor spaces in indoor spaces, antique wooden columns, and small interior gardens. He used materials that gave a certain architectural impression to the viewer such as; white cement floors, white plastered walls, and ceilings showing diverse styles and periods. (*GEOFFREY BAWA – 33RD LANE HOUSE – The Archi Blog*, n.d.). Residential houses 4 and 5 had huge areas but somehow the surroundings did not merge well with the architectural design of the houses. There was a lack of connectivity that can be seen in Bawa's house. If the same architectural concept could be used in houses 4 and 5's design then their space and landscape could have looked refined. Bawa had constructed many verandahs and courtyards in this house, each one was directly interlinked with the interior spaces without defining any boundaries. So, rather than making built areas and open areas separately, they have been merged together so they are faithful to Bawa's style of architecture.

The seventh house analyzed in this study was A.S.H. DE SILVA HOUSE, it was made for a doctor who wanted to have his house and surgery unit constructed together on a steep sloping site. (*Geoffrey Bawa Trust*, n.d.) He employed a 'chequerboard system' to link pavilions that trapped small gardens and courts in his house. He redesigned the colonial bungalow and made informal pathways to connect the gardens with the courts. At the foot of the incline sits the doctor's counselling room, it is connected to an open loggia that is used as a patient sitting area. It is connected to the house by the means of a long flight of stairs. The stairway leads the guest up to the very heart of the house. On plan, the house fundamentally seems to be a basic square shape that is built around a focal patio. However, guest area segment separated the upper room wing from the lower living zone. (Geoffrey Bawa, [1996](#)) A different wing containing the kitchens, kitchen courts, and the worker's rooms –runs southwards from the living region along with the parameters of the site. Toward the north of the site, another structure contained an independent level for the doctor's sister. (Geoffrey

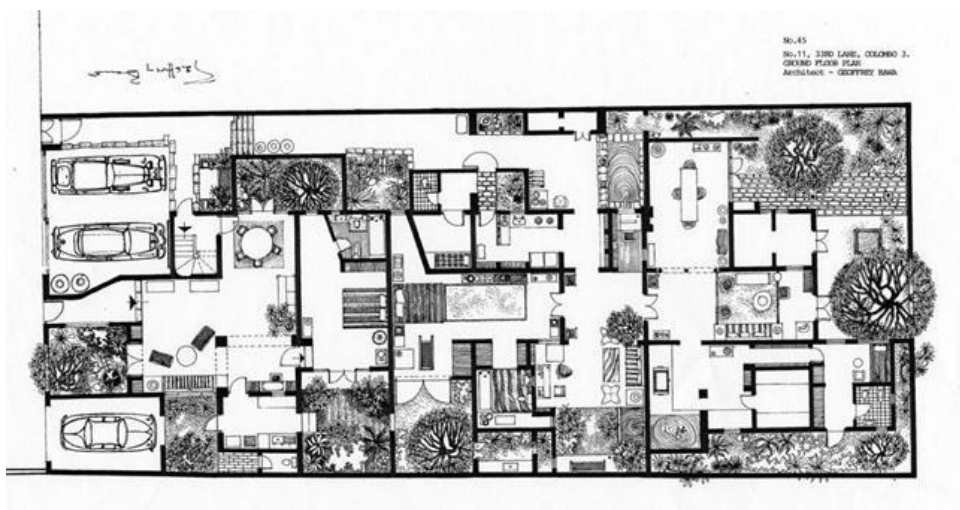
Bawa, [1996](#)) The house is built to have active social gathering sites. The inner spaces gradually merged into the garden centre, which connected the inner space with the surrounding greenery. The arrangement of the house components and their impression on the incline through the construction of open yards and gardens worked well together. Every room had cross-ventilation or ventilated through a stack effect(*Geoffrey Bawa Trust, n.d.*).

However, through observation, houses 1, 2 and 3 have very few ways through which they could be designed to merge with the landscape. In House 1, the patio is placed at one corner of the floor, however, if it could be centrally located around the rooms and lounge then the space could be utilized more meaningfully. Whereas House 3 had dedicated areas for outdoor activities but they did not merge with the landscape in the built area. The house was on one side and greenery was located on the other side. In the case of this house, it is recommended that the spaces should be merged like in Bawa's house so there is a centrally located pool. This planning would maintain privacy at the pool area and keep the other spaces private from the pool as well.

Figure 11

Landscape Options of the Ash. De Silva House at Various Levels

Source: (33rd Lane | Archnet, n.d.)



Conclusion

Landscape designers have become increasingly interested in the improvement of residential projects. Since surroundings have an impact on human beings living in residential areas, therefore, developing pleasant surroundings remains a communal goal. It is essential that residential surroundings are improved since humans are greatly affected by them. Therefore, developing a suitable and pleasant surroundings in a residential area becomes a communal goal. As residential areas also include places for residents' activities, the quality of residential landscapes have a great impact on people's lives and their activities. Thus, landscape architects must create plans that cater to people's physical and mental needs. In this paper, common issues in the development of residential areas were discussed. One such issue was the planning of landscapes in residential houses, which was determined to be not sustainable and eco-friendly. At the same time, some concepts and classifications related to residential areas and landscapes were put forward. Additionally, a comparative analysis was drawn between the local and international planning and designing concepts of landscaping. Based on the planning theory and development model, some methods and principles were utilized to analyze residential landscapes. Based on the analysis of selected cases, the "Methods and Principles of Landscape" provides useful information that can be helpful in designing better landscape for projects in the future.

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