Modern Architecture as an Agency of Political Competition: The Case of Iran and Pakistan

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Introduction

Jacques Rancière in *Dis-agreement Politics and Philosophy*, states that "[Politics] is the art of the local and singular construction of cases of universality."[1] In his approach, politics is essentially defined as the adaptation of local values to the universal, rationalist project of political modernity. This local adaptation – itself implying a political position – shows many varieties throughout history. From the 1950' onwards, this is certainly true for the Middle East, where such adaptations occurred as an either direct or indirect effect of the American interest to support traditional political regimes, while encouraging them towards moderate reforms.[2]

Centuries of British rule in the Middle East brought about a cultural dualism in which traditional and Western values prevailed over the private and public spheres respectively.[3] However, the end of World War Two was accompanied by the overthrow of British power and the emergence of postcolonial states in the region. These newly independent states became centers of developmentalism.[4] This policy provided the new regimes with the opportunity to confront and redefine universal and local notions of modernity, modernization, tradition and/or the traditional. To present the image of these regimes as a "theatre of progress,"[5] politics also took center stage in the architectural and urban planning discussions.

This paper focuses on the cases of Iran and Pakistan, two countries where architecture was employed as a means of mediating or debating political ideas. The hypothesis is that building modern architecture does not necessarily envisage modernity as a political project. Both countries imported architectural modernism but maintained political traditionalism on various levels. As we shall see, this is partly because traditional cultures experienced the process of modernization as a promotion of values that challenged the implicit political order. This hypothesis will be tested by addressing the relationship between modern architecture and modernity as a socio-political project in Iran and Pakistan. We shall focus on the role of a few indigenous figures, like Kamran Diba (born 1937) and Yasmeen Lari (born 1941), whose built projects should not be considered as a rejection or an uncritical acceptance of Western influence, but rather as contributing to the

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1 Jacques Rancière, *Dis-agreement Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 139.

2 April R. Summitt, "For a White Revolution: John F. Kennedy and The Shah of Iran," *Middle East Journal* 58 (2004), 574.

3 Kamil Khan Mumtaz, "Architecture After Independence," in *Architecture in Pakistan*, ed. Judith Shaw (Singapore: Concept Media Pte Ltd, 1985), 160.

4 Ahmed Zaib Khan Mahsud, "Rethinking Doxiadis' Ekistical Urbanism," *Positions* 1 (2010).

5 "Theater of progress" introduced by Rem Koolhaas, in *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*. See Gjoko Muratovski, "Urban Branding: The Politics of Architecture," *Design Principles & Practices* 6 (2013): 47.

creation of "a non-Western modernity."[6] Rather than a top-down modernization imposing a new modernist architecture, these architects tried to bring socio-cultural change in the way that citizens would occupy these new dwellings and city centers.[7] In fact, they tried to let some of the content of modernity sink in the modern forms of the cities, while their projects extended into the "subconscious of the society."[8] The cases demonstrate how architecture shifts between the macro-level of politics and the micro-level or everyday life and thereby reflects the repressed tensions of a changing society.

An intricate relationship

Pakistan and Iran are not only close to each other geographically, but are also related by strong historical, cultural and religious ties that go back many centuries.[9] These relationships strengthened particularly after the separation of Pakistan from India, in 1947, and the recognition of its independence by Iran.[10] Three years later, in 1950, Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, the Shah of Iran (1941 – 1979), visited Pakistan in order to strengthen the cooperation on the economic and political level, and subsequently, the two countries signed a treaty of friendship that caused a long-term bilateral agreement. Due to this initial positive gesture, their border was called a "border of peace and friendship."[11] Throughout the years, Pakistan-Iran relations have maintained a steady undertone of cooperation and cordiality on both regional and global level.[12] In this context, Rana – the director of Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) – pointed out the position of Alex Vatanka[13] who argued that "[o]n paper, Iran and Pakistan are engaged in a number of efforts designed to further political and economic integration. There is, however, relatively very little to show for all of this – and depth in the relationship is still missing".[14]

The friendly diplomatic relationship had wider geopolitical impacts, when both Pakistan and Iran aligned themselves with the United Stated in order to gain the superpower's favor and support. From the American point of view, these regimes were considered "pillars of stability"[15] in the region. In order to integrate Iran and Pakistan into the Western capitalist economy, the American foreign policy provided these countries with ideas, commodities, and technologies. This diplomacy was also directed against the Soviet Russian intention to gain control over the region. Douglas Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court asserted that "we [the U.S.] will write their [Iranian] history instead of letting Soviet Russia do it."[16] The United States' struggle to keep Iran from Communism led to the 1953 *coup d'état* that also convinced the Shah of Iran to strengthen his political base with American support. Accordingly, from 1960 onwards, the Shah called his monarchy constitutional and, in 1963, implemented a socio-economic reform called the White Revolution. "The realization came to me," argued Muhammad Reza Shah, "that Iran needed a deep and fundamental revolution that could, at the same time, put an end to all the social

6 Pamela Karimi, "Dwelling, Dispute and the Space of Modern Iran," in *Governing by Design. Architecture, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Dianne Harris **(**Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2012).

7 Ibid.

8 Saeid Khaghani, "The Political Unconscious," *Architecture Research* 7 (2017), 50.

9 Zahir Shah et al, "Pak-Iran Relations: New Dynamics and Prospects," *J.Appl. Environ. Biol. Sci.* 5 (2015), 66.

10 Mumtaz, "After Independence," 160.

11 Shah et al, "Pak-Iran Relations," 66.

12 Ibid., 67.

13 Alex Vatanka is a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington. His book is entitled "Iran and Pakistan: Security, Diplomacy and American Influence."

14 Muhammad Amir Rana, "Iran and Pakistan intertwined History," https://www.dawn.com/news/1272879, last accessed May 11, 2018.

15 Summitt, "White Revolution," 574.

16 Pamela Karimi, *Domesticity and Consumer Culture in Iran: Interior Revolutions of the Modern Era* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 88.

inequalities and all the factors which caused injustice, tyranny and exploitation."[17] This top-down reform was perceived as a national contract between the Shah and the people, a situation that was similar to the American Bill of Rights.[18] Accordingly, both Kennedy and Johnson accepted the Shah as a democratic ally and supported him financially. Although his authority in Iran was unquestioned, the Shah increased his control with their consistent support.[19]

The Iranian *coup d'état* was followed by the overthrow of the Pakistani government in 1958. Ayub Khan (1958 – 1969), a politician and military leader, was elected President the following year. He advocated a representative system which was called "Strong Democracy."[20] Ayub Khan's message to the West was clear. He told the U.S. Congress in 1961 that Pakistan must receive their aid because "If there is real trouble, there is no other country in Asia on whom you will be able to count…Our aim always was and always has been and always shall be to have representative institutions."[21] Thus, the U.S. and Pakistan relationship in those years was also one of "mutual interdependence."[22]

The modernization and implementation of American ideals through economic changes also produced modifications of urban environments, new urban structures and new building typologies. Since the partition and the rise in immigration from the subcontinent in 1947, Pakistan, funded by the United States to save their large migrant and refugee population from the communist influence, realized the necessity of the urban transformation. This was the main point of concern for Costantinos A. Doxiadis – the Greek modernist architect-planner who, at that time, was in charge of Pakistani urban reforms.[23] Indeed, his new approach to urban planning marked a shift in the process of development from a colonial to a postcolonial status. It disclosed the hybrid conditions in which new regimes were encouraged to modernize, while preserving their traditions through Regional Planning. Doxiadis redefined the modernist city in developing countries as "world-city" and called it *Ecumenopolis*: "[g]lobal conception with local expression."[24] This approach fully convinced the Ayub government and brought Doxiadis the commission to design the new capital of Pakistan, Islamabad.[25] According to Daechsel, it was an American institution, the Ford Foundation, that recommended Doxiadis to Pakistan and paid for his expenses. The foundation was quite active in Pakistan where it promoted American political interests, and the Greek Doxiadis was pro-American.[26]

In Iran, after the 1953 *coup d'état*, the Plan Organization, a semi-independent agency, was established. In 1958, the organization used 60% of the oil revenues, but also, it extensively borrowed from the World Bank and the U.S. Development Loan Fund. Doxiadis was one of the Western consultants who worked at this organization. As Madanipour noted, the agency was considered "not only as a government within a government, but largely as a foreign government as well".[27] Doxiadis' first visit to Iran occurred in 1957. He subsequently returned there many times in order to participate in large-scale urban and housing projects. Doxiadis' main Iranian partner

17 James A. Bill, "Modernization and Reform from Above: The Case of Iran," *Journal of Politics* 32 (1970): 31.

18 Ardeshir Hafezi, "Reza Pahlavi's White Revolution," http://www.payvand.com/news/03/jun/1107.html, last accessed May 12, 2018.

19 Summitt, "White Revolution," 573.

20 Sarah Ksiazek, "Architectural Culture in The Fifties: Louis Kahn and The National Assembly Complex in Dhaka," *Journal of The Society of Architectural Historians* 52 (1993), 428.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 M. Ijlal Muzaffar, "Boundary Games: Ecochard, Doxiadis and the Refugee Housing Projects under Military Rule in Pakistan, 1953-1959," in *Governing by Design. Architecture, Economy and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Dianne Harris (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 2012).

24 Mahsud, "Rethinking Doxiadis."

25 Muzaffar, "Boundary Games."

26 Markus Daechsel, *Islamabad and the Politics of International Development in Pakistan* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 163-164.

27 Ali Madanipour, "The Limits of Scientific Planning: Doxiadis And the Tehran Action Plan," *Planning Perspectives* 25 (2010): 488.

was the architectural firm EMCO. Most projects, such as the 1972 Action Plan of the capital – Tehran – were first commissioned to EMCO; they were then assigned directly to Doxiadis.[28] The settlement subsequently provided a new opportunity for modernization. In this way, modernization happened because private individuals were allowed to enter the market economy and act as cultural agents of change, the Third World being thus integrated into the global market economy.[29] This raised oppositions. In 1962 the Iranian leftist writer and social critic Jalal Al-e-Ahmad, in his book titled *Occidentosis*, criticized this as a 'A Plague from the West': "We are all like strangers to ourselves, ...in our homes…and, most dangerously, in our culture."[30] According to him, "U.S. agents" like Doxiadis believed that postcolonial cultures could be kept in a transitory status, being integrated into the free market, while delaying their entry into democratic politics; the citizens would become consumers and celebrate a kind of "soft modernization."[31]

To counterweight, in both countries, the argument of "Cultural Authenticity" was applied by some Western-trained local architects as an antidote both to the "Western capitalist basis of the Pahlavi regime"[32] and to the policies of Pakistani government.

The representation of American ideals in architectural policies of Pakistan and Iran

Early on after having come to power in 1958, Ayub Khan decided to move the capital and call it Islamabad (the city of Islam). The intention was to create a modern city with a traditional identity, essentially a model for the entire region.[33] However, modernist architects, like Yasmeen Lari, were in total disagreement with this political intention that was intended to redefine the "true Islam."[34] Since "common denominators" could hardly be found in the various Muslim cultures, these architects strongly opposed both the label of Islamic architecture and its implementation as one holistic culture; they considered this as a support of imperialism.[35] Whereas Ayub Khan saw the isolation of the bureaucracy in the capital as a means to control the country, Doxiadis perceived it as a means to control the city. As Hull observed, Doxiadis divided the new city into areas for bureaucracy, the military and the civilian population, and this urban fabric was meant to express the new social order.[36] At the same time, his strict grid-iron plan seemed to respect the Islamic tradition because it was "based on pure geometry."[37]

The most significant building in Islamabad was the Parliament. The first design for the Parliament building was attempted in 1962. Few projects were presented, like Arne Jacobsen's uncompromising modern design that was criticized for not being national enough. The assignment demanded a building that "will have to be carefully designed to reflect our past culture, at the same time utilizing modern methods of construction".[38] The Ayub government subsequently asked for "parodies of the past"[39] by adding some Islamic features like arches and domes. Jacobsen was replaced by Louis Kahn who, in his turn, was later also relieved of his

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28 Ibid., 490.

29 Muzaffar, "Boundary Games."

30 Karimi, "Dwelling."

31 Muzaffar, "Boundary Games."

32 Nigel Westbrook, "The Regionalist Debate in the Context of the 1970s Architectural Forums in Iran," *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 31 (2014), 393.

33 Mumtaz, "After Independence," 184.

34 Talinn Grigor, *Building Iran: Modernism, Architecture and National Heritage under the Pahlavi Monarchs* (New York: Periscope, 2009), 164.

35 Kamil Khan Mumtaz, "The Islamic Debate: Architecture in Pakistan," In *Mimar 19: Architecture in Development*, ed. Hasan-Uddin Khan (Singapore: Concept Media Ltd., 1986), 41.

36 Mattew Hull, "Uncivil Politics and the Appropriation of Planning in Islamabad," in *Crisis and Beyond: Reevaluating Pakistan,* ed. Naveeda Khan (London: Routledge, 2009), 446-447.

37 Mumtaz, "After Independence," 188.

38 Ibid., 187.

39 Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1988), 22.

Fig. 1: Louis Kahn, Dhaka master plan (1962 – 1974)

assignment. His project was criticized as incapable "to modify the design so as to reflect Pakistan's desire to introduce Islamic architecture in Islamabad's public buildings."[40]

Nevertheless, the official institutions that finally found the situation ready for the direct American intervention commissioned Kahn to design a second capital at Dhaka (1962-1974). During his first visit to Pakistan in 1963, Kahn found out that the commission was politically motivated. Vale quoted Kahn saying: "President Ayub Khan told us that there was unrest in East Pakistan and he wanted to start with the construction of the citadel before the elections in the fall."[41] The second capital city at Dhaka was to be only the legislative capital, the seat of the National Assembly. The principal seat of the Ayub government was to be located in Islamabad.[42] In Kahn's view, Dhaka was some kind of apotheosis of his search for a new kind of modernism that transforms monumentality and links it to the cultural authenticity of the context. (Fig. 1) This monumentality made it possible to reconcile structural rationalism with the post-war economy.[43] Kahn was seeking to increase public participation in society, as he wrote in a note late of the same year 1963: "This is a new capital in a new country… [It] must be indicative of a new way of life".[44] Kahn held the modernist belief that the architect should be a social activist and the client's wishes should match the architect's ideals. In designing the National Assembly's form and concept, Kahn took the conditions of democracy for granted. However, only deliberate action can construct these democratic ideals, and Kahn, overlooking Ayub's authoritarian practices (of which he must have been well aware), seemed to accept his client's ambition of "creating a new democracy."[45]

After Pakistan, Iran was the last country where Kahn was asked to design a building of national significance. However, Kahn's commission for the new Urban Center in Tehran was not his first

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40 Mumtaz, "After Independence," 187.

41 Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture Power and National Identity* (London: Yale University Press, 1992), 245.

42 Ibid.

43 Dung Ngo, ed., *Louis I. Kahn: Conversation with Students* (Texas: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 82.

44 Sarah Williams Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn's Situated Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 162, 166.

45 Ibid.,166.

engagement with the architectural culture of Iran. In 1970 he took part, among other famous guests, in the International Congress of Architects in Iran. During this Congress, Kahn described tradition as a quality and a sense of validity that differed from traditional, as a transitional status.[46] Local architects were influenced by this spiritual reading of tradition, "Traditions are just mounds of golden dust, not circumstance, not the shapes."[47] For Kahn, in terms of quality, tradition related to monumentality. Some of his contemporaries, like Sigfried Giedion (1888 – 1968), believed that monumentality was eroding because of capitalist democracy. Kahn, however, sought a modernist definition of monumentality through an emphasis on the quality in architecture.[48] Still discussing monumentality, and through linking civic and public spaces with housing and city planning, he believed that the social housing reform would also find its symbolic equivalent in a new monumentality. Accordingly, he wrote that "this generation is looking forward to its duty and its benefit to build for the masses with its problems of housing and health, the nation has adopted the beginnings of social reform."[49] Furthermore, some of the CIAM and Team X members, who were also present at this conference, claimed that the debates on regionalism during the fifties and the sixties must undoubtedly be reviewed in other contexts, like Iran in the seventies.[50] What Kahn and other figures described as spiritual qualities, regionalism, etc., can also be seen as a support for the Shah's politically motivated pseudo-regionalist (traditionalist) architecture.[51] Nevertheless, efforts were made to sabotage the real concerns of Kahn about democracy in the region. For example, during a seminar on Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World in 1978 Jaquelin T. Robertson, who was commissioned after Kahn to redesign the same project of the new Urban Center in Tehran, criticized Kahn's former design as a case of

"…hired intellectual guns who move about the world from one country to another giving counsel, doing quick studies, relying on accumulated knowledge… and too often only on intuition…Yes, mercenaries, without uniforms or guns, but potentially just as lethal. In this [new] plan everything we advocate has been tested and proven successful in use elsewhere… important projects like this should not be a guinea pig for planner's fancies."[52]

Tehran's new center is the most prominent example of how Kahn's modernist monumentality and regionalism doctrine was misused by the Pahlavi regime. This city center supported the regime's claim of internationalization of (local) politics, embellishing it with the past. And these are exactly "ready-mades,"[53] namely, global solutions that were formerly proposed by Doxiadis in the 1972 Tehran Action Plan. Consequently, we will try to highlight the different motivations of the regime underlying the pseudo-regionalism and the Critical Regionalism that was presented by some local architects as an antidote.

The late Pahlavi regime or how the improved Iran meant to become America

In Iran, after the Pahlavi White Revolution, new planning ideas were meant to be applied to Tehran.[54] The authorities commissioned the American Urban planner Victor Gruen to provide the Tehran Comprehensive Plan (TCP). In 1962, the Iranian government was invited to visit the new capital sites of Islamabad and Dhaka and subsequently implemented the TCP.[55] The

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46 Farshid Emami, "Civic Visions, National Politics, and International Designs: Three Proposals for a New Urban Center in Tehran (1966-1976)" (Master diss., MIT, 2011).

47 Ibid.

48 Williams Goldhagen, *Louis Kahn,* 27, 29.

49 Ibid., 30.

50 Westbrook, "The Regionalist," 386-387.

51 Emami, "Civic Visions."

52 Jaquelin T. Robertson, "Shahestan Pahlavi: Steps Toward A New Iranian Center" (paper presented at the seminar for the series Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, Gouvieux, France, April, 1978).

53 Madanipour, "Scientific Planning," 485.

54 Ali Madanipour, *Tehran: The Making of a Metropolis* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 207.

55 Daechsel, *Islamabad*, 174.

fact that the two projects echoed each other suggests a kind of rivalry between Iran and Pakistan, which until then occurred behind closed doors.[56] Between 1963 and 1967, Gruen (the founder of the shopping mall) developed the TCP together with the Iranian architect Abdol Aziz Farman-Farmaian. As Madanipour pointed out, the TCP identified some problems in the city, such as high congestion in the city center, and the continuous migration of low-income groups to Tehran. They argued for the modification of "the city's physical, social, and economic fabric."[57] The future plan expanded the city towards the west and curbed the concentrated city center. The most important part of this project was Tehran new Urban Center (Shahestan – literally the Imperial City), which was never completed due to the 1979 revolution. Even though a part of the TCP new Urban Center was planned in the sixties, it was realized only a decade later, as the result of increased oil revenues. Since then, oil revenues rose from $34 million in 1954 – 1955 to $5 billion in 1973 – 1974 and further to $20 billion in 1975 – 1976. Iran's "booming economy"[58] entitled the Pahlavi regime to speak of the growing, different kind of interdependency between itself and the West,[59] because Iran became a petroleum state or — as Abrahamian famously argued — "a rentier state."[60]

At the inauguration of the Shahyad – literally Shah's Memorial – Tower (1966 – 1971) constructed on the occasion of the 2,500 years celebration of the Persian Empire and located in the west part of the old city center, the Shah proclaimed,

> "We Persians may be able to merge, in a new and harmonious form, our antiquity and our modernity. Toward the Great Civilization, this monument is designed to become the heart of a whole new urban development project in the capital that will transform this part of west Tehran."[61]

From then on, newspapers introduced Tehran as the crossroad of the world and Shahyad Tower was its modern gate. (Fig. 2) Tehran was meant to embody the Pahlavis' cultural leadership in the region, and the Shah therefore asked for a modern look for his capital city. However, this modernization was confronted with a rapid and problematic growth in Tehran's population. Subsequently, the regime commissioned Kahn to prepare the proposal for the new center of Tehran (1973 – 1974) in collaboration with Kenzo Tange.[62] (Fig. 3) In order to create the new Tehran, the ambitious Shah was ready to finance the megalomaniac design of an American city in the desert.[63] This project would spread over a 554-hectare area. As Amirahmadi wrote, it was "the biggest complex of tertiary activities and offices in the world… The project was the best reflection of the Shah's obsession with large-scale showcase projects and with favoritism toward domestic and international dominant classes."[64]

The goal of this hybrid center was to house a variety of functions, from government offices to luxury services like hotels, restaurants and shops. As Emami argued, the project's goal was to "provide an opportunity for the people to participate in a state space, not as modern citizens entitled to political participation, but rather as atomized subjects of a totalitarian system."[65]

56 Mohammad Sahimi, "Iran's National Interests: What Are They," http://www.payvand.com/news/02/aug/1038.html, last accessed May 12, 2018.

57 Madanipour, *Tehran,* 207.

58 Westbrook, "The Regionalist," 387.

59 "Shahestan Pahlavi," http://www.aryamehr.org/eng/aryamehr/future/19.htm, last accessed May 22, 2018.

60 Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 125.

61 Khashayar Hemmati, "A Monument of Destiny: Envisioning A Nation's Past, Present, and Future Through Shahyad/Azadi" (Master diss., Simon Fraser University, 2015).

62 Farshid Emami, "Urbanism of Grandiosity: Planning a New Centre for Tehran (1973-1976)," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 3 (2014), 76.

63 Vesta Nele Zareh, "The (almost) all American City," http://www.monu.org/mudot1/VNZ.pdf, last accessed November 2, 2018.

64 Hooshang Amirahmadi and Ali Kiafar, "The Transformation of Tehran From A Garrison Town to A Primate City; A Tale of Rapid Growth and Uneven Development," in *Urban Development in The Muslim World*, ed. Hooshang Amirahmadi and Salah S. El-Shakhs (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1993), 124.

65 Emami, "Urbanism of Grandiosity," 94.

Fig. 2: Iranian airline advertising in the 1970s introduced Shahyad Tower as the modern gateway to the crossroads of the world

Fig. 3: Left and Middle: Louis Kahn and Kenzo Tange individual designs of the Shahestan Master Plan, Tehran, 1974,
respectively. Right: Arata Isozaki, integration of Kahn's and Tange's proposals, Shahestan Master Plan, 1974
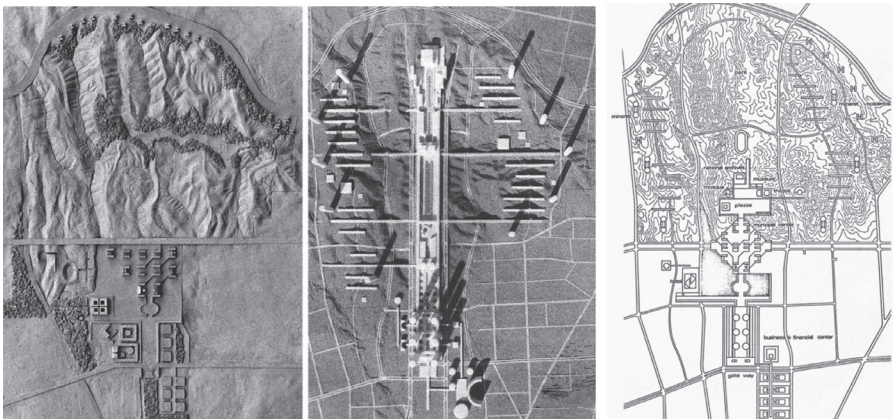
In the meantime, the Pakistani government and Kahn also renewed the agreement to continue the work on the Dhaka project. In fact, by June 1973, Pakistan received funds amounting to $443 million, one third of all foreign grants received since the country's independence. Through the new agreement, the American involvement in the region was starting to infiltrate into the architecture and policy affairs of Dhaka.[66]

Yet, such an unusual and competitive desire to support the urban redevelopment in Dhaka calls into question the real intention of the U.S. for the region. Since, as Daechsel has shown, the politically thorny issue generated hardly any concrete projects.[67] In fact, we have to consider that the oil crisis started in 1973 and was felt as a recession in the West. The U.S. government tried to convince the Pahlavi regime to ease the impact of the oil shortage on its economy.[68] This complex combination between global economic problems, on the one hand, and the desire to influence a local region on the other hand, troubled the balance of power. It was logical then that the U.S. opposed the Shah's ambition to rebuild Tehran. According to a Treasury Department expert,

> "among other things, the Shah has announced a $5 billion scheme to build a 2 square mile city within a city in Tehran as part of his dream of making Iran's capital a major city of the world. Projects like these are more than a matter of national pride… A central concern among Mid-Eastern leaders is what happens when Iran oil runs out – and that will occur in twenty years for some producers – or when the West no longer needs it. To guard against the economic ruin that day could bring, the Pahlavi regime are embarking on a program of industrialization that they hope will carry them safely into the next century."[69]

On his side, the Shah claimed: "We call our present policy a national independence policy. This means that we do what will best serve the interests of our country and nation."[70] The tension is clear: while the American criticism signaled a loss of influence in the region, the Shah related the reconstruction of Tehran to political independence. Then, it is possible that Kahn's death in early 1974 was not the only reason for the Pahlavi regime to redirect the commission to the British firm Llewelyn-Davies International, while Nikpay (the Mayor of Tehran) had been advocating for LDI (with the American Robertson as managing director) before the architect's untimely death.[71] Instead of giving the job to the American architect, the Iranian government wanted to commission the project to a group of British experts.

So, while the U.S. and Pakistan relationship was manifestly positive, the relationship with Iran was ambivalent: on the one hand, the Pahlavi regime stressed (regional) independence from the West. On the other hand, on the surface, the two countries maintained diplomatic relations.[72] To justify this claim, one can see that Doxiadis – a preeminent pro-American character – was still helping to solve the late Pahlavi regime's urbanization and urban conflicts. Accordingly, the Tehran Action Plan took center stage to lead Tehran to become a metropolitan city, regardless of the fact that Doxiadis had failed to fulfill his ideas of scientific planning. This happened because he was asked to provide an immediate design in three months and also because of his own "readymade solution."[73] This solution included the implementation of new satellite towns outside Tehran, which were the well-known solution around the world at that time. As Madanipour argued, this approach shows the contradiction in Doxiadis' plan for Tehran: although he significantly emphasized local solutions for local problems, his Tehran Action Plan had indeed

66 Bayezid Ismail Choudhury, "The Genesis of Jatio Sangsad Bhaban at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2015).

67 Daechsel, *Islamabad*, 150.

68 Ali Mozaffari and Nigel Westbrook, "Shushtar No'w: Urban Image and Fabrication of Place in An Iranian New Town, And Its Relation to The International Discourse on Regionalism," *Fusion* 6 (2015), 8.

69 "Shahestan Pahlavi."

70 "State Visits - Shah of Iran," Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/library/document/0204/1511962.pdf, last accessed May 12, 2018.

71 Emami, "Urbanism of Grandiosity," 88.

72 Barbara Zanchetta, "The United States and the 'Loss' Of Iran" (paper presented at the Department of International History and Politics, Graduated Institute of International and Development Studies, 2009).

73 Madanipour, "Scientific Planning," 485.

"nothing to do with its context".[74] In opposition to what he suggested for Tehran, in his first visit to Iran's oil-rich south-western province of Khuzistan in 1957, he was concerned about the impact of the oil industry on the rural areas and explained his ideas on housing to an Iranian official: "…styles have to grow out of the soil of the country."[75]

The Iranian architect Kamran Diba, who previously worked with Doxiadis in preparing the Abadan comprehensive plan located in Khuzistan,[76] was well aware of what was at stake. His building project of Shushtar New Town (1974 – 1978) in the same province shows his disagreement with these urban policies. That is why it is worth delving into the implied oppositions of Diba and his Pakistani contemporaries.

Politics are always local: the case of Anguri Bagh Satellite City and Shushtar – New Town

Political modernity has functioned on the basis of a top-down approach; abstract and rational ideals were projected onto local communities, with their own complex history. Tensions are inevitable when Western abstract concepts – like equality, secularization, justice – are projected onto specific traditional cultures. Rancière suggests that successful political strategies would follow another direction: the singular and specific case has to be built as an actualization of a universal ideal. The relation between the local and the universal requires thus an experienced political class that can mediate between, on the one hand, a specific culture (with its own traditions and tensions) and, on the other hand, a subsequent universal ideal. In his words "[P]olitics is the art of the local and singular construction of cases of universality."[77] Yet, this requires a double awareness: that universality in political or artistic ideas emerges in historically and culturally delimited contexts, and that ideas tend to expand outside their area of influence. Even within the same culture, politics presupposes for Rancière the fine-tuning of the universal to the local. Furthermore, any attempt to transplant and implement general ideas in other contexts implies a similar and sometimes more difficult fine tuning. In some cases, modernist aesthetic ideas may be accepted and/or adapted without accepting the political dimensions of Western modernity.

The relation between universal abstract ideas and local conditions of traditional societies is thus vital in politics. We need to test this hypothesis in the case of the policies of architecture in Pakistan and Iran. After all, in the 1970s, architecture was the sign of larger cultural tensions between U.S., Pakistan and Iran. In this period, the whole region attempted to import both Western architecture and Western democratic institutions.[78] Debates on different aspects of architecture and democracy influenced modernist local architects. For instance, the first Pakistani woman architect, Yasmeen Lari, who graduated from the Oxford School of Architecture in London, was concerned about social justice and its relation to architecture. Her residential project Anguri Bagh (1973 – 1975) was built in the north-eastern end of Pakistan's Punjab province, Lahore. (Fig. 4) Another case is that of the Iranian sociologist and architect Kamran Diba. As a Harvard-trained architect, he was commissioned by the regime to build a similar residential complex, the Sushtar New Town (1974 – 1978), in the province of Khuzistan. (Fig. 5) Indeed, these two satellite cities embody some of Kahn's architectural typologies and doctrine.

The Pakistani residential complex Anguri Bagh was initiated in August 1973, designed in September of the same year, and completed two years later. In 1980, Lari described the project as a governmental plan to set up houses for the low and the middle class. Further, the five Multiple Family Housing included about 6,000 homes ranging between small one-room flats to two-bedroom row houses. Nevertheless, their distribution amongst the population was handled

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74 Ibid., 497.

75 Ibid., 498.

76 Ibid., 490.

77 Rancière, *Dis-agreement*, 139.

78 Vale, *Architecture Power*, 162.

politically: the complex, finished in 1975, remained uninhabited until 1977, when the dwellings were given to the supporters of the government.[79] Meanwhile, in Iran, the new satellite city of Shushtar New Town was meant for the families of white- and blue-collar workers of Karun Agro-Industry. Due to the tight schedule and pressure from the government, the first neighborhood was designed simultaneously with its master plan.[80] Government pressure was crucial for the construction of Shushtar New Town. That is because the governmental priority was Tehran's new center, and – as Hourcade argues – this was so disproportionally large that, except for the Shushtar New Town, the government did not intend to finance any other project.[81]

The redevelopment of the rural areas through different architectural and industrial constructions was an older idea, going back to the national independence policy of the Shah from the late fifties. His ambition was to initiate a program of regional industrial development that would prepare Iran for its economic future; he also wanted to protect Tehran from uncontrolled immigration. Shushtar New Town was an example of this regional policy. As Wolcott explained, however, regionalism is an ambivalent concept and it can be manipulated easily.[82] Also, in the case of Iran's urban planning, regionalism was only recognized as a regional development that could fully exploit national resources.[83]

Meanwhile, because the capitalist economic model appealed to the Shah, he also decided to make all Iranian workers capitalists, through the wider share ownership program. The workers were to become part owners of the businesses in which they worked. Indeed, becoming capitalist was his real intention when the Shah talked about moving towards Great Civilization in the late seventies. Grigor evokes Muhammad Reza Shah's words, who argued that,

> "From 1963 we set our people upon the road of common sense and progress, toward the Great Civilization. For 37 years all my political activities were carried out with the aim of placing my people upon the path leading to this Great Civilization…What is this Great Civilization that I wanted for Iran? To me, it is an effort towards understanding and peace, which creates the perfect environment in which everyone can work."[84]

Those who are familiar with labor relations know that this idea was once considered a panacea in U.S. industry; it was later set aside as another questionable item in a long list of employees' benefits. However, this idea was felt as revolutionary in Iran and, almost a decade after the White Revolution, it was also added to the national contract as a new point. For a country like Iran that had no proper modern industry and labor laws before the Pahlavi regime, it could be perceived as a big step toward development. In our view, it can be also considered as an example of gentrification of marginal populations from Pahlavi's Modern Tehran.

On the 16th of May 1972, the Shah advised the industrialists to come forward and sell at least one-third of their shares to the public. Also, they were asked to build houses for their employees "Our primary view" the Shah said, "is that in the first stage, [the shares] must be offered to the workers and staff of the companies."[85] The government also initiated a centrally planned housing program in the peripheries. In the context of government-funded model housing, the company complex of Shushtar New Town is the most paradigmatic project within.[86]

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79 "Architect's Record of Anguri Bagh Housing. Courtesy of Architect," submitted to the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980, https://archnet.org/sites/64/publications/134, last accessed May 12, 2018.

80 Kamran Diba, *Buildings and Projects* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Hatje, 1981), 180.

81 Emami, "Urbanism of Grandiosity," 93.

82 Leon Wolcott, "Regionalism: Political Implement," *American Economic Review* 35 (1945), 371.

83 Hooshang Amirahmadi, "Regional Planning in Iran: A Survey of Problems and Policies," *Developing Areas* 20 (1986), 512.

84 Talinn Grigor, "Of Metamorphosis Meaning on Iranian Terms," *Third Text* 17 (2003), 214.

85 Habib Ladjevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 241-242.

86 Ali Mozaffari and Nigel Westbrook, "A Return to Beginnings of Regionalism: Shushtar New Town Seen in The Light of the 2nd International Congress of Architects, Persepolis, Iran 1974," *SAHANZ* 32 (2015), 716.

Fig. 4: Anguri Baghi satellite city in Lahore, Pakistan (1973 – 1975) – Yasmeen Lari (Agha Khan collection).

Fig. 5: Shushtar New Town in Iran's southwestern province (1974 – 1980) – Kamran Diba

Despite the fact that Shushtar New Town drew more international attention, the Anguri Bagh project was actually designed and built first. The Anguri Bagh and Shushtar New Town show typological similarities and both emphasize social interaction. Hypothetically, Shushtar New Town was based on the theory of Critical Regionalism that promoted the design of a total environment and urban human rights, rather than on building separate houses. Diba wrote in this regard:

> "The more conscious one is of the patterns of activity and interaction, the more as an architect one is led to behave like a theatre director… Architects only stop short of putting words into people's mouths. They certainly can put ideas into their minds and promote roles and actions."[87]

These specific cases in Iran and Pakistan suggest the difficulty to negotiate tensions between the universalizing ambitions of high modernism and the (comprehensible) resistance of local traditions. Thus, as Mozaffari and Westbrook pointed out, Shushtar New Town can be understood in the light of what Tafuri said about Kahn's design at Dhaka: substituting universality for the local standpoint.[88] This substitution has systematically been felt as a violent modification, for the simple reason that architectural modernism has always had a complex relationship with tradition. As an avant-garde, even in the Western hemisphere, modernism claimed to reinvent architectural language and implement it as a solution to the challenges of modernity. Even though conservatives in the West also curbed the enthusiasm of modernity as a socio-political process, its fundamental premises were generally accepted: democracy, equal rights and social progress. However, as we have seen, the implementation of modernist architecture in non-Western countries had to negotiate not just a new architectural language in relation to the architectural tradition; it also had to negotiate through modern architecture the cumbersome acceptance of a larger project: modernity itself.

Conclusion

As we have seen, architectural modernity and modernity as a socio-political project have a complicated relation. That can be explained by an inherent failing in architectural modernism, and there is no universal rationale that justifies its implementation everywhere in the world. As the situation in Iran proves, even within one culture, variations between rural and urban areas influence the politics of architecture. Larger cities accept more easily the official political intentions of the government, while rural areas require a local approach.[89] Rural areas usually come second for governmental authority and control, and sometimes can escape surveillance more easily. They offer enhanced opportunities for architects to integrate some kind of passive resistance in their projects. The challenge was to match modernist architectural forms with modern political ideals. This is what architects and politicians had to confront in Iran as well as in Pakistan.

Indicative of this conflict is the debate between Seyed Hossein Nasr and Lari during the 1978 conference on "Architectural Transformation in The Islamic World". Nasr is a Harvard-trained traditionalist philosopher and a prominent Pahlavi supporter, who provided a theoretical foundation for Muslim traditionalist architecture. During the conference, he argued that a few Muslim elites undermined the values associated with the traditional Islamic culture which is still dominating in rural environments. He pleaded for returning to these traditional values and for eliminating the secular influence.[90] Lari replied that she identified herself with Nasr's definition of

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87 Diba, *Buildings*, 8.

88 Mozaffari and Westbrook, "Shushtar No'w," 3.

89 Jessica Joyce Christie, Jelena Bogdanović and Eulogio Guzmán, *Political Landscapes of Capital Cities* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016), 389.

90 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Toward an Understanding of Architectural Symbolism. The Contemporary Muslim and the Architectural Transformation of the Islamic Urban Environment" (paper presented at the seminar for the series Architecture Transformation in the Islamic World, Gouvieux, France, April 1978).

the elite. As "a Muslim, but not a devout one,"[91] she wanted to adapt modern morphology to the local "living pattern."[92] Modernists of the 1970s like Lari and Diba were very different from the first generation of modernists; they looked for authenticity in returning to the past.[93] Accordingly, Diba pointed out that by overthrowing the Pahlavi regime in 1979 while simultaneously eliminating the basis for modernist's socio-political reforms, "the Iranian revolution is, in a very important sense, a cultural phenomenon. The conflict between modernism and tradition has roots which go much deeper than the politics of oil or corruption."[94]

Thus, can one consider that the approach of these local architects leads eventually to a "collective hope"?[95] Answering this question is beyond the aims of this paper. However, for societies whose socio-political transformations were politically motivated and limited to top-down modernization, local modernists' confrontation with the past, and their bottom-up reforms made the ordered modernization archaic and contrary to its initiator. What the case studies here intend to prove is that architectural modernism, rather than making a modern look for a country, had to negotiate the implicit political project that it reflects: modernity itself.

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91 Yasmeen Lari, "Discussion" (paper presented at the seminar for the series Architecture Transformation in the Islamic World, Gouvieux, France, April 1978).

92 Ibid.

93 Berman, *Experience of Modernity,* 332.

94 Kamran Diba, "The Recent Housing Boom in Iran- Lessons to Remember," in *Housing: Process and Physical Form*, ed. Linda Safran (Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture, 1980), 38.

95 Berman, *Experience of Modernity,* 346.

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