



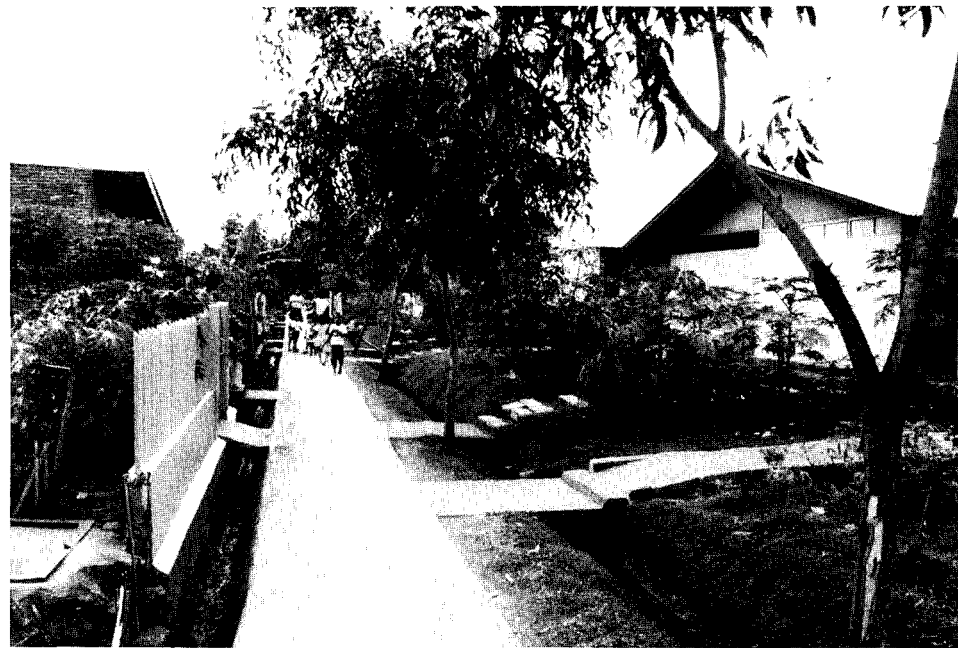
A PERUMNAS core house at Malaka with owner increments (fence and footpath)

Photo: H-U Khan/Aga Khan Awards



Increments in progress to a PERUMNAS core house at Malaka

Photo: H-U Khan/Aga Khan Awards



Individual and community improvements at Malaka village

Photo: H-U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

Comments

HRH Prince Hassan

I feel that the construction of the new society presented by Mr. Diba was of great interest to us. He referred in his opening remarks to the differences between the planners and the professional community, and the difficulties that they had in implementing through the system. As the ombudsman of planning in my own country, I feel that the planners and the professional community have perhaps overstated their grievances. The Shushtar project was largely executed within that ten year boom; things cannot be all that bad. Bureaucracy and routine and corruption and all the other ills are present, but they are also more on the implementative side than on the planning side, at least in my own country. I do not often feel that the planners have the force to override the implementers, and certainly it is gratifying anyway to feel the continuity of professional zeal as described by Mr. Diba.

The Shushtar concept differs from the ideas broached by Mr. Sudra in regard to Ismailia in the sense that all needs were considered within the objective of fullest possible development of a comprehensive society. I noticed throughout Diba's presentation the references to cheap cost, simple architectural design, inexpensive use of materials: there seems to be an attempt to ensure the relevance of this housing experiment. I want to know, then, what exactly were the obstacles? This is baffling me, and I would certainly like to have some elaboration on this question as it relates to the theme of our meeting. Where were the obstacles? We know that there are obstacles on the administrative and implementative side, but with the Shushtar example I felt that all was well with the world. I would certainly like to know wherein the contradiction lay.

Diba

Because we had a multiplicity of clients, we experienced relatively little interference in the design process. But we did face a number of constraints, not the least of which was

working in a very difficult and uncertain time period. There was little concern for quality in development, and nobody seemed interested in finished projects. No evaluations were made on a qualitative basis, and a lack of responsible leadership addressing itself to construction made doing a proper job very difficult. These add up to considerable architectural constraints.

Allow me to expand my comments with some impressions of the seminar. Some of the ideas we have heard thus far are highly intellectual and scientific. There is a real danger in taking a kind of consultant approach, in looking with micro-scale attention at the problem of housing. This approach becomes primarily a political tool easily manipulated by the technocrats. From an educational viewpoint, of course, there is great value in such pedantry, but this is a luxury which fails to address the real grass roots problem.

I think that a micro approach to long-range planning and housing is really quite dangerous and inadequate. In the end, the quality and the physical form of the environment we create are the result of our actual professional endeavour. I wonder about the question of subsidy in housing. It has nothing to do with approaching a solution to the housing problem. The subsidy is a kind of political, manipulative tool. What I would like to emphasize are the inadequacies, the inherent shortcomings of the comprehensive and large macro-scale plan in regard to housing. I have nothing against large-scale or national development plans in the cases of developing energy resources, but housing is a sector that demands constant and individualized attention, because it deals with individuals.

Lim

I would like to comment on two points, both of which touch on the general theme. The first is the role of the professional and the second concerns density.

The professional, at least the informed professional, does know the theoretical bases for what is wrong and what can be done. His biggest problem is political directions

and political will. I agree with the view that there is no housing problem *per se*, because people always have somewhere to live. The question is one of upgrading the standard of living, within the capacity of the people immediately concerned and the economic capabilities of the society as a whole. Upgrading is a slow, gradual process. It has to be related to religion, to culture and to prevalent morals and ideology.

Mr. Correa noted that professionals include all those who are involved in some aspect of the built environment: planners, sociologists, designers, etc. Do these professionals have a role? My feeling is that their role is somewhat marginal, that political decision makers are really more important in terms of getting things done. It is even possible for a committed citizen to discuss and recommend actions. I am more concerned with professionals and professional intervention. Sometimes I think that such interventions may have done more harm than good, because of faulty terms of reference and because of the contexts in which they are performed. I am anxious to suggest that foreign consultants, including those who are competent and committed, be more careful in choosing their target countries. In other words, it is not very useful to dispatch qualified professionals to countries in which prevailing politics are not favourably disposed to assist the low income groups. Of what use is another good consultancy job, complete with good reports which will be buried before they can ever be read or implemented?

The second point I would like to raise is density. I would like to ask Mr. Correa about his statement on population densities increasing as building heights increase. Although it is true that increased densities can be obtained in high blocks, they can only be obtained if certain amenities are incorporated. For example, if you have twenty-story buildings you may have playgrounds on the ground floor or on the upper floors, and you have schools incorporated into the complex. That means a tremendous increase in construction costs. If you try to keep construction costs constant, then I am doubtful whether the multiplication of these densities beyond the base point of one hundred households per hectare can be substantially increased. This is fundamental,

because if density cannot be substantially increased with high-rise or middle-rise buildings without a substantial increase in construction costs, then we should look at the situation anew.

Let's do some arithmetic. When we talk about a density of one hundred families per hectare, what does that mean? With an average family of six, there are six hundred persons per hectare, sixty thousand per kilometre. Any city in the world can accommodate people at these densities, so what has gone wrong? Besides the questions of land and equity, I think we have to look at the private and public sectors. In the public sector I would also include the self-help sector and the slums and squatter area, which are marked by very high densities. It is obvious that if the private sector density remains relatively low, then no matter what proportion of the population it caters to, the amount of land area taken up substantially increases. In other words, directly or indirectly it is the poor who are subsidizing the rich. In terms of density, infrastructure and everything that goes with it, the private sector is using up much more land than the public sector for the number of people being accommodated. I think we cannot really discuss this question of density without actually looking at the correlation between the public and private, the low and high income sectors.

ElAraby

It seems to me that most of the presentations, although intellectually satisfying, have not addressed themselves to the specific context of the Islamic world. There is definitely a difference between discussing a matter in a developing or Third World country and a Muslim society. There have been some comments about building regulations and land uses and land speculation, and also a few comments on society as a whole. But unless we begin to think in terms of definitions of what kind of society we have, what is a Muslim society and how does that have a bearing on lifestyle, we miss the point. The point is that we must begin with the core concept of Islamic-ness, of Islamic rules and attitudes, and then apply our

technical and professional know-how to amplify this core. This is certainly true in the realm of housing solutions, and very likely in development progress as a whole.

Cantacuzino

I would like to ask one practical question of one of the speakers, and then make a brief comment. Mr. Van Huyck mentioned land speculation and the need to curtail it, and Mr. Correa emphasized the urgency of making more land available for housing and showed us the site of the new town of Bombay. I would like to know what steps the government has taken to prevent land speculation in the new town.

Secondly, Mr. Van Huyck introduced the concept of minimum standards and noted its inhibiting and misdirecting role in new housing. This concept also exists in reverse, when considering whether to raze the existing housing stock. The problem is to define the meaning of "slum." Too often there is a subjective and emotional response to this word, and decisions are made on this basis. The fact is that there are many instances, though not so many in the Third World, of badly built, ill-equipped, run-down, almost derelict working class houses in desirable locations which are being taken over and rehabilitated by the middle and upper classes. Conversely, there are many houses of this kind in undesirable locations which are being pulled down, and the inhabitants rehoused in high-rises. This is certainly true in England and other European countries. When it comes to the Third World there are probably many examples of housing which are not worth upgrading and keeping, except perhaps on a strictly temporary basis. The problem in Bombay is not one of upgrading but of restructuring, which of course involves planning, design and architecture, even if people have to be encouraged to create their own vernacular. I would very much welcome comments on this point, in view of the fact that Mr. Van Huyck stressed repeatedly that the existing housing stock should be upgraded at all costs.

Buch

We are speaking in terms of the development of Islamic housing, or of Islamic communities in which a Muslim can live in a particular manner in an Islamic context. This is an understandable thing in a country which is largely inhabited by Muslims, or where the state is theocratic. But what happens in a country where integration, rather than segregation, is important? I can cite the example of Delhi. In 1947, when India and Pakistan were separated into two countries, there was near-madness prevailing in West Pakistan, in the East Punjab and in parts of northern India. However, that part of Delhi which had a closely intermixed Hindu-Muslim population, including the walled city of Shahjahanabad and the area around Jama Masjid, remained free of communal tension. In the areas which had distinctly separated Hindu or Sikh or Muslim locali-

ties, there were major riots in which thousands of people were killed. I would suggest that you draw your own conclusions from this. But clearly, unless this seminar thinks in terms of the integrative process of housing, especially in the context of the Indian subcontinent, I have my doubts whether we can really come up with workable solutions.

Correa also mentioned the question of scale. I am quite prepared to concede that government may have no relevance where the scale is small. But if the objective of housing is to get it to the people who really need housing, then we enter into a dimension that is not only quantitatively but also qualitatively different. There can be no comparison between a small development of, say, ten hectares, and the need to provide for the housing of a city like Delhi into which a quarter of a million people immigrate every year. And when you get that kind of a qualitative *cum* quantitative change, is there any



Delhi, India: modern view of Delhi from the Jama Masjid

Photo D. Sareen

organization *other* than government which can really deal with the problem? Does government have a relevance? If organizations other than government can deal with a problem of this scale, then I think we must already have achieved Marxism and the state has withered away. Is that what is actually being suggested in all of these injunctions to decentralize planning, to parlay it into the hands of non-governmental but equally unwieldy and manipulative organizations?

Turner

I think we have finally raised the heart of the matter, which is whether or not complex systems can be designed, can even be planned. I belong to the growing school of thought which holds that they cannot be.

Urban history goes back at least six thousand years, but only in the last few generations have cities been built and designed *before* the people come in. We have built the cities and inserted people into them, whereas they had always been the after-products of people gathered in a particular place. I suggest that planning and building on a large scale is not the business of the architect. It is a question of rules. True, we have to plan infrastructures, major communication lines and the like. But we are discussing housing, and that is not a business to be undertaken by a large organization. It is the business of large organizations, specifically government, to facilitate the process of housing, to ensure its success on an individualized basis and in an orderly fashion.

Van Huyck

I submit that the major problems in housing for the urban and rural poor all over the world are the constraints which governments are placing on the potentially spontaneous ability of the people to house themselves. That is the message I was trying to transmit, perhaps all too vaguely, in my paper. I believe that we technicians—architects, economists, sociologists, engineers—are

really being asked to be ancient alchemists, trying to change lead into gold. We are searching for the marvelous new building material that will make it possible to house the world's poor. We aim to design a house that can meet the housing criteria of the poor, and still be responsive to government standards and priorities. I do not think this is possible, and I do not believe there really is a housing problem. I think we have a *definition* problem with what governments define as the housing problem. What, for instance, constitutes an acceptable house? What is a minimum standard? I think these are the things we can usefully discuss in the seminar this week.

Next we have a problem of priority. I think we have an enormous shared concern here that the priorities of public investment and public action are wrong. They are simply wrong, and that is why we have a housing problem. Our discussion of those priorities can start with the legislative and administrative regulations which are the constraints. Over and over again, around the world, we hear of a land problem: land speculation, insufficient land for housing. All too often I am asked to do a study on controlling land speculation. If I have the opportunity, I like to ask whoever is requesting the study one simple question. Is the government ready to change the rules of the land game? We can quickly pick out the eight or nine basic ways in which land prices can be controlled in urban areas. But all of those ways require that the people who own this capital asset must take a loss, if not in present value then in anticipated future value. That is the constraint, and it is not a matter of public will. It is a matter of the government saying that it is prepared to take that action, and no amount of study needs to be done. The problem we have to face is how to reconsider existing standards and make them relevant to the real means of the poor. We did one study in which we systematically reviewed government regulations and restrictions on plot size, density, zoning, building codes, etc. After translating those standards into costs, we found that some seventy percent of the people in that country could not afford to live legally.

Interest rates are another area of concern, particularly in Islamic countries. As soon as

interest rates are legislated or set by government policy at unrealistically low levels, with the true costs of capital and inflation no housing programme can succeed. It simply cannot be self-sustaining. All over the world we can cite housing agencies that come on board with large amounts of public equity capital, but are out of business four or five years later because they have not been made financially viable. They were not allowed to set financial policy that would create a viable organization.

I had listed five criteria which I think are essential components of a viable housing programme for the urban poor. First, housing programmes for low-income people must be capable of massive application on a sustained basis. Second, they must have low per capita operating costs, with potential for cost recovery from the urban poor. All too often it is middle income housing which is subsidized by the urban poor. Third, the successful housing programme must provide substantial opportunity for self-help participation from the urban poor themselves. Fourth, it must have low levels of administrative requirements. Fifth, it must be flexible and capable of change in response to changing needs of the urban poor. I do not believe that any conventional formal housing programme currently done in the public sector, such as four-story walk-up flats or full low-cost housing schemes, can meet those criteria. That is why we are not making a lot of progress.

I think, instead, that settlement upgrading can meet those criteria. Here in Jakarta is one of the dramatic success stories in community upgrading. And I think maybe, just maybe, a minimal sites and services programme that would at least urbanize land at the edge of cities and in the vacant downtown areas could meet those five criteria. But only one thing meets them perfectly, and that is spontaneous housing. That is how the poor are housing themselves, and they obviously fit the criteria. So the best starting point in revising government policy and programming would be to go back and really look at the spontaneous settlements. We must begin to understand the process whereby people are housing themselves, and then set facilitation of that process as the target for the public sector.

Comments

Lim

I have three questions. The first, which I would like to pose to Mr. ElAraby, is concerned with values and the urban structure. I gather that some basic Islamic value systems are applicable to urban forms and especially to the concept of land. Now, I have had some opportunity in the last eight or ten years to study cultural values in southeast Asia. What is very interesting to me is the fact that many of the concepts have considerable parallels with other religions, for example Buddhism. This is not to say that religions are necessarily identical, because they are not. But I wonder whether many more studies should not be made of comparative religions in terms of their basic value systems. We would do well to see whether common grounds can be found, particularly in the implications for housing, urban form, communities and the like.

My second question is whether the issue is indeed the importance of symbolism, as some distinguished participants have suggested. I think society should have some sorts of symbols; man cannot live by bread alone, and that sort of thing. The question then revolves around the role of the profession. Can we really talk about the architectural profession as the arbiters and providers of form, as if architects are acting like God? We should be more humble and admit that, at best, we are only the interpreters of the inspiration of the people and the values and lifestyles of each community. Otherwise, we will fall again into the trap of "the modern movement" in architecture, where architects have tried to act as God and of course failed miserably. When we talk about symbolism, perhaps we may be able to differentiate the macro-structure of the urban community (in which informed people, architects and others, may be able to make some form of contribution) from the community in which the people are best left to their own decisions.

My third point is about urban structure. What are the social, economic and political frameworks which dictate the urban structure? The latter is nothing but an expression of the value system of a particular society at

a particular time. If the urban fabric is not reflective of the society as a whole, at least it reflects the decision makers. Let us look at a situation today. We are all very disturbed about the Third World areas where the urban structure has rapidly been destroyed, if not totally then substantially, depending on the greed or aggression of the system. What are our symbols in these materially-oriented societies? Perhaps the hotel, office blocks, the banks. They are the vistas seen also in Paris, in Istanbul or in Peking. But we are now talking about a reorientation of symbols. We have new symbols, and the primary symbol is a money god. We should have better definition of our development objectives. Of course, we need development in order to fulfill our material needs. Can we integrate those economic symbols of development into the urban society, as part of it and not as its main symbols? Or can we at least segregate them, as in Paris, push them out to somewhere else in order not to disturb the entire urban structure? These are the questions I would like to propose for further attention.

Hassan

I would like to reiterate the conceptual framework that I feel is necessary for an understanding of the problem of housing in the Third World. We can begin simply by asking, "What is the problem of housing, and why does a problem exist in the first place?" I believe that the answer lies in the unequal distribution of living space and in the qualitative differences between living space available for the rich, the not so rich and the poor. The latter comprise the largest population mass in Third World societies. Why do these inequalities continue to exist? I doubt that we would find anyone among us who believes that these inequalities are reflections of the natural order of things. Most of us subscribe to the notion that equality of facilities and equality of opportunity is better and more desirable. Why, then, do inequalities of the social structure continue to exist?

I have suggested in my paper that there are several explanations. Societies reproduce themselves *in toto*, and part of this repro-

duction are the equalities or inequalities inherent in the housing system. The poor have living spaces which are qualitatively different and inferior to those available to the rich. It is this inequality of space which reproduces the future generations of poor, and this is the point that I had intended to make in my case study. Children will actually socialize into a mould which will ensure reproduction of private capital in exactly the way that has been planned by the intelligentsia and the planners.

This brings me to a second point: the role of the intelligentsia and the planners in the reproduction of inequalities. I am addressing these comments to my own and to Mr. Correa's paper. We members of the intelligentsia play a very important role in the reproduction of the inequalities which exist in housing specifically and in society in general. We perpetuate existing bureaucracies with our vested interests, and we lack the sociological imagination necessary to understand the relationships that exist between different sectors of the society. I have had only limited occasion to work with architects and planners, but in my experience they have a brief and they follow that brief to the letter; very rarely do they really stop and ponder the things they are working on.

The third point raised in my paper concerns the Islamic way of life. Mr. Noe'man's presentation dealt ably with this, but I must admit that I don't understand what it is. Is it a universal way of life? Are the values that I (and others) have pointed out unique to Islam, or are they characteristic of many religions and cultural systems? What I do find unique to the Islamic way of life is the way the inner living space of the house is used; this is a function of prevailing definitions of sex roles and other social mores. As we move away from the house and into larger social configurations and more complex spaces, the Islamic way of life seems to have more universal implications; it becomes more universal in its general organization. It might be valuable to look more closely at the way living space is used in Islamic societies and particularly in the Muslim home.

Comments

O. Grabar

In listening to the various recommendations or summaries, I am troubled by the absence of two attributes or coordinates in dealing with housing. One is a lack of sufficient definition of the aspirations of Muslim cultures or subcultures. We have only an imperfect understanding of the dreams of various social subgroups within the larger umbrella of Muslim culture. Whatever housing is to be premiated should be considered not only for the characteristics it possesses, but also for the degree to which it meets existing aspirations.

The second thing is perhaps more difficult to express. In trying to identify housing criteria within the perimeters of Muslim culture, it is easy to say that a culture had "x" number of characteristics at a particular time, and let's see whether these can be adapted to the contemporary world. But I wonder if the criteria we propose today will be meaningful even ten years from now, in light of rapid industrialization, movement of large numbers of people, problems of poverty and so forth. A hundred years ago one did not think much about what the world would be like ten years in the future. Today we suspect all too much what is likely to be, and we are probably making some terrible mistakes in our predictions. But we are accountable to the future, and the developing criteria suggest that this sense of accountability is one of the reasons we are here. One could even argue that this concern for the future is a typically Muslim attitude, since it has been a central aspect of the Islamic ability to adapt itself to different cultural and ecological settings.

H. Majid

I am here in the midst of a group of highly specialized professionals, individuals of varied experience. They are no strangers to me, but I am sure my name is unknown to them. The formal theories and design processes espoused here at the seminar must be weighed against the need for survival, as illustrated in the various site visits we have made. This dichotomy is likewise my goal as an architect in Malaysia, a country where we have totally lost our sense of direction because our society is fragmented in a number of ways.

Here in Indonesia we can identify the housing problem as purely Islamic because the population is overwhelmingly Islamic. But in Malaysia we have a plural society of Malays and Chinese. We have to adapt to this, and the teachings of Islam maintain that we must not deny the existence of other races or cultures. This plurality is an additional constraint on the Malaysian experience of society, especially if these issues are classified as sensitive. Only a racially integrated society will survive a civil disturbance or riot. We have had such an experience, and this is the lesson we have had to learn and to incorporate into all our design commissions. The role of architect is more than just that of designer.

With all due respect, we are not interested in theories, we are interested in action. We are interested in how to solve the problems of cultural exchange and cultural appropriateness. You cannot change culture overnight, nor can you impose anything that is truly foreign. It would naturally and rightly be rejected.

I do not think we have been popular in the sense that we have a unique way of solving things. We now have what is called the "new economic policy." The new policy is one product of the civil disturbances of 1969, which saw some loss of lives. Out of that there grew a realization that the stability of the country and its very survival depends on community spirit. There must be an integrated society. This is why I stated at an earlier workshop that we should forget Islamic values, Islamic symbols or Islamic forms in any community. Let us just look at that community. What are the elements that comprise it? I believe that a community is always founded on goodness, tolerance, and all those qualities embodied in Islam and indeed in any religion. Whether it is Islamic or otherwise, such a community has a universal benefit which cuts right across the parameters of the Islamic world and Islamic architecture.

While Malaysia has a relatively small population compared to Indonesia, we still have these kinds of problems, and there are others. Architecturally the constraints in my country are much more rigid. For example, we were once colonized, just like India and Indonesia. Despite our independence of over twenty-one years, we are still coping with the building by-laws that were handed out in 1959. If I'm not mistaken, that year marked the last review or amendment of the by-laws, which do not now meet the requirements of survival. We do not talk about getting a good design to comply with the plans and regulations, but just about surviving and building a decent home for the people.

We have a colleague from the World Bank who is now financing a sites and services project in Malaysia. On this point I would like to repeat what Mr. Islam has said, because this summarizes the major fault of such foreign aid. We want the aid, clearly. But the aid is not forthcoming without the so-called foreign expertise involved with it. Often the experts are Asians, but of a background different from ours—from India perhaps, or from Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. Such an "expert" operates here under totally different constraints from those present in his own country. Most of the work, even the evaluations for foreign



Traditional house, west coast of Malaysia

Photo: H-U Khan/Aga Khan Awards

aid projects in Indonesia is done by foreign consultants. Do we need foreign consultants to evaluate and tell us the facts? These are evident, and we local experts can tell you what they are. The mere fact that the endorsement of a World Bank-appointed consultant is needed to confirm a need for aid in this country really defeats the whole purpose.

Let me illustrate what is happening because of these attitudes. I was the architect for a particular project, and we applied for a relaxation of building by-laws. This is virtually impossible to get, because it is built into the minds of the administrators that if the British did it it must be good, and it is still good after so many years. This, obviously, is crazy. Anyway, one result is a growth of squatter settlements, full of people who have flocked into the cities. I am not trying to support squatters or anarchies, but I am trying to be reasonable and be human about this. These people come to the cities. Do we know why they come? Do we feel the benefit of their presence in the cities? We should realize that great benefit is to be had

from their immigration, that without them the system as a whole would collapse. I think this is what is happening in England. If not for the so-called "coloured" people, the whole London transport system and every other system would collapse. So, we need these squatters. They are forming their own laws, and this is where the current process of architectural design or community design may come from—the people themselves. I have found more truth and more use in the undefined laws of the squatter settlement than in a settlement designed by architects, planners and private developers. In a squatter community, whatever the need for housing and supply, the delivery system is always functioning.

People employ architects to build housing estates designed by planners, but at the same time there are squatters. Which of the two systems should be evaluated and assessed to determine which is better for a particular society? The squatters submit to the evaluation because they cannot risk the razing of their houses. They know they are not government officials, they are not in influen-

tial positions in the government hierarchy. But they are the workers below. They are the implementers. If they can implement an architect's beautiful plan, they can take the same plan, study the principle and apply it in their own community. Thus there are squatter communities with better facilities than some more formally planned settlements. Some even have free facilities, free electricity and water supply. Why? Because most of the inhabitants work in the electricity office and water works. They know how to do things for everybody else; why not do it for themselves?

The squatter community is a very good illustration of people knowing each other, knowing their backgrounds and their identities. If they have any building extension work to be done, they know the man who is in the construction company. It is a very basic, almost a primitive method, but it is successful and it is existing in cities that are supposed to be modern. I know that if I need some kind of building extension, the channels by which I might obtain it are much more complex and infinitely slower. These direct and basic levels of communication visible in the squatter communities will carry on for as long as the professionals fail to perceive the real needs of contemporary society. They look at things as carryovers from the past, as if past success guarantees present value.

Returning to the new economic policy, it is now the government's policy to insist on racial integration. It is law in Malaysia that if a new housing estate is located in a predominantly Chinese area, thirty percent of it should be reserved for the Malays, and another variable percentage for other ethnic groups. In this way there is mutual respect. For example, in a new residential area of about 50,000 people, the need for a mosque was recognized by a non-Muslim, a Chinese community leader. Land was donated for the purpose, and it is up to the Malay and the Muslim communities to further synthesize resources and get this mosque built.

W. Porter

It is my pleasant task to comment on three of the prepared papers, presented by our distinguished colleagues Van Huyck, Hassan and Correa. I have elected to review what I consider some of the most important and interesting elements of their presentations.

Van Huyck's paper first brings into question the supposition that the economic contribution of housing is less than that of some other development sectors. He points out that there are many other benefits to be considered, beyond the single factor of rent levels which an economist might use as an indication of economic benefits. People living in decent housing have better work productivity, better health, less juvenile delinquency and even a possibility of better education. These social factors are also the concern of Hassan's paper. The greatest returns from housing may not be solely from its shelter aspect, but may have to do with the adequacy of the urban infrastructure, the water supply and other services associated with residential areas. Correa's paper also touches on that aspect.

Van Huyck argues that there is a lack of definition of public and private roles in the area of housing. The so-called popular sector is not often acknowledged as a source of housing supply or as a way of meeting housing demand. He states that the housing delivery system is inadequate, hobbled by a legislative base which does not provide sufficient controls nor appropriate finance mechanisms.

His disavowal of any generalized collective aspiration and support for specific target groups is the most provocative part of Van Huyck's paper. He alleges several reasons for the failure of housing to identify target groups, and in particular to respond to the poor. The urban poor are not politically active and therefore neither draw attention to themselves nor lobby effectively for their highest priority needs. Since the middle class has unmet needs in housing, it is not at all surprising that they move in and take over newly available housing, outbidding lower income competition for housing stock.

Van Huyck then makes several suggestions for improvement of the low income housing

problem: housing must no longer be torn down, and moves should be made only to add to the housing inventory. The popular sector and rural development, as well as the public and private sectors, should be recognized as legitimate ways of satisfying the housing needs of the poor. Government could work harder to reduce the costs of the housing which they do build or finance, and the needs of low and lowest income groups could be given the highest priority. An important suggestion is that cost recovery potential be increased and subsidies decreased. Van Huyck asserts that new kinds of training are required for administrators and managers to facilitate the development of housing, and I propose that planners be included in this re-training as well. In particular, I have to concur with Van Huyck's urging that the greatest resource of all—the energy of the people—be mobilized to meet the housing demand.

Hassan's paper talks about the influence of housing on creating and sustaining a certain social structure. Social structure is class structure, and different housing construction types reflect class differences. He makes an important point when he says that if one views squatter settlements as bad places to live, as problems within themselves, then it is quite understandable why an administrator would move to eradicate squatter settlements. However, if one understands the squatter settlement as an expression of a way of life at a particular time, and in fact as the best possible adaptation at the time, then it might move one to quite a different action plan. Like Van Huyck, Hassan views housing as an instrument of development, as well as a socially desirable commodity and a consumer industry. These three concepts suggest quite different sets of interventions. Housing as a consumer industry leads to the emergence of housing classes. The idea of housing as socially desirable or as an instrument of development calls for rather different and stronger programmes of government intervention. Housing could be built in order to promote the economic health of a nation, to stabilize its currency, or to prevent migration into less economically active or advantaged areas. The middle class bias of the bureaucracies may interfere with these strategies, and bias the interventions which

are actually made away from the poor and toward the middle class.

Hassan uses a case study of Singapore to show public housing emerging as a major strategy. Whereas the new public housing estates are ethnically heterogeneous and economically homogeneous, the old housing system was the opposite: economically heterogeneous and ethnically homogeneous. Singapore developed four major ethnic subdivisions, with the Europeans, Chinese, Indians and Malays situated near their traditional places of employment. The administration of the public housing estates fails to maintain this sort of ethnic homogeneity.

Hassan and his students have carried out a study of conditions in Singapore's public housing estates, with children as a primary focus of interest. They have looked, for instance, at the issue of crowding, at where the children play, the parents' attitude toward their social environment. One important finding is that delinquency seems to increase with crowding. Crowded conditions also seem to be a hindrance to study, although mothers do not associate poor school results with environmental conditions. They argue instead that the children are stupid and have a low aspiration level. Hassan questions whether these attitudes are being internalized by the children themselves, thereby guaranteeing an enduring apathy and low level of performance. He talks as well about the impersonality and superficiality of social contacts in the public housing estates as normative modes of behaviour. Both parents and children become aware of the extreme routinization of social life, associating ideals of wealth and progress with material wealth. Clustered together, these facts yield a possible indictment of the new public high-rises which I think is important for all of us to hear.

Correa's paper discusses the scale of the housing problem much in the manner of Van Huyck. The problem is large and the population very poor, and new construction of any type is impossible if one expects the poor to pay for it. Correa reminds us that traditional building has indeed worked, and while it may not be a panacea it is worth examining very carefully. Although he ob-

serves that urban land has been preempted from housing use because it calls for higher densities than traditional building has been able to provide, he challenges that perception later in his paper. He believes that housing is not simply a product for shelter, but instead it is a process of creating a residential environment for people. This process consists of four different scales or types of use: areas for exclusively private use, for intimate neighbourly contact, for neighbourhood meetings and, finally, the principal urban space such as the madina. Correa goes on to challenge the usual notion of mere shelter as a sufficient response to housing need, by saying that some elements can be open to the sky and still satisfy some of these four requisites of housing.

He challenges the density argument usually made by people who believe we cannot afford to build at low densities in cities, pointing out that if densities double, building heights may have to jump as much as ten times. Increasing density does not result in land savings sufficient to offset the fact that lower housing is more sensitive to the social, cultural, religious and environmental concerns and patterns of the population. In addition, the planning, design, construction, maintenance and management of the higher buildings is largely in the hands of the middle class, whereas all of those activities at lower densities can be carried out by the poor. Thus the introduction of higher and more expensive housing types results in a profound redistribution of income from the poor to the middle class. I think Correa is saying that one can more sensitively make tradeoffs among the four divisions of housing if one is working at ground level, depending on different needs in ritual and life patterns. In a high-rise flat it is very difficult to challenge any of the well-defined spatial divisions.

I wish Mr. Correa could have spoken more to the idea of urban context, which he did not have time to develop very fully in the paper. He does close with some comments on the role and responsibility of the architect, and not surprisingly urges that first the architect help to generate the new urban context. He cites New Bombay as an example of attention to some concerns of the

urban context, including job location, transportation, patterns of residential density, desire lines and so on.

The second responsibility of the architect is to return to the role of the site *mistri*, the master builder, the expert who formerly helped the low income community to build in a simple and appropriate fashion. The *mistri* brought experience and good sense and particularly a wonderful visual sense to those attempting to build for themselves. Correa further observes that the traditional training of architects, contractors and engineers militates against the likelihood that they would ever enter into professional relationships of this type. By and large their training is of a more traditional and highly specialized type, dealing with more aggregated problems and with people who are well organized enough to employ professional services—in short, contemporary training serves an elite population. I have perhaps extrapolated a bit beyond what was said in the paper, but that is a prerogative of personal commentary.

N. Ardalan

It is a unique privilege to review and comment upon three very important works, each of which addresses the question of creating relevant housing in Islam. Before commencing that challenging task, however, some general observations might help our deliberations regain an understanding and a sense of balance of the important considerations.

The seminar thus far has been dominated by a preponderance of papers whose main emphases have been social, economic, legal and political. In short, most of the concerns expressed have been non-visual, non-physical and fundamentally focused on process. The three papers follow this general tendency.

The development of criteria for an award in architecture is one of the primary aims of this seminar. It is therefore difficult to see how an award can be given only to a process, which involves mainly legislation and administration. Certainly a wholesome

process plays an important part in the creation of architecture, but there must also be concern for form and for the visual image, in order for aesthetic beauty and environmental comfort to result. I take it as axiomatic that a quest for beauty, the inclusion of relevant symbolic meaning and the achievement of certain minimum environmental comforts are the undeniable rights of the human condition, regardless of economic constraints or religious beliefs.

Therefore, in my capacity as a practicing architect from the Muslim world, I shall attempt to address my comments to three issues of concern. First is a critical review of the three papers with respect to their relevance to the problem of creating appropriate housing within Islamic cultures. Second, I shall attempt to complement the "process bias" with a substantive concern for the role of purposeful form in the architecture of Islam. Third, I intend to suggest areas of future research and inquiry, which may prove useful in the search for new directions in the vital issues confronting housing in the Islamic world.

The first work to be commented upon is by a group basically of the orient, but working in the occident on topics principally related to the Muslim world. This is a professional group composed of Mona Serageldin and spokesman Kadri ElAraby, in consultation with William Doebele. The second paper is the work of John Turner, one of the important thinkers of our age concerned with new directions in the world order. Finally we have the work of N. John Habraken, who in profound humility provides us with the concept of "the gardener" as a professional model to be emulated in order to aid our resolution of the problem of housing.

To begin with, in Serageldin's work we are looking at a historic document. It is one of the exceptional surveys of historic deeds and documents of the Arab world, and one of the first such reviews undertaken in contemporary times by Muslim scholars. If we are to seek firm foundations for our thoughts and precedents for our future actions, such documents are invaluable tools. The study deals principally with the formal legislative process and the self-legislative processes of an Islamic society, with reference to the land

tenure systems of Arab countries. Of course, the work gives rise to a series of questions. For instance, do the non-Arab cultures of Islam also relate in the same way to the concepts presented in this document? What are the regional variations of these concepts in countries such as Indonesia, the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent, Iran, Turkey and other non-Arab cultures of the Islamic world?

Another area of concern relates to the mode and limitations of the presentation. The work has been presented as a selective series of factual translations. There appears to be no inclination toward commentary upon the texts; the potential benefits of a synthesis or suggestions for the possible integration of traditional ideas into twentieth-century problem solving are therefore absent. So, the question that we hope Mr. ElAraby will be able to help us with is: "What are the future prospects of studying such deeds, legislations and land tenure systems, and can they give us a relevant and timely sense of order for new Islamic communities and for the new housing patterns that we seek?"

I now turn to the second paper. John Turner is one of those pioneering visionaries who has been asking for the creation of a new world economic order. That is indeed a sizable task, but he has persisted for years in this school of thought and we now find seeds of his concerns and theories germinating in many parts of the world. However, it is important to remember that they are theories, and the existing world order does not look very similar to these ideas. Consequently, we really have very little feedback on the applicability and results of such new world conceptions. It is fair to ask what the experiential results of these theories have been. Next, it is necessary to question the real relevance of such theories to Islamic cultures. I believe that the paper presented is so vast, and so much an outgrowth of theoretical studies of Third World economics in general, that it cannot be assumed to have direct relevance to the realities and ideals of specifically Islamic cultures.

The paper does not develop a substantive argument nor evidence to support the contention that its theories are usable in a conference on Islamic culture, and particularly

on the issue of housing within that cultural context. Although it can be argued that Islamic countries fall into the Third World category economically, there is too much lacking in the paper to allow any further assumptions to be made. The final point that deserves mention is that the paper presents an approach to the solution of housing that is totally non-visual and solely process-oriented. The expressed theme of this seminar is Housing in Islam—Process and Physical Form. While the process aspects of the paper are commendable, there is a necessarily coincident appreciation of form that is missing. I therefore find Mr. Turner's argument considerably less convincing.

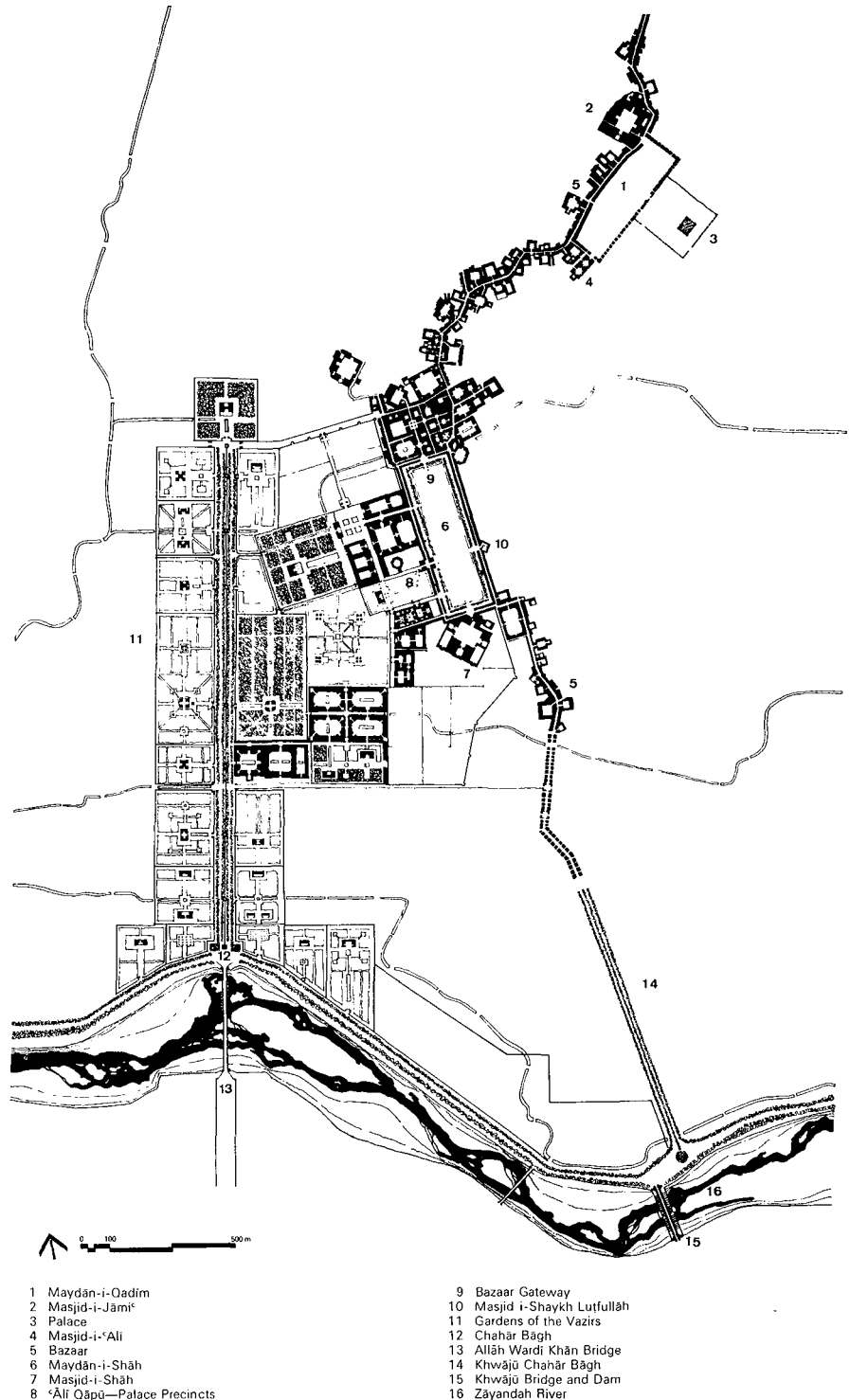
The third and last paper is by N. John Habraken, who introduces the "gardener" concept as a rediscovered model of the professional architect. He is suggesting that professional intervention should place only the seeds of architectural ideas, nourish and care for the growth of the plant and then leave the evolution of the final form to the prospective users. This notion, of course, raises another series of vital questions. Who chooses the type of "plant form" to be cultivated, and for what reasons would certain plant forms be suitable (and therefore survive) while others would not? Is it not the role of the gardener to come equipped with the knowledge to make such decisions? If so, then is "the gardener" simply another metaphor for the craft and profession of architecture and its related disciplines?

The twelfth century Persian poet Jalal-id-din Rumi has said in a poem: "Were there no hope of the fruit, would the gardener have planted the tree?" Here Rumi observes that fruit, seed and tree are really simultaneous realities of a totality, representing only a natural process of transformation frozen at certain periods into distinct forms. Therefore, it is not enough just to place the seed; there must be an envisioning of its eventual form and a directed maintenance of its correct growth.

We have witnessed several different conditions of "seed placement" and their resultant forms in our tours through the Jakarta environs. I believe we saw three different basic attitudes and results (these are evident in the *Site Visits* photo-essay). There was

also a qualitative difference: the three projects ranged from the products of a religious community to a private developer to a semi-public developer. The first had stronger visual and social coherence, its maintenance of traditional forms and materials was higher and there was conscious care for both process and form. Would not a detailed case study of these qualitative differences help identify more relevant Islamic housing procedures and patterns in Indonesia? I believe that it would. If such differences are evident in Indonesia between successful community development based upon traditional models, versus less successful developments growing out of the loss of traditional consciousness, then it may also be possible to observe similar patterns in other Islamic cultures. I shall attempt to present three sets of object lessons from Persia, an Islamic society totally different from Indonesia, in the hope of illustrating the lessons that may be gained from a comparative study of complementary cultures. Of course, the study only serves to touch some points of concern, as such studies require greater in-depth scholarship than the present context allows. The ecology that I have chosen is very much the polar opposite of the hot-wet, tropical islands of Indonesia, for Persia is principally a mountainous plateau with great hot-arid plains and deserts.

The first object lesson is the value of "the whole to part continuity" and the example to be cited is the city of Isfahan in central Iran. Viewing the city today reveals a compact settlement pattern composed of introverted courtyard structures, environmentally well-adapted and culturally representative of social integration of a high order. It is significant to observe also that this social integrity produces a highly visual environment possessing a distinct Islamic identity and a discernible language of form. Next, it is important to remember that the Islamic city of the tenth century A.D. reached a major cultural peak in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and continues to be an important centre in the twentieth century. It manifests a settlement morphology of nearly one thousand years, in which continuity and change were both accommodated in dynamic yet harmonious ways.



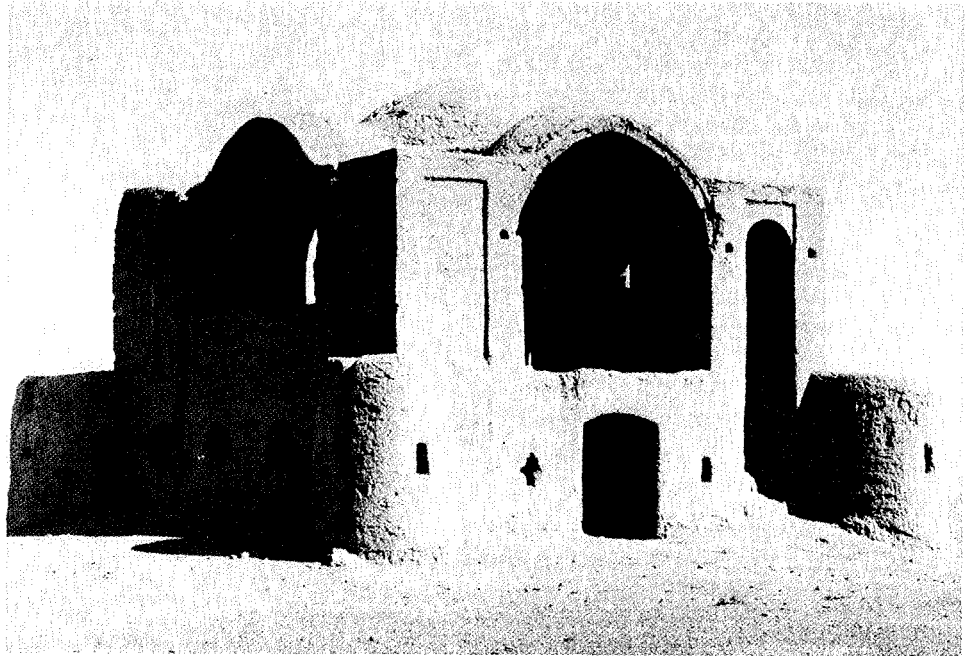
Plan of Isfahan, Iran, showing the major monuments and their harmonious integration

Plan: From Ardalan and Bakhtiar, The Sense of Unity

In such an urban pattern housing hardly exists as a separate entity, since it is the idea of community at different urban scales that is the sustaining force of the town. Even the basic unit of the town is not the house, it is the kinship clustering of courtyard houses around communal entrances (*hashtis*). These clusters form quarters (*mahalles*) with their own nodes of social amenities (mosques, baths, etc.), services (*bazarcheh*, etc.) and pathways, often controlled by gateways into the quarter. The great linear bazaar of Isfahan unites these many quarters of the town into a totality of great coherence and imageability. The bazaar form itself is a vital and practical symbol of integration, for it contains the places associated with the major institutions of the society: the congregational Friday mosque, local mosques and shrines, many caravanserais, the hospital, the treasury, the great square, the royal palaces and the numerous shops of various trade and craft guilds. If one sought the answer in Isfahan to the question "what is Islamic housing," the response might be as follows: housing in Islam can only be understood in terms of the Islamic community, for so strongly is Islam identified in Persia with a social and communal way of life.

The second of the object lessons concerns the classic Persian literary metaphor of mud (*khesht*) and mirror (*ayneh*). This is a commonplace imagery, arising from the mud and desert environments of the villages and settlements of Iran which, ironically, produce some of the world's most delicate and refined carpets of silk and fine wool. The metaphoric concept deals with the idea of complementarity, and posits mud (viewed as earthly, unpolished and imperfect) as the complementary opposite of the mirror (viewed as heavenly, polished and perfect). In poetic imagery, mud stands for the ontological unconscious, the "participation mystic" of the peasant and his folkloric ways, while the mirror represents ontological consciousness, actively reflecting the creative visionary intellect of the master craftsmen.

This creativity differs from creativity known in the occident, for it works to perfect a given set of architectural themes. Here we shall consider just one of these themes, the *chahār t̄āq* or quaternary architectural idea.

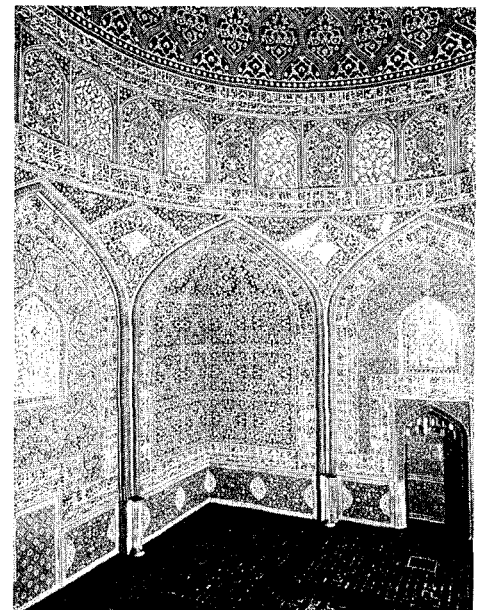


Kashan, Iran. A mud mausoleum of chahār t̄āq plan

Photo: From Ardalan and Bakhtiar, The Sense of Unity

As both processes of realization stem from a traditional world view or gestalt, they are firmly rooted in Islam, yet the folkloric basically repeats with minor variations a pattern handed down by tradition; the master's work comes fresh from each new creative realization of the same basic theme. Together they exemplify the harmony of a structured, societal acceptance of given patterns and ways of action, while allowing for new interventions and creations that still fortify and maintain the ontological continuity and symbolic meaning of the whole society. Only when faced with entirely new problems is there a provocation to create new forms. This is perhaps one of the reasons for the relative stability of architectural forms in Islamic Persia.

Two examples embody these principles. One is a mausoleum from Kashan dating from the early twentieth century, and the other is the Shaykh Lutfallāh in Isfahan of the seventeenth century. Both are *chahār t̄āq* plans, but while the former is literally made from the mud of its immediate surroundings in a



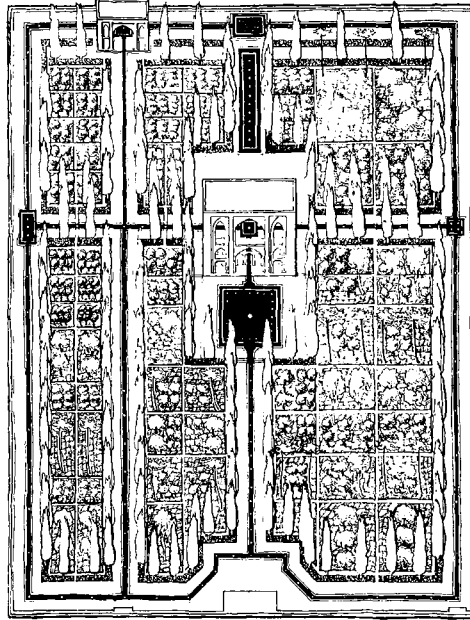
Isfahan, Iran Interior of the Shaykh Lutfallāh mosque: detail of tile work

Photo: University of Pennsylvania

repeat form that goes back even to pre-Islamic Iran, the latter is a highly sophisticated development of the same theme, exploring the new considerations of larger spaces and structural spans, glazed faience techniques and color imagery. In concept the *chahār tāq* has remained the archetypal sacred place in Iran, wherein the sacred fire had burned in pre-Islamic times. In Islamic history it became associated with the place of the *mihrāb* in the mosque, the tomb of a saint and even the palace pavilions set in the Paradise Gardens.

One of the primary lessons to be gained from this study is the knowledge that the creative impulse, in the traditional sense, needs to be focused and directed. Next, it is necessary to remember that Islamic society has always recognized hierarchy, personal capacity and individual inclinations, emulating all nature in these considerations. Therefore, the will of the people has been best interpreted by those guilds and master craftsmen who have had the ability to synthesize and realize the needs and aspirations of society in actual material terms. In the field of architecture, "experts" have always existed and have helped people design and build their homes and their communities. Their domains of intervention and levels of integration with the society were formerly much more pervasive than what we experience today. The *memar* (mason), *mohandes* (engineer) and the *mistri* (master builder) had always helped in the evolution of both the symbolic and physical needs of the community. Today, with these strong traditions broken or in a state of near collapse, the need for the master builder is stronger than ever before. Without such input the house tends to be reduced to a mere shelter, and the settlement to an agglomeration of chaotic and disparate parts lacking unity and environmental harmony.

The final object lesson relates to a particular Koranic aesthetic ideal which forms one of the basic archetypal images of placemaking in Islam. The reference is to the vision of the prophet Muḥammad entitled "the night-sea journey," as documented in the Hadith. Here, with the guidance of the angel Gabriel, the prophet of Islam as the universal prototype of all Muslims experiences a vision of paradise. From then on, through-



Kashan, Iran Plan of the Bāgh-i-fin courtyard

Plan: From Ardalan and Bakhtiar, *The Sense of Unity*

out the holy Koran, this particular paradisiacal image is referred to as the ideal state of environmental serenity and human aspiration. The image is of a garden of bliss wherein is contained a central pavilion composed of four columns supporting a pearly dome of great majesty. Upon each column is inscribed one quarter of the Koranic formula "*Bismillah Rahman-i-Raheem*" (in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate). Under the central dome gushes a fountain (*salsabil*), and between these four columns flow the rivers of beauty. Together they form four rivers (one of water, one of milk, one of honey and one of wine) that flow in the four cardinal directions, nourishing a paradise garden in which all blessed life exists in perfection.

So visually powerful is this image of the ideal place, and so accommodating to an Islamic way of life, that for centuries the aesthetic schemes of the house (in terms of both courtyard house or garden pavilion) have been based upon this imagery. The innovative designer in Islam found it meaningful to conjure such symbolic imagery in

his work, thereby bringing into being micro-climates well adapted to the hot-arid environments of the Middle East and to the visionary mandates of the culture.

From this brief study we can derive an understanding of the value of purposeful imagery, and the need to reactivate such emulative imperatives in the minds of modern society. Without such visual imperatives, the process of rebuilding our communities will lack formal definition and a sense of agreement.

I have reviewed and commented upon three of the seminar presentations, and have myself presented some key object lessons from Islamic tradition to help reveal the historic precedents of a framework for our considerations. I should now like to suggest that some answers to the questions surrounding the issue of relevant housing for Islamic cultures may lie in the following areas of detailed, scientific investigation.

One, an Inventory of Islamic Houses: at the scale of the family, to document and investigate both the quantitative and qualitative principles of order operative in the design, construction and usage of the house, in each of the ecological and cultural variations of the Islamic societies through history.

Two, an Inventory of Islamic Settlements: at the scale of the community, to document and investigate both qualitative and quantitative principles operative in the design, construction and usage of human settlements in each of the diverse ecological and cultural zones of the Islamic societies.

Three, a Survey of the Role of the Professional Craft Guilds in Islamic Architecture: with regard to the role of professional intervention, to reinvestigate the participatory roles of the master mason, the *mistri* and the *mohandes* in Islamic history, and to pursue the idea of "originality" in the context of traditional creativity and building. These possible areas of investigation might serve to structure our group discussion sessions.