M. Reza Shirazi

Contemporary Architecture and Urbanism in Iran

Tradition, Modernity, and the Production of 'Space-in-Between'

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Preface

Iranian architect Bahram Shirdel, whose work has been referred to in this book, in an interview with Shargh Daily (18 June 2016) contends that Iranian architects are generally 'Westoxification' (*Gharbzade*). He argues that traditionalist and modernist architects in Iran are two sides of the same coin; they are incapable of bringing original Iranian archetypes into the twenty-first century context and generate a particular type of development which is rooted in our historical architecture and urbanism.

This statement, from an architect who graduated from Western architectural schools and collaborated with some prominent thinkers and architects such as Jeffrey Kipnis and Peter Eisenman, resonates with a long-standing question which Vartan Avanessian addressed some 70 years ago. In the first issue of the magazine 'Architect' published in August 1946, Avanessian raised a challenging question which, I would argue, is still the central question for Iranian architects and urban planners, if not for all individuals and intellectuals. He noted that Iranian architects 'are faced with two differing viewpoints; should one imitate the past and recreate the valuable works of that era; or should one look to the future and adapt architectural design to the modern way of life'. In fact, this oscillation between two extremes of Modernity and Tradition has been the essential, ontological and practical question which has overwhelmed the production of urban space in Iran during the past 150 years. Standing or moving between two affirmative and negative modes towards Modernity and Tradition has registered itself as a critical 'urban condition': a state of uncertainty and continuous tension which has not always been constructive but destructive in social, political, cultural and economic realms. This book addresses this long-standing 'urban condition' in the architecture and urban planning disciplines.

This book is rooted in my 20 years of intellectual engagement with the same question Avanessian raised: the challenge of Tradition and Modernity in various aspects of contemporary Iran, including architecture and urbanism. I was particularly interested in looking at turning points in which these two extremes could interact and reconcile in a creative way and generate a condition in-between to which I refer in this book as 'space-in-between': a state of affairs in which two

extremes are in tension but constructively communicate and interchange. Architecture and urban planning of the late 1960s and 1970s until the advent of the Islamic Revolution in 1979 were rich enough to produce such a space-in-between.

My work on the theory of Critical Regionalism (Kenneth Frampton) during 2005–2009 provided me with the necessary grounded knowledge to look at the architectural and urban works of this period from a different but systematic perspective. The more I contemplated this theory, the more I became confident that the architectural works of three leading architects, namely Kamran Diba, Nader Ardalan, and Hossein Amanat, are authentic critical regionalist works in which a 'space-in-between' has been creatively produced.

The book has five chapters. The first chapter shows how architecture and urban planning in Tehran have been crystallized in a space between two extremes of Westernization and modernization on the one hand, and Traditionalism on the other. It underlines the exigency of a mediatory approach, what I refer to as the 'in-between', through which the two arms of the dichotomy can come together in a continuous, productive dialogue. The second chapter introduces the theory of Critical Regionalism as a theory of 'in-between' and discusses its central arguments. The third chapter is a critical regionalist analysis of the writings, projects and works of three architects, Diba, Ardalan and Amanat. It demonstrates how central qualities of a critical regionalist approach have been concretized and manifested in these works in order to form a 'space-in-between'. In the next chapter, these architects respond to my challenging questions which encourage them to narrate their singular narrative from the production of 'space-in-between' and their substantial contribution to it. Two final chapters go beyond the 1970s and show how the architecture and urbanism of post-revolutionary Iran continued to take place within two extremes of Modernity and Tradition. It argues for the urgency of the creation of a new 'space-in-between' which reflects the possibilities and needs of the contemporary and future Iran.

I do believe that the contemporary architecture and urbanism of Iran has not yet been sufficiently documented, studied and analysed. This book, I hope very much, could be a valuable contribution to this lacuna.

Oxford, UK   M. Reza Shirazi
August 2017

Acknowledgements

I would also like to honour the architect and educator Houshang Seyhoun for his inspiring contribution to the contemporary architecture and urban planning of Iran. I remember the rainy spring day in May 2011 in Vancouver, as he approached me with a copy of his book 'Houshang Seyhoun: Half a century of artistic activities in the world of art and architecture' in hand. I was deeply touched by his passion for Iranian architecture, dedication to teaching the younger generation, and his hopes for a better future. Regrettably, he passed away in 2014, but his works, as I have noted in this book, are prominent examples for a place-specific architecture inspired by both treasure of tradition and achievements of Modernism.

Contents

Chapter 1
Mapping the 'In-Between'

In the opening chapter of the book I, use Paul Ricoeur's classic text, *Universal Civilization and Natural Culture* (1965) as a point of departure. The text intends to show how developing countries, including Iran, confront a twofold problem: the necessity of understanding the country's profound personality and rootedness in the soil of the past, at one extreme, and at the other, the scientific, technical and cultural rationality of modern civilization. In other words, these countries face the crucial challenge of becoming modern and yet returning to their original sources, or of simultaneously reviving an old, dormant civilization while also taking part in universal civilization. In the first chapter, I argue that the general history of Iran over the last 150 years, and particularly its architectural and urban transformation, has oscillated between the two extremes of the West, Modernization and Modernity (*Tajaddod*) on the one hand, and the East, Nationalism and Tradition (*Sonnat*) on the other.

To explain this tension, I review intellectual discourses from the middle of the nineteenth century up to 1970s which represent these two extremes. I present a detailed overview of the history of architecture and urban transformation in the city of Tehran in order to show how different trends of Westernization, Modernization and Universalization have been reflected in architectural buildings and urban projects, and how these manifestations have mirrored the intellectual and theoretical debates of the time. This highlights the exigency of a mediatory approach, what I refer to as the 'In-Between', through which the two arms of the dichotomy can come together in a continuous, productive dialogue. Thus, this chapter provides a foundation for exploring such an approach, through the mediatory potential offered by the concept of Critical Regionalism, in the second chapter.

1.1   The Question of the 'In-Between'

In the process of industrialization, Ricoeur (2007) argues, we confront a continuous tension between the necessity of free access to progress and to the exigency of safeguarding our heritage. Due to the aggressive influx of universalization, techniques might be invented in a region, but they spread rapidly across the world and become accessible to the public. This process might be delayed but never could be stopped, so that 'an invention rightfully belongs to mankind as a whole' (Ricoeur 2007: 46).

From the political vantage point, the growth of a state rooted in the man's rationality, and consequently the necessity of moving from a centralized to a democratic power, has become a universal phenomenon. This worldwide tendency towards the universal covers a range of fields including economy, science and culture, to the extent that one may talk about a universal way of living: standard housing, clothing, transportation and leisure are all consistent parts of a worldwide consumption culture. This attitude has some advantages for world civilization, Ricoeur states: there exists a minimum degree of comfort, a common awareness concerning man's participation in making his own history, a progressive sense of autonomy, and an increasing advance towards an 'elementary level of culture'.

But this is just one side of the reality. Pointing to the destructive side of universalization Ricoeur writes, 'This single world civilization at the same time exerts a sort of attrition or wearing away at the expense of the cultural resources which have made the great civilizations of the past' (ibid.: 47). In the context of underdeveloped countries,[1] this jeopardy is of a vital importance, in that they confront a twofold problem: on the one hand, the necessity of unearthing country's profound personality and rootedness in the soil of its history; on the other hand, the necessity of taking part in the scientific, technical and cultural rationality of modern civilization which may necessitate abandoning the whole cultural past. Ricoeur continues, 'There is the paradox: how to become modern and to return to sources; how to revive an old, dormant civilization and take part in universal civilization' (ibid.: 47).

In this context, Ricoeur advocates the existence of various cultures, instead of a single cultural style. These multiple cultures, rooted in various languages and historical backgrounds, make it possible to establish different contexts of civilization, and generate a culture-oriented civilization released from the dominant values of world civilization. But to be able to survive and preserve the character of a culture, it is necessary to be 'capable of assimilating scientific rationality', not repeating the past and producing 'a simple folkloric ornamentation', rather to be rooted in the past 'in order to ceaselessly invent' (ibid.: 51). Ricoeur concludes that 'Only a living culture, at once faithful to its origins and ready for creativity on the levels of art, literature, philosophy, and spirituality, is capable of sustaining the

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[1]The original date of this article, 1965, and the change of terminology over the course of time should be considered.

encounter of other cultures—not merely capable of sustaining but also of giving meaning to that encounter' (ibid.: 52). To achieve this goal, an authentic dialogue among civilizations is unavoidable, a communication which affirms the origins of a civilization but remains open to other civilizations. This is the only possible way to meet the above-mentioned problem and bring together the two poles of the paradox.

1.2 Around the 'In-Between'

Ricoeur's concern is very meaningful in the Middle Eastern context, where the challenge between Modernism and Traditionalism, or in his words the paradox of being modern and returning to sources, has been a continuous tension since the early nineteenth century. And this is clearly observable in the case of Iran. In a sense, the history of the last 150 years in Iran has been permeated by the confrontation between the West, Modernization and Modernity (*Tajaddod*) on the one hand, and the East, Nationalism, and Tradition (*Sonnat*) on the other (Makdisi 1966; Abrahamian 1982; Jahanbegloo 2003; Behnam 2003; Alsayyad 2008). This confrontation has been first reflected in the intelligentsia, who for different reasons and from diverse perspectives discovered and highlighted the deficiency of the ruling system and lifeworld, brought forth the urgency of going beyond limitations and obstacles, and tried to set some pointers for the direction in which society should move. However, this confrontation has not stayed within the bounds of a theoretical dispute in the intellectual sphere; rather, as will be elaborated in this chapter, it has gone beyond this in its impacts on Iranian cities and architecture, which were traditionally grounded in the repetition or reinterpretation of certain typical patterns. At the end of the nineteenth century, in response to the incursion of the Western way of life into the traditional lifeworld of Iranians, cities changed to adapt themselves to the new requirements of urban living. The case of Tehran significantly reflects this process of transformation and confrontation. Although the first streams of change and modern thought initially appeared in Tabriz, as the centre of Iranian politics and culture, Tehran remained the main field of confrontation.

In order to portray this intellectual conflict and illustrate how the architecture and urbanism of Tehran has always oscillated between the two extremes of Traditionalism and Westernization, the trajectory of transfiguration in architecture and urbanism in Tehran will be investigated through the framework of a number of generative discourses, supported by an overview of the related intellectual debates and theoretical discussions. At the outset, it should be noted that this study is not intended as a chronological survey, although it follows a historical sequence. The main objective is to discover and highlight the extremes—their emergence, theoretical and political background and their architectural and urban manifestations.

1.2.1   Traditionalism

Before the import of Western ideas of development into the lifeworld of the inhabitants of Middle Eastern cities and the onset of Westernization, settlements mostly took the form of traditional communities where dwelling forms were shaped by indigenous sociocultural and environmental concerns (Alsayyad 2008). Structurally, Tehran remained a traditional city up to the end of the nineteenth century in terms of urban structure and configuration, despite growing changes occurred in the infrastructure, population and urbanization landscape of the country (Marefat 1988; Amirahmadi 2012). While it was only a very small village with underground houses in the thirteenth century, it underwent reconfiguration in 1553 when the Safavid king Tahmasb built a bazaar, town walls with four gates and a moat. Later in 1589, Shah Abbas built a *Chahar-Bagh*[2] (four gardens) and a *Chenarestan*[3] (plane grove) in the northern part of the town and transformed it into a typical Iranian city (Zaka 1970). But Tehran had a fairly sparse population (Curzon 1892) up to 1785, when Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar selected it as the location for the Persian capital (Lockhart 1960). The Qajars tried to follow and re-establish the Shi'ite governing system of the Safavids, which had been weakened during the rule of the Afshars (1726–1747) and Zands (1750–1779), and legitimate themselves as the faithful Shi'ite dynasty (Kamali 1998). In this regard, Tehran's cityscape had to be transformed into an ideal traditional city by means of building places of religious observance like mosques, as well as the typical traditional urban components of bazaar, Hammam (public bath), Madrassa (school), and so forth.

By 1796 Tehran had 15,000 inhabitants, and already in 1811 this had grown to between 40,000 and 60,000 inhabitants (Madanipour 1998). The 1857 map of 'Darol-Khelafeh-ye Tehran' (The Seat of the Kingdom of Tehran) drawn by August Kriziz, an Austrian teacher in Dar-ol-Fonun, with the help of his students Zolfagar Beg and Mohammad Taqi Khan (Marefat 1988), depicts a traditional homogeneous city with its typical institutions and components: a citadel on the northern side, a bazaar extending from the south of the citadel linked to the Friday and Shah mosques, and four residential quarters surrounded by a polygonal wall (Fig. 1.1). The city had two main squares, of which the Meydan-e Arg (citadel square) lay inside the citadel, and the Sabzeh Meydan (Herb Market) functioned as the public square of the city. As Madanipour explains, the structure of the city 'was an axial spatial structure with a clear functional organization: a political authority (royal

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[2]*Chahar-Bagh*, literally meaning four gardens, refers to the typical geometric and spatial configuration of a Persian garden, which consists of two main axes, generally marked by a watercourse, dividing the entire garden into four sections.

[3]*Chenar* means plane tree; *chenrestan* is literally a garden of plane trees. *Chenar* used to be a typical tree in Persian gardens, tall of stature and a metaphor for beauty and dignity in literature and poems.
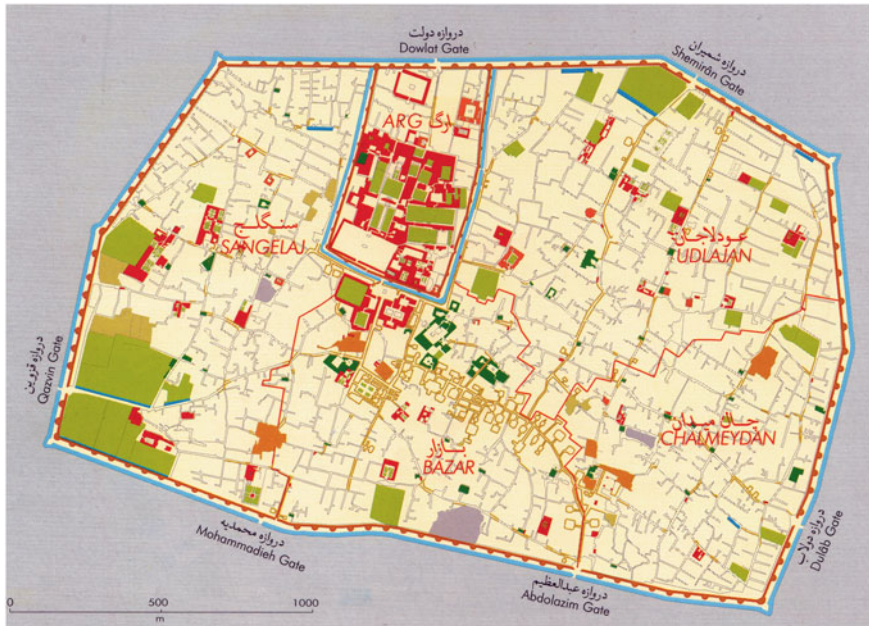
Fig. 1.1 Tehran map, 1857 (Tehran Municipality)

compound), an economic centre (bazaar), a religious focus (Friday mosque), and the living places of the townspeople (four quarters)' (Madanipour 1998: 30).[4]

1.2.2 Westernization

In Iran, the initial confrontation between premodern Iranian-Islamic society and European culture resulted in the idea of 'Westernization'. At this period, to be modern implied being Western and behaving like a Westerner, that is the 'adaptation and application of modern Western civilization to a traditional Persian-Islamic society' (Farman Farmayan 1968: 119) 'to rebuild Iran in the image of the West' (Abrahamian 1982: 140). This tendency was based on the presupposition that the only valued civilization is Western civilization and the only option is its immediate imitation (Behnam 2003: 3).

Actually, the need to modernize was first recognized by Abbas Mirza (1789–1833), the crown prince of Fath Ali Shah (1772–1834), who in 1813 and 1825

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[4]For more details regarding the structure and governance of *Mahalle* see: Marefat (1988).

fought two campaigns against Russian aggression in the northwest of Iran, both of them ending in disaster and defeat.[5] He concluded that the only way to win the war against Russia was to reorganize and re-equip the army based on a new system of education and administration, which he called the '*Nazm-e Jadid*' (New Order).

The leading figures of this period presented different understandings of development and progress and contributed to introducing social and political changes in different ways. Fundamental administrative reforms were executed by Mirza Taghi Khan Farahani (1807–1852), known as Amir Kabir, the chief minister of Nasereddin Shah, who in 1851 established 'Dar-ol-Fonun', the first polytechnic college in Tehran which purveyed an alternative body of knowledge from that traditionally taught (Ringer 2003). It was designed by Mirza Reza Mohandesbashi, one of a number of students sent to England by Abbas Mirza to study civil engineering, and was erected using local labour (Bani Masud 2009), but managed by a team of professionals hired from France, Austria and Italy.

The most extreme tendency to westernize was reflected in the work of Mirza Malkom Khan (1833–1908), an Armenian-born citizen from Isfahan who had converted to Islam. He believed in complete westernization and making everything European style: 'The survival of Persia depends on the adaptation of Western civilization' (Adamiyat 1970: 123). The elite, as well as the king, were greatly inspired by these exhortations, as illustrated by the first photograph taken of Nasereddin Shah, which shows him dressed in the European style (Gurney 1996).

The first transformation of Tehran can be understood and analysed within the process of westernization.[6] In 1867, Iranian diplomats urged Nasereddin Shah to accept Napeleon III's invitation to visit Paris during the Exposition Universelle (Çelik 1992), with the anticipation that the Shah's visit to Europe might encourage him to accelerate the pace of reform in Iran, and that 'seeing Paris would give the shah the necessary perspective to contrast Iran's position with that of the putatively more advanced West' (Marsahi 2008: 22).[7] This visit did not take place at that time, but some years later Nasereddin Shah made three visits to Europe—in 1873, 1878 and 1889. The order for urban transformation and city expansion was given around 1868 by the Shah.[8] A team was commissioned to carry out these works, led by

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[5]Iran conducted two wars against Russia. The first war (1804–13) ended with a peace treaty that ceded part of a territory including present-day Georgia, Dagestan, and most of the present-day Republic of Azerbaijan. The second war, starting from 1826, although it was partly successful at the outset, nevertheless culminated in another disadvantageous peace treaty that ceded nearly all of Iran's Armenian territories and Nakhchivan.

[6]The process of Westernization was already under way in other countries in the Middle East, particularly Istanbul and Cairo. For a detailed description see: Abu-Lughod (1971), Çelik (1986).

[7]Both Khediv Ismail of Egypt and Sultan Abdolaziz of the Ottoman Empire received an invitation from Paris and visited the exhibition, though Nasereddin Shah did not attend. For more details see Çelik (1992).

[8]Since the visits to Europe took place after the commencement of the city expansion, it is difficult to argue that the new proposed configuration of the city was the result of the direct influence of European cities, including Paris, on the Shah. But it can be imagined that his travelling and visits to Europe encouraged him to accelerate new construction and development.

Fig. 1.2 Tehran map, 1890 (Tehran Municipality)

General Buhler, a French teacher at Dar-ol-Fonun, who was inspired by the old fortifications of Paris and other French cities (Katouzian 1996) (Fig. 1.2). The new city plan took the form of a perfect octagon, enclosed by moats and walls, with 58 spearhead-shaped bastions, pierced with 12 gates (Zaka 1970). Consequently, the area of the city grew from 12 to 31 km^2 (Gurney 1996).

This phase of reshaping was not limited to the westernization of the formal configuration of the city, but influenced urban life too. New developments were located to the north of the old city and did not contain the traditional city core.[9] The construction of the new square of Tup-Khaneh (Cannon Square) included modern Western infrastructure such as the economic institution of the Imperial Bank of Persia, as well as newly established quarters for the homes of the aristocracy, foreign embassies and houses for European residents. However, the trend of

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[9]Marsahi (2008) argues that rebuilding the capital into an appropriately national capital with a central open cityscape and large boulevards in the European style provided space for the Shah's ceremonial activity, following his visit to Europe in 1873 and recognition of new methods of legitimation through ceremonial practices. The construction of Takyeh Dowlat, a large stage for practicing *ta'ziyeh*, a traditional theatrical event commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Hossein, was in line with this concept.

westernizing in the city did not overwhelm its traditional fabric; the result was a bi-cultural, bipolar society as can be seen from the 1891 map of Tehran. This map demonstrates two different urban patterns and hence two different urban lives: while the Old Sabze-Meydan in the city centre, linking the Arq (citadel) to the Bazaar complex, remained at the service of those who followed the traditional lifestyle, the newly established Tup-Khaneh Square provided a fresh focal point with its modern institutions for foreigners and high-class inhabitants. On the status of the new square, Alemi (1985: 82) writes:

> The square reflects the principal ambitions of the court and is a sort of exhibition hall for their new acquisitions: the military reform is perceived through the canons, the decorations and the nearby drill grounds; the technological innovations are to be seen in the use of gas for illumination, the telegraph, and the tramway; the new source of finance, the Imperial Bank of Persia, is the most important building facing the square.

This bipolar character of the developed city is well explained by the Western travellers who visited Tehran at that time.[10] Curzon[11] in 1892 writes that:

> In a word, we are in a city which was born and nurtured in the east, but is beginning to clothe itself at a west-end tailor's. European Tehran had certainly become, or is becoming; but yet, if the distinction can be made intelligible, it is being Europeanized upon Asiatic lines (Curzon 1892: 306).

Williams Jackson[12] writes about the simultaneous presence of the orient and the occident in the following terms:

> East and West combine imperfectly in the mixed civilization, with a far greater preponderance of the Orient, as is natural…all these [modern institutions] tell something of the influence of the Occident. But all the [old institutions and character] belong to the Orient and make Tehran as Oriental as any capital in the East. (Williams Jackson 1906: 418).

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[10]For a detailed insight into the accounts of travellers in Tehran, and the way they have observed, explained and interpreted this conflict between the new and old see Shirazi (2015).

[11]Sir George Nathaniel Curzon lived from 1859–1925, and published widely on the cities of Central Asia and the Middle East, including *Russia in Central Asia* (1889), *Persia and the Persian Question* (1892) and *Problems of the Far East* (1894). The book *Persia and the Persian Question*, written in 1892, is considered to be Curzon's magnum opus. The two-volume book covers a range of topics including Persia's history and political condition, and includes a detailed description of different cities, illustrated with graphics, maps and pictures. The Tehran section, 53 pages in length, is the result of his visit to this city in the autumn and winter of 1889.

[12]Abraham Valentine Williams Jackson, who lived from 1862–1937, was born in the city of New York, graduated from Columbia University in 1883 and was appointed professor of Indo-Iranian languages and public lecturer at Columbia in 1891. He wrote several books in this field, including *A Hymn of Zoroaster, Yasna XXXI* (1888); *An Avestan Grammar* (1892); *An Avestan Reader* (1893); and *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran* (1899). The spirit of scientific curiosity and adventure led him to Persia and central Asia in 1903, 1907 and 1910. The outcome of these visits was *Persia, Past and Present* (1906) and *From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam* (1911). He visited Tehran in 1903 and produced a 10 page report on the city that included eight illustrations.

And Bradley-Birt[13] (1910: 289) says that 'If there is a meeting-place of East and West it is Tehran. It is the most extraordinary conglomeration of things Asian and European, it is possible to conceive'. All these statements show that, to the eyes of these travellers, 'the city presents an ambivalent and ambiguous texture. It is no longer the traditional city, nor the modern European city. It is something in between, a conglomeration of old and new, tradition and Modernity, East and West' (Shirazi 2015: 250). And it is this character which gives Tehran peculiarity and differentiates it from other similar cities.

Bab-e Homayun Street (or Almasiyyeh Street) provides a fitting illustration of this contradictory situation (Fig. 1.3). This street links two building typologies together: the extroverted typology of the West with the introverted typology of the East. The urban landscape of the street is drastically westernized, and facades are opened up to the exterior through the large shop windows. Behind them, the old typology of the building is dominant: courtyard buildings in a compact arrangement. This structural contradiction is well reflected in the inhabitants' behaviour: European-style clothing appears side by side with the old traditional costumes, new means of transportation run beside old ones. It seems that although the city intends to give an impression of being new, it nevertheless continues to live traditionally, and the westernized city is appropriated and inhabited by the people in a traditional way. As Katouzian makes clear:

> The activities that were carried on in the avenue reflected the mingling of two civilizations: the cars and tramlines ran side by side with animals transporting men and goods; the shops displayed traditional goods together with Western imports; modern business alternated with craft workshops (Katouzian 1996: 36).

Thus, streets from that period allocate room for transportation purposes, and their urban space manifests the trend towards Westernization (Bani Masud 2009: 135). But behind them, the social texture remains old and steeped in traditional patterns (Gurney 1996: 65).

Although Buhler's intervention in Tehran was the first in a series of imported concepts to give the city a European image, the result has been interpreted differently. While Habibi observes a sense of continuity and dialogue between the old and new urban spaces (Habibi 2006: 145), Madanipour believes in a rupture and break with the past rather than a revival (Madanipour 1998: 200). These different interpretations indicate the intermediate condition of the city in which both sides of the old and the new are strongly observable. The city at that time represented basically two different kinds of urban life: it was neither a traditional city, nor a modern European city; it was something in between, a conglomeration of old and new, traditional and modern, East and West.

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[13]Francis Bradley Bradley-Birt, born in 1874 (d. 1963), was a diplomat and writer who started his career as an English member of the Indian Civil Service. His book *Through Persia, From the Gulf to the Caspian*, published in 1909, is based on his visit to Persia in 1906. The Tehran section comprises 18 pages, with some illustrations.
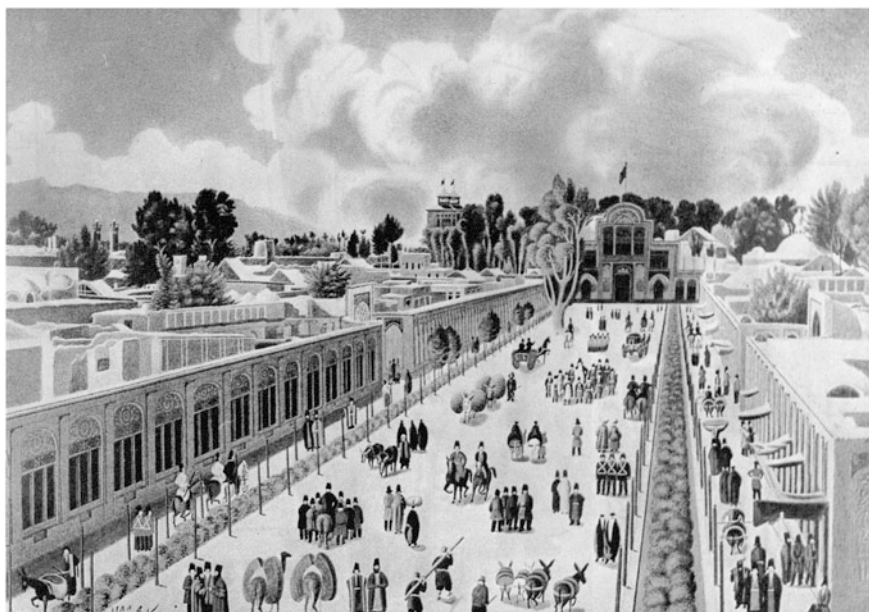
Fig. 1.3 Babe-Homayoun Street drawn by Khan Malek-ol-Shoara in 1871 (Golestan Palace)

1.2.3 Modernization–Nationalism

The growing tendency towards modernization stepped up to a rapid pace in Reza Shah's era. After World War I, Iran was in an unstable condition, divided up between local tribes and *khans*. Reza Shah (1921–1941), a former army officer in the Cossack Brigade, launched a broad programme of change in different areas to stimulate modernization and push Iran into the modern world. At this period, the imitation of one or another European country was not on the agenda, but the aim was rather to follow the growing universal tendency of establishing a modern government and society. In this regard, 'The realization of a *tabula rasa*, a utopian blank slate upon which a new Iran could be conceived "over again", was endemic to the strategies of Pahlavi modernization' (Grigor 2014: 97).

To achieve this goal, intensive economic, administrative and social reforms were implemented. Reza Shah ordered the expansion of the road network and the construction of the first railway. Moreover, he built a string of state-owned factories, and thus prepared the foundation on which the next stages of modernization could be erected. For Reza Shah, the secret of modernization lay in forgoing the many religious and social norms of traditional society in favour of the values of a twentieth-century nation state. The administrative machinery and bureaucracy was widely expanded to exercise control over diverse fractions of society and different parts of the country. Educational reform took place to substitute secular primary and

secondary schools for traditional institutions governed by clerics. The University of Tehran,[14] the country's first European-style university, was established in 1935, indirectly supported by influential statesmen with direct contact with Reza Shah (Catanzaro 2014). The result was the secularization of education on the one hand, and the emergence of a new social middle class as the driving force for the process of extensive modernization.

All these activities and initiatives show Reza Shah's intentions in building a modern Iran. As Abrahamian makes explicit:

> Although Reza Shah never formulated a systematic blueprint for modernization—writing no major thesis, delivering no grand speeches, and leaving behind no last statements—he implemented reforms that, however unsystematic, indicated that he was striving for an Iran which, on the one hand, would be free of clerical influence, foreign intrigue, nomadic uprising, and ethnic differences; and, on the other hand, would contain European-style educational institutions, westernized women active outside the home, and modern economic structures with state factories, communication networks, investment banks, and department stores (Abrahamian 1982: 140).

Besides the extensive tendency towards modernization, as Marsahi (2008) puts it, the Reza Shah era was the first political era in which Nationalism was used self-consciously by the state as its ideology. To this effect, there was growing attention to the pre-Islamic legitimation of the Kingdom in order to 'Persianize' Iranian culture along pre-Islamic lines. This Nationalism did not take immediate 'tradition' as its source of inspiration, but referred to a remote past, a vanished pre-Islamic legacy. For example, Reza Shah and his administration referred to the pre-Islamic legitimation of the Kingdom, and used the name Pahlavi, a pre-Islamic word, as the royal family name (Kamali 1998). In his visits to historical sites and buildings, he expressed a great enthusiasm towards pre-Islamic architectural works (Kiani 2007: 58). The effect of all these activities, as Katouzian remarks, was to produce a 'pseudo-modernism' characterized by 'an uncritical rejection of all existing Iranian traditions, institutions, values' on the one hand, and 'a superficial zest, an emotional fever, for the imitation and emulation of all things European within the narrow confines of a small, but increasing, group in the urban community' on the other (Katouzian 1981: 105). In general, the ideals underlying the change initiated by Reza Shah were threefold: a complete dedication to the cult of Nationalism-Statism; asserting this Nationalism by rapid adoption of the material advances of the West; and finally an erosion of the traditional power of religion, replacing it with secularism (Banini 1961: 45).

To provide room for the above-mentioned developments in Tehran and to establish the capital as a modernized city, structural transformation was unavoidable, so that for 20 years Tehran became transformed into a big construction site under the control and supervision of Reza Shah (Kiani 2007: 140), as a result of which the Tehran of 1941 bore no resemblance to that of 1921 (Banini 1961: 144).

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[14]The identity of the first initiator of the idea of Tehran University is much contested. However, Reza Shah's direct and indirect support played a vital role in the inauguration of the university. For more details see Catanzaro (2014).

Although in 1922 the government decided to build large squares and enlarge urban spaces, this was not realized until the ratification of the Law of Municipality in 1930, through which the second major attempt to reform the city and its modernization became possible. This law consisted of guidelines on the height of the buildings and obliged shops to construct a glass window giving onto the street (Habibi and Hourcade 2005: E34), a clear move to transform the appearance of the streets in conformity with the Western modern style. This was followed by the establishment of a legal basis under the Street Widening Act of 1933, which left drastic changes in the urbanscape of the city (Ehlers and Floor 1993).

Consequently, the new mayor of the city, Karim Buzarjomehri, an army general, embarked on an intensive modernization of the city. While Naserid urban developments occurred mainly outside of the city core,[15] new developments took place within the city to give it a new appearance (Habibi 2006: 161). All 12 gates of the city, together with many old buildings, were destroyed in 1930 to make the 'modernization of the city' possible (Zaka 1970: 16), and transform Tehran into an 'up-to-date capital' (Abrahamian 2008: 90). Demolition of the gates had a symbolic implication, a negation of the Qajar dynasty and its urban presence:

> They were seen neither as 'historic' nor 'monumental', but rather as standing tributes to Qajar power….Their demolition both enabled the physical expansion of the urban fabric and the eradication of the last traces of the *ancien regime* from the capital (Grigor 2004: 42).

Removing the signs and traces of the old dynasty from the urban components as much as possible was an omnipresent trend, to the extent that the Police of Tehran started to destroy any references to Qajar in writings and tiles of the governmental and non-governmental buildings (Safamanesh 2009). There was no new comprehensive plan, but a so-called 'Naqshe-ye Khiabanha-ye Jadid' (Plan of the New Avenues) in 1937, a plan for widening the old street network and building new concourses, according to which moats were transformed into wide new boulevards, and cut through the old fabric of the city. 'The royal compound was fragmented, its buildings redeveloped, to be replaced by a new government quarter, mainly Ministries of Justice and Finance' (Madanipour 1998: 37). Takyeh Dowlat was also torn down, which could be interpreted as representing the demolition of the religious symbols of the previous dynasty. The destruction of the old to provide room

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[15]Naserid developments, as explained here, took place in the northern parts of the city, and required no significant destruction and clearing. This approach was similar to what happened in Safavid Isfahan when the Shah decided to give the city dignity and glory. Recognizing that developing the city outwards to former agricultural land is much simpler and less problematic than developing in urban areas with existing rights in property, huge urban projects including Naqsh-i Jahan Square component and the Chahar-Bagh complex were built in the southern parts of the city centre (see: Falahat and Shirazi 2012, 2015). In contrast to these pioneering examples, Reza Shah advocated radical destruction and demolition within existing urban areas, did not tolerate any resistance, and thus implemented his ideas by force. He considered that the entire city must be modernized and must represent the country's progressive image, not only part of the city, as in Safavid Isfahan and Naserid Tehran.

for the construction of the new was the central approach. The intention was to adapt the city to the new transportation system as a symbol of modern life. Habibi states that the 1937 plan was obviously inspired by the modern architecture and urbanism movement and imposed a gridiron pattern onto the city (Habibi 2006: 162). Mayor Buzarjomehri imposed the plan's implementation, in some cases using brute force against the people to push the changes through (Kiani 2007: 111).[16] The dominant presupposition was that the traditional urban morphology had no logic, but was rather a situation of chaos requiring rapid organization. A government announcement of 1924 prescribed new construction codes for the future streets and buildings, claiming that 'the former buildings constructed in streets and alleys were not based on architectural and engineering principles and hence the passages are mostly tortuous and irregular'[17] (ibid.: 192). New regulations were also imposed with regard to the facades of shops facing onto the main thoroughfares, forcing them to be constructed as two-storey buildings, a strategy which was exported to other cities as well (Safamanesh 2009). Any kind of resistance was not tolerated, even that coming from influential clerics. While raising concern among the clerics regarding the preservation of religious sites, particularly *Imamzadeh*[18] buildings which were under the protection of *waqf,*[19] a law was passed in June 1941 to place all *waqf* properties within city limits under the jurisdiction of the municipalities and thus accelerate new developments (Banini 1961: 144). One of the oldest *Mahalles* of Tehran, Sangelaj, which was historically associated with political, anti-establishment movements, was completely destroyed due to its alleged irregular urban pattern and poor urban quality, to provide space for the construction of the Bourse Project designed by the American Leon Barton after an international competition. This project was never realized, and instead the vacant area was turned to a public park now called Park-e Shahr (Marefat 1988).

Forming the main west–east and north–south axes of the city, two new roads—Shah Reza (now Enqelab) and Pahlavi (now Valiasr)—were constructed, the latter a tree-lined, 20-km-long concourse which links the railway station in the south to Tajrish square in the north. A main argument for these Haussmanian interventions was to safeguard Reza Shah's newly established dynasty against the protests and

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[16]The process of demolition and destruction was very rapid and brutal, and failed to consider the rights of property owners. It is said that tens of thousands of residential units were demolished, along with historical buildings and edifices. This was reflected in a couple of reports and diaries of the time. For a detailed description of the reactions see: Grigor (2014).

[17]The statement is in line with a series of clichés produced around Iranian cities' morphology, claiming that they are irregular and chaotic, taking European cities as point of reference, considered as regular and ordered. For a detailed account of these clichés see: Falahat (2014).

[18]*Imamzadeh*, literally the offspring or descendent of an Imam, refers to a person—or a tomb—that belongs, directly or through a chain of descendants, to the holy family in the Shiite branch of Islam.

[19]*Waqf* is a religious endowment in Islamic law. It refers to any property endowed for charitable purposes. Any change in the original endowment agreement is very complicated and restricted. In urban development plans, the existence of *waqf* properties within the site of development may lead to delays in implementation.

probable movements of the time (Habibi and Hourcade 2005: E34; Bani Masud 2009: 145). New squares were constructed for traffic and as the symbols of a modernized city, and 'the *maidans* bore little resemblance to their origins as centers of activity for the neighborhood's inhabitants' (Khan 2000: xxv). In a sense, the making of a dual city starting from the new developments of the Naserid era accelerated in the Reza Shah period through radical urban renovation and extensive urban development projects, so that '[t]he division of society into two groups of population—one leading a traditional lifestyle, the other living according to Western norms—has found its reflection in Reza Shah's urban reforms' (Ehlers and Floor 1993: 275).

A significant consequence of the above-mentioned urban interventions was the rearrangement of political power as represented in Qajar society, namely Ulama (clergy), Bazaries (merchants), and nobles. Attacking the traditional places of attachment and exercise of power in the name of urban renewal and modernization, however, could not weaken the Ulama and Bazaries' social status and influence: while they may have gradually moved their places of residency to the outskirts of the city core, their places of work and activity remained as before. Only nobles experienced a wide process of relocation to the northern parts of developing city (Grigor 2014), creating a growing middle and upper class as the driving forces of the modernization programme.[20]

In the field of architecture, both modernist and nationalist tendencies had their adherents. Modernization in architecture was advocated by Iranians who were trained in European universities and 'introduced into Iran a new language that broke all links and continuity with the past' (Micara 1996: 54). The most famous figures representing this tendency were Vartan Avanessian (1896–1982) who graduated in 1922 from the École Speciale d'Architecture in Paris, Paul Abkar (1908–1970) who graduated from the Université de St. Luc in Brussels, Gabriel Guevrekian (1900–1970) who graduated in 1921 from the Hochschule für Angewändte Kunst in Vienna, Keyghobad Zafar (born in 1910) who graduated from the Royal College of Art and the Architectural Association in London and Mohsen Foroughi (1907–1982) who graduated from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris.

All these architects had some experience in European countries, and their works reveal a sort of mitigation of the original features of the contemporary modern works they designed in Europe. As Micara writes:

> The reasons for this mitigation were not only the specific features of the urban context of Tehran and the wishes of Persian clients, but also the environment in which the architects were educated and carried on their early professional work … It is remarkable that all these experiences are linked to the early avant-gardes: Art Nouveau, the Secession and, in the

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[20]The Amiriyyeh neighbourhood to the north-west of the historical city was an urban area dedicated to the nobility of the Pahlavi dynasty. As the name of the neighbourhood suggests—*amir* means commander or high-ranking military officer, thus *Amiriyyeh* is a place associated with him—it was planned to house the newly emerging social class close to the ruling government. This area, though currently drastically changed and transformed, was an area that displayed Pahlavi style residential architecture.

case of Mallet Stevens, a minor, although brilliant and refined, current of the French Modern Movement (ibid.: 54).

Avanessian, who was an advocate of Reza Shah and modern architecture, originated a strand of architectural thinking that deserves more attention. He compares modern architecture's ability to relieve the burdens of traditional architecture with Reza Shah's unveiling project (*Kashf-e Hejab*), through which women were released from the prison of *Chador*.[21] This belief unconsciously gave affirmation to the new extroverted architecture, by contrast with the traditional introverted architecture. He writes that in premodern times:

> Similar to the women who were imprisoned at home and used to live as prisoners, buildings and gardens and other edifices of the capital were enclosed and veiled within high walls; and like the women's face free from any smile or happiness, the appearance of the buildings inside the dark and sometimes towering muddy walls seemed very sad and grumpy. (Bani Masud 2009: 188–89).

This explanation shows how a main characteristic of Iranian architecture and urbanism, namely the principal of introversion, is misinterpreted, and the opposite pattern of extroverted architecture is admired without considering its social and cultural implications and connotations. Avanessian believed that architectural heritage, although precious, is not sufficient for the creation of a 'new architectural world'; thus, new generations are obliged to invent a new method and approach more appropriate to current lifestyles. He was against any ornament and historical decorative motifs, inspired by modern Austrian architect Adolf Loos, and wrote hard words against any neo-Achaemenid style reproducing columns with animal torsos capitals: 'The sensible mind shouts: Stop this! Are you going to turn Tehran into a zoo with all these statues of cows and lions?!' (cited in Karimi 2013: 61).[22] Avanessian's approach can be seen in the Darband Hotel in Tehran (1936–1939) and other residential units and complexes (Fig. 1.4).

The nationalist wishes of the government were manifested in architectural buildings through 'a superficial repetition of architectural forms, elements and motifs, particularly those of the Achaemenid and Sassanid periods' (Mirmiran 2004: 39) in a nineteenth-century Neoclassical European manner based on the 'application of symmetry, hierarchy and geometric forms' (Diba and Beheshti 2004: 32). The aim of this attitude towards architecture, following Reza Shah's wish to revive the pre-Islamic past and its achievements, was to construct a nationalist architecture by means of reproducing pre-Islamic motifs, ornaments and forms, thus constructing a new national identity. This 'national style' should also

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[21]A long cloak worn over garments by Muslim women in Iran. It covers the entire body.

[22]As can be seen in Avanessian's statement, it seems difficult to follow simultaneously both the modernist and nationalist desires of Reza Shah and his protagonists in the architectural field. While severe Modernism advocates a break from the past in any form, Nationalism looks for a reproduction of historical motifs as a source of dignity and national honour. While Avanessian admires Reza Shah's unveiling programme, since it releases women from the prison of the past, he criticizes the nationalist manifestations of his ideas as absurd and nonsensical.

Fig. 1.4 Darband Hotel in
Tehran (1936–1939),
designed by Avanessian

differentiate itself from that of the Qajars (Karimi 2013). Reza Shah himself invited
Ernst Herzfeld to come to Iran in 1925 to explore the nation's valuable pre-Islamic
legacy and provide recommendations for preserving monuments, what was docu-
mented as 'A Brief Inventory of the Historical Heritage and Edifices of Iran'
(Grigor 2004). Arthur Pope played a vital role in discovering and formulating Iran's
pre-Islamic heritage through his writings advocating this belief that 'the past might
itself be recovered in service to the task of nation-building' (Isenstadt and Rizvi
2008: 11).

The main designers of this approach were European architects or archaeologists
such as Maxime Siroux (1907–1975), André Godard (1881–1965) and Arthur Pope
(1881–1969), who worked on the architectural history of Iran, and Nikolai Marcov
(1882–1952), educated at the St Petersburg School of Architecture and a former
officer in the Cossack Brigade. Among the prominent buildings, we can point to the
Iran Bastan Museum by André Godard and Maxime Siroux, and the University of
Tehran Campus by André Godard. The Iran Bastan Museum (1936), constructed by
native Iranian Mimars, presents an indirect but gentle allusion to historical symbols
and signs, and the grand entrance is reminiscent of the Great Arch of Taq-e Kasra in
Ctesiphon (Fig. 1.5). As Isenstadt and Rizvi (2008: 14) put it, Godard borrowed
historical motifs from a range of sources and adapted them to new projects, thus his
designs 'were congruent with the larger contours of eclecticism'.

The Society of National Heritage (Anjoman-e Asar-e Melli) was a leading
association concretizing a nationalist secular doctrine through architectural build-
ings. Founded by a group of secular nobles, intellectuals and statesmen, the aim of
this association was constructing national monuments and cultural facilities high-
lighting the dignity of past epochs, through a historicist and eclectic style. In most
of the cases, particularly with mausoleums and monuments, the main approach was
demolishing the existing building and constructing over it anew.[23]

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[23]A result of deconstructing the old and constructing anew was the secularization of the monument
and a transformation in its role from featuring in a religious ceremony of pilgrimage to taking its
place in a modern ritual of respecting and admiring the past. Grigor (2009) has uncovered and
relayed the philosophy and approach of The Society of National Heritage in detail.

Fig. 1.5 Iran Bastan Museum (1936), designed by André Godard
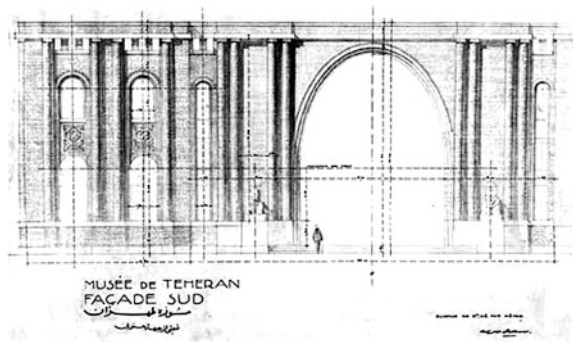
As we can see, both modernist and nationalist approaches were present in the Reza Shah era, however, what was officially favourite was the latter since it matched and represented the governmental wishes of the Shah and his friends. In a sense, the modernist trend grew, to some extent, outside of the Shah's control, since a very modern piece of architectural work devoid of any references to the pre-Islamic past would be nonsense in the eyes of nationalists. This is clearly observable in the behaviour of Reza Shah once he visited the Dissection Hall of Tehran University, built in a modern style and with a simple façade, berated it, and reacted with anger and rage (Safamanesh 2009).

1.2.4   Universalization

Mohammad Reza Shah (1941–1978), the successor to Reza Shah, followed his father's plans regarding modernization and nationalism, but in the context of a more complex international situation. He was able to fulfil Reza Shah's dream of building a massive state infrastructure thanks to rising oil revenues (Abrahamian 2008: 123). State bureaucracy expanded dramatically, imposing a systematized order throughout the country. In 1963, the Shah launched the White Revolution plan, with land reform as its central objective. He also launched a 7-year cycle of development plans, in a series geared to achieving industrial prosperity. The result was the highest ever growth rate and a substantial increase in national revenue. Social programmes enhanced standards of life in the various fields of education, health, women's participation, family and so on.

The aim of the Shah was to play a more active role universally, to put Iran forward as a modern country whose power extends beyond its national boundaries and even beyond the Middle East region and is on the way to embodying a universal ideal model, a 'Great Civilization', and 'the fifth most industrial state in the world'. As Abrahamian spells out: "He declared that Iran was at the gates of the Great Civilization; its future would be more glorious than its past…; its standard of living would soon surpass that of Europe; it would produce a way of life superior to both capitalism and communism…". (Ibid.: 131).

However, the extensive programme of development and growing urbanization which made Iran a 'showcase of modernization' in the region, as it was characterized in 1966 by the US ambassador to Tehran (Little 2002: 221) exacerbated social tensions and hastened inequality. The gap between rich and poor, as well as between the governing system and the new social forces widened dramatically. For instance, between 1967 and 1977 the proportion of urban families living in one room increased from 36 to 43%, and 42% of Tehran's housing was deemed inadequate (Abrahamian 1982: 447).

After the Second World War, Tehran faced extensive urbanization and growth, and its absorption of the surrounding villages and suburbs augmented the city's growing structure on all sides, especially in the north and west (Shirazi 2013; 2014). The area of the city reached 180 km^2 in the mid-1960s, with a population of about 3 million. The north–south divide was widening dramatically, endangering social and political integration (Hourcade 1996). To control the situation and provide an acceptable basis for meeting the wishes and ideals of a developing country and incorporating them into the structure of the city, a framework for future development was urgently needed. In this regard, the first Master Plan for Tehran, prepared by a consortium that combined Aziz Farmanfarmaian Associates of Iran and Victor Gruen Associates of the United States under the direction of Fereydun Ghaffari, was approved in 1968 (Fig. 1.6). The objective of this plan was to solve the existing and future problems of the city of Tehran. It proposed a linear city, oriented towards the west, consisting of 10 urban zones, each with 500,000 residents, and provisioned with a clear hierarchy of urban services and facilities supported by a network of highways (Farmanfarmaian 2006). Southern parts of Tehran were to be reorganized and the impoverished quarters of the city transformed into public recreational districts. The old neighbourhoods surrounding the Bazaar were to be a tourist attraction. This plan followed the Los Angeles pattern (Habibi and Hourcade 2005; Hourcade 1996), with an extensive focus on physical aspects and the unrelated transfer of ideas from the West 'without pursuing their social objectives' (Madanipour 1998: 208). This is confirmed by the Iranian partner in the project, Aziz Farmanfarmaian (1920–2013), where he acknowledges that the scientific method and modern approach employed in provision of the master plan were not fitted to the reality existing on the ground, and there was no concern shown for the traditional urban pattern of the city and the inhabitants' lifestyle (Farmanfarmaian 2006).

The universal approach is also observable in Farmanfarmaian's architectural works, in which, under the influence of the universal principles of International Style, he tried to enhance the technical and architectural capabilities of Iran to an acceptable level.[24] This attitude is well reflected in the Azadi Sports Complex, the

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[24]Not only did Farmanfarmaian's architectural work incorporate principles of international style and thus promote the intention to be represented internationally, the office he ran was also a prominent professional consultancy for architecture and urban planning in the region, with employees from different disciplines covering a range of advanced technical consultations worldwide. The 60s was a prosperous period for his office, with more than a hundred Iranian as well as international employees in the two Tehran and Athens branches.

Fig. 1.6 Master Plan of Tehran, 1968 (Tehran Municipality)

Ministry of Agriculture, the Saman Towers, and Mehr Abad Airport (Fig. 1.7), where the universal vocabulary of the International Style are extensively applied.[25]

Universal appeal was the main objective of the Shahestan Pahlavi project, 'creating a beautiful city centre which would give twentieth century Iran a national center of the high quality that Isfahan contributed to the sixteenth century' (Robertson 1978: 45). Located on the Abbas-Abad hills in an almost empty tract of land about 554 hectares in extent (Costello 2012), this mixed use complex included governmental and commercial offices, retail outlets, hotels, housing, cultural and community facilities, ultimately amounting to 5130,000 m^2 of floor space, fully served by local urban facilities, with the huge 'Shah and Nation Square' bigger than Naqsh-e Jahan Square in Isfahan and Red Square in Moscow (Fig. 1.8). This project, although its designers claimed it would provide a 'contemporary response' to the question inspired by the structure, building form and scale and the surface enrichment of historical Persian architecture, was planned as a flagship for the international role of the capital of Iran and to transform Tehran's image into one of the world's major capital cities. The government's universalizing ambition was reflected in the words of the chief planner:

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[25]One should exclude some architectural works from the list, such as the Tehran University Mosque and Iranian Pavilion in EXO 67, Montreal, Canada. In these works, as he has confirmed in an interview, he has followed feelings and intuitions rather than rationality. In both cases, there is a distinctive difference from other works designed under his supervision and in his office in terms of form, spatial configuration, ornament, references and associations.

Fig. 1.7 Mehr Abad Airport, by Aziz Farmanfarmaian

It will symbolize Iran's rapid progress toward becoming a leading industrial nation and world power… In its achievement, Shahestan Pahlavi can reflect the highest aspirations of Iranian culture and perhaps provide the country once more with a capital that can elicit the admiration of travelers the world over. (Ibid.: 47).

1.2.5 Anti-modernism

Right from the beginning of the appearance of the idea of Westernization, or the introduction of reformist ideas which necessitated challenging traditional doctrines, an anti-modern approach arose which was supported by the traditional institutions led by the clergy and the Bazaar. This view was further intensified when it found itself thwarted by extensive modernization and universalization. A clear manifestation of the opposition between reformists and traditionalists was the battle between the two oppositions of the Constitutional Revolution (1905–1907): while the constitutionalist figures including intellectuals and pro-revolution clergies were in favour of institutional changes and social reforms, traditionalists, with the leading figure of Sheykh Fazlollah Nuri, rejected any kind of change, arguing it to be in contrast to religious law or Sharia. Later on, this line of thought was formulated by

Fig. 1.8 Shahestan Pahlavi
project, model (Robertson
1978)

some intellectuals, such as Jalal Al-e Ahmad, as the idea of 'Occidentosis', or
'Westoxification' (Gharbzadegi). As Behnam explains, 'In their encounter with the
modern world, they resort to the Islamic past, and in this return recognize the Holy
Scripture, the Quran, without the medium of any new interpretation, as their sole
foundation of faith' (Behnam 2003:10). These thinkers regard the early years of
Islam as embodying the ideal conditions to which a return should be sought.

As far as the architectural and urban landscape is considered, it becomes evident
that this trend of thought had less influence on the cities in the Pahlavi Period. At
the city scale, urban planning and design policies were exclusively in the hands of
the bureaucrats who were the official agencies in the service of fulfilling the wishes
of the state, which was modernist in nature. In academia, as well, a modernist
approach and international style was the dominant trend, leaving less space for
thinking or acting differently. The only area that remained for the expression of
traditionalist doctrine was the design and construction of single buildings, mainly
religious ones, where traditional crafts and architects (Mimars) were involved.[26]

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[26]It is worth mentioning that this line of thought, to some extent, was crystallized in the Islamic
revolution of 1979, an obviously anti-Western, if not anti-modern movement, a reaction to the
Shah's extensive ambitions for modernization and secularization. The Islamic Revolution was the

1.3   The Exigency of the 'In-Between'

Our review of the constitutive intellectual, architectural and urban development discourses between the mid-nineteenth century up to 1970s in Tehran indicates that this discourse has located itself within a space between two poles of Tradition and Modernism. As Madanipour rightly puts it, 'A tense coexistence of the old and new, in which they constantly struggle for domination, is a hallmark of the modern history of Iran and its capital, Tehran' (Madanipour 1998: 252). In the field of architecture, as Vartan Avanessian prophesied in the first issue of the magazine *Architect*, Iranian architects 'are faced with two differing viewpoints; should one imitate the past and recreate the valuable works of that era; or should one look to the future and adapt architectural design to the modern way of life' (quoted in: Sarvsheibani 2008: 15). It can be argued that this statement captures the central challenge for the contemporary architecture of Iran.

In fact, there has been a continuous challenge with regard to modernization in Iran, oscillating between two extreme modes of affirmative and negative, resulting in a long and as yet unfinished debate between anti-modern and pro-modern discourses. While the pro-modern approach or extremist modernizers, as Madanipour calls them, 'wanted to move towards total assimilation with the capitalist industrialized countries of the West' (Mandanipour 1998:11), the anti-modern approach tried to reject Western Modernity, claiming it to be essentially anti-Islamic and in contrast to the doctrine of Quran. Due to the political conditions in the Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah eras, both of which advocated extreme Modernism and universalism, the production of urban and architectural space shifted more towards the modernist end of the spectrum, while the traditional approach was mainly repressed and marginalized, paving the road for the reactionary extremist retrenchment advocated by Revolutionary Iran. However, being located at one end of the spectrum and ignoring the other end is theoretically and practically questionable. As Jahanbegloo argues, the two extremes of Modernity and Tradition are so interwoven that to be either modern or traditional appears quite impossible: 'To reject Iranian traditions entirely would be to reject our Modernity as well' (Jahanbagloo 2003: xiv). It is neither possible to reject modernization nor to completely approve it; hence the fallacious dichotomy of Tradition–Modernity and selecting between two polar opposites must be replaced by another discourse. In this regard, a 'dialogical exchange' should be established, a 'cross-cultural, exotopic dialogue' in which 'Modernity is no more reduced to the status of a simple instrumental object or rejected as a dangerous enemy of the Iranian identity' (ibid.: xxii). All this highlights the exigency of an intermediary 'condition' in which these

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first theocratic state in the modern world to institutionalize the doctrines of 'Pure Muhammadan Islam' under the governance of Islamic clergies. The aim of the Islamic revolution was to found an Islamic Republic based on authentic Islamic doctrine, in which all aspects of society are directly derived from religious instruction and traditions. It brought to the fore a clerical constitution favouring Sharia law. Regarding the architectural and urban manifestations of the post-revolutionary era, see Chap. 5.

extremes coexist in a continuous but generative tension, a 'third' situation which bridges the gap between West and East, Modernity and Tradition, universal and particular, civilization and culture.

Critical Regionalism tries to locate itself right at the middle of this challenge and proposes establishing a mediatory approach which could culminate in an 'In-Between' status of being modernist but taking into consideration indigenous sources. In the coming chapters Critical Regionalism as a 'theory of in-between' will be introduced, followed by the argument that a non-official, incremental, but creative approach towards architecture and urban planning was generated and developed by a number of leading architects in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s. These architects tried to theorize and practice a 'space-in-between' which unites the traditional and modernist reaches of the spectrum in a creative way.

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Chapter 2
The Theory of 'In-Between'

The aim of this chapter is to provide a thematic overview of the theory of Critical Regionalism as a theory of 'In-Between'. I explain how Kenneth Frampton's project of Critical Regionalism combines the two traditions of phenomenology and critical thinking to establish a constructive dialogue between Habermas's unfinished project of Modernity and Heidegger's insistence on being as becoming. There follows a thematic overview of the central concepts of Critical Regionalism, incorporated into the body of a set of dichotomies which create a 'site of confrontation', such as place/space, tectonic/scenographic, and *avant-garde/arrière-garde*. I will argue in conclusion that Critical Regionalism presents itself as 'the theory in-between' and hence produces a generative space for exchange, dialogue, and simultaneous presence enriched with the never-ending process of reinterpretation or new creation (*Khalq-i Jadid*).

2.1 Two Lines of Critical Thought

Frampton's critical approach to architecture combines two traditions of phenomenology[1] and critical thinking and establishes a constructive dialogue between Habermas's 'unfinished project of Modernity' and Heidegger's insistence on 'being as becoming'. On this parallel interaction he writes:

> Anyone who is familiar with my writing will at once detect the influence of two different
> lines of critical thought which in the main are German in origin—lines stemming from
> Hegel and Marx and culminating in Gramsci and the Frankfurt School; and another line,
> stemming from Nietzsche and Husserl, the school which encompasses in its range both

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[1]Although Frampton never employs phenomenology in a classical way, his architectural thought is permeated by themes and concerns that are essentially phenomenological, thus making a constructive, though indirect, contribution to the phenomenological discourse in architecture. I have highlighted Frampton's contribution to the phenomenological discourse in Shirazi (2013).

phenomenology and existentialism and stretches to the writings of Heidegger and Hanna Arendt (Frampton 1989: 79).

Nonetheless, at the first glance, the influence of Hanna Arendt and the Frankfurt School is much more evident than that of the others. In the introduction to his book *Modern architecture, a critical history* (1992), Frampton states that he is like many other scholars of his generation influenced by 'a Marxist interpretation of history', though he never follows a distinct method of Marxist analysis. He notes that the critical theory of the Frankfurt School has deeply coloured his thought and made him 'aware of the dark side of the Enlightenment which, in the name of an unreasonable reason, has brought man to a situation where he begins to be as alienated from his own production as from the natural world' (Frampton 1992: 9). For Frampton, the Frankfurt School is 'the only valid basis upon which to develop a form of (post) modern critical culture'[2] (Frampton 1988: 63). Hanna Arendt and her ideas are a major source of inspiration for Frampton: '*The Human Condition* (1958) was and still is an important reference for my work. It's not a Marxist thesis, but certainly a political one' (Frampton 2003: 42).

This influence grants a twofold flavour to Frampton's architectural thinking recognizable in his works and writings. On the one hand, his works advocate a critical approach to the overwhelming tendencies and patterns of thought supported by the master narrative of techno-science. On the other hand, he carves out the superficial and catches the essence and origin of things and sheds light on the phenomenological aspects of the environment. Ultimately, this twofold departure point culminates in a mediatory position which benefits from the advantages of both traditions but stands somewhere in-between: a space of dialogue and confrontation.

2.2 Hybrid World Culture

The paradox of becoming modern but returning to sources, that is, inheriting an old, dormant civilization but taking part in universal civilization—as highlighted in Ricoeur's argument in Chap. 1—is interpreted by Frampton as a core and central theme for Critical Regionalism: to be modern and traditional, universal and regional simultaneously. Since the beginning of the Enlightenment, Frampton suggests, 'civilization' has been concerned with instrumental reason, but 'culture' with the specifics of expression, the realization of the being, and the evolution of its collective psychosocial reality.

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[2]It needs to be mentioned that Frampton's interest in developing a postmodern critical culture does not mean he is in favour of postmodernist architecture. As will be elaborated later in this chapter, Frampton criticizes postmodernism for its superficial historicism and populism.

The conflict between civilization and culture increased dramatically from the mid-twentieth century and affected the structure of cities at the expense of the old urban fabric, which was progressively overlaid by the free-standing high-rise and the serpentine freeway. This victory of universal civilization over the locally inflected culture culminated in a mixture of residential stock with tertiary and secondary industry transformed to a *Bürolandschaft* cityscape. In this context of extensive universalization, Frampton advocates a 'hybrid world culture' as the result of cross-fertilization between rooted culture and universal civilization. A regional culture may transform to a rooted tradition only if it is open to the influences of foreign culture and civilization (Frampton 1983: 148). This transition could be fulfilled by means of a Critical Regionalist approach, which stands against the Populism, sentimentalism, and ironic vernacularism of the postmodern culture. While vulgar Populism aims at functioning as a 'communicative or instrumental sign' and sublimates immediate desire through a simulation devoid of any critical perception of reality, Critical Regionalism is a dialectical expression: 'It self-consciously seeks to deconstruct universal Modernism, in terms of values and images which are quintessentially rooted, and at the same time to adulterate those basic references with paradigms drawn from alien sources' (Frampton 1982c: 77).

In this sense, the idea of Critical Regionalism[3] is an essentially cultural strategy entailing both *world culture* and *universal civilization,* and is contingent upon a process of double mediation. "In the first place, it has to 'deconstruct' the overall spectrum of world culture which it inevitably inherits; in the second, it has to achieve through synthetic contradiction, a manifest critique of universal civilization" (Frampton 2002a: 82). Deconstructing the world culture implies preventing any formal and explicit derivation of the cultural signs and motives, but reinterpreting them newly and implicitly. In fact, the attempt to create a 'hybrid world culture' out of the 'rooted culture' means being both local and universal:

> Local in the sense that there is a modern necessity to reinterpret native tradition without degenerating into kitsch historicism; universal in the sense that the cultural 'void' (aporia) of the developed or developing countries arises out of the fact that the innocence implied by the continuum of the vernacular in any profound sense is irrevocably lost (Frampton 1982d: 106).

As Kelbaugh notes, Critical Regionalism is critical in two senses: it is a critique of extensive universalization and modernization, and a critique of sentimental and nostalgic practices of regional culture (Kelbaugh 2007). Here, a set of themes and principles are introduced which illuminate the central principles of Critical Regionalism in Frampton's opinion.

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[3]The term Critical Regionalism was first coined in 1981 by Tzonis and Lefaivre in 1981 but later developed by Kenneth Frampton who endowed it with its distinctive character. For these authors' interpretation of Critical Regionalism see: (Lefaivre and Tzonis 1985, 1990, 2003; Tzonis and Lefaivre 1991).

2.3 Resistance on the Margins

Production of 'world culture' in the above-mentioned sense is to be found not in the dominant cultural and communicational centres of the world, but rather, on the 'periphery' of the so-called developed world, in places with a traditional cantonal identity, or 'on the fringes which have not been conquered by consumer society' (Pallasmaa 1988: 28) to use Pallasmaa's interpretation, because 'these peripheral nodes were able to sustain a more multi-layered complexity of architectural culture' (Frampton 1988: 55). These 'borderline manifestations' characterized as 'interstices of freedom' (Frampton 1983) are strong enough to establish a self-conscious and local expression based on the 'sensuous, concrete and tactile elements of either a topographic or tectonic nature' committed to the modernization process on the one hand, and capable of quantifying "the received consumerist civilization through a consciously cultivated 'culture of place'" on the other (Frampton 1988: 55).

By these explanations Frampton points to those regional 'schools' which aim at representing and serving particular constituencies. They advocate a strong sense of identity and follow 'an anti-centrist sentiment—a discernible aspiration for some kind of cultural, economic and potential independence' (Frampton 1982c: 77). They are not a collective effort, but a series of talented individual works with a profound commitment to a particular culture.

This marginal manifestation produces a kind of 'architecture of resistance'; an architecture which stands far from the mainstream of 'starchitecture'and resists its ambitions of dominance. The architecture of resistance, for Frampton, means challenging the progressive myth of the *avant-garde* and turning towards the *arrière garde*, to the strategy of revealing differences. This 'difference' lies in the architects' 'different approach to the task of place creation in late-capitalist urban economy' and their resistance to the placelessness of Megalopolitan development (Frampton 1982d: 85).

2.4 Scenography of Postmodernism

According to Frampton, although the postmodern phenomenon was an understandable reaction to the extensive modernization of the time, aiming to escape from a contemporary existence dominated by scientific–industrial values, ironically it followed the rule of the production/consumerism cycle and thus "reduced architecture to a condition in which the 'package deal' arranged by the builder/developer determines the carcass and the essential substance of the work, while the architect is reduced to contributing a suitably seductive mask" (Frampton 1992: 307). Due to this general principal of postmodern architecture, namely the conscious ruination of style and the cannibalization of architectural form, which resulted from following the rules of the production/consumption cycle, the resulting architectural works of banal historicism—be it the AT & T building by Phillip

Johnson or the Portland Building by Michael Graves—come to much the same thing: the Populist format of Venturi's 'decorated shed'. Frampton writes that:

> The impulse is scenographic rather than tectonic, so that not only is there a total schism between the inner substance and the outer form, but the form itself either repudiates its constructional origin or dissipates its palpability. In Post-Modern architecture classical and vernacular 'quotations' tend to interpenetrate each other disconcertingly (Ibid.: 30).

Thus, for Frampton postmodernism is a pseudo-avant-garde reactionary attitude which tries to present a 'reconciliatory historicism'. Its approach is resuscitating or reinterpreting normative forms of the premodern bourgeois culture with varying degrees of irony and/or cynicism (Frampton 1982a: 25). As a populist attitude postmodernism advocates a simple-minded attempt to revive the hypothetical forms of a lost vernacular, but is not able to propose a critical attitude towards reality.

2.5   Dichotomies of Critical Regionalism

If Critical Regionalism is a marginal movement which resists the overwhelming values of the 'centre' (as characterized by the overemphasis on the one side at the expense of the other, for instance, the universal at expense of the regional; high technology at the expense of local crafts, and extensive modernization at the expense of tradition), the main task of Critical Regionalism would be not a naïve highlighting of the opposite pole, but rather to put both ends of the spectrum into continuous interaction through which a constructive dialogue may be born. As Frampton states, this approach 'should be seen not so much as categorical opposites between which we must choose, but rather as the points of dialectic interaction' (Frampton 1991: 38). These opposing pairs create a 'site of confrontation' where there exists the state of an ongoing tension and not a positive/good against negative/bad opposition (Frampton 1996a); they are as 'irreducible poles which cannot overcome the state of tension which arises from their conjunction' (Frampton 1988: 58). There now follows a discussion of the main dichotomies constituting the central concerns of Critical Regionalism.

2.5.1   Place/Space

Frampton criticizes the existing disability of architects and planners in creating 'places' and the growing placelessness which leaves few places we may significantly choose to be in. He writes, "In our ubiquitous 'non-place' we congratulate ourselves regularly on our pathological capacity for abstraction; on our commitment to the norms of statistical coordination; on our bondage to the transactional processes of objectification that will admit to neither the luxury nor the necessity of place" (Frampton 1996b: 443). This placelessness was formulated by Melvin

Webber, where he described future cities of interaction as 'non-place urban realms' untied to a specific location, a 'community without propinquity' in which traditional relations between people are not valid anymore (Webber 1968). Webber argues that the ideas of city and region, as well as the idea of community, have been traditionally tied to the idea of 'place'; they have been distinguishable by the fact of territorial separation. However, currently the necessary condition is no longer the propinquity aspect of 'place' but accessibility, a condition of permanent moving, relocating, and change. This understanding of the city and community is essentially critical for Frampton. This 'non-place urban realm', he argues, leads to a 'rush city' which leaves no room for a true 'place'. The 'mass' culture, the billboard facades, extensive technological rationalization, all indicate the loss of 'place'.

In this condition of placelessness Frampton advocates revitalizing capacities of place in creating belonging and interaction, and suggests that the central principle of Critical Regionalism is *place* in its Heideggerian meaning on the one hand, and the *space of public appearance* on the other. He writes:

> If any central principle of critical regionalism can be isolated, then it is surely a commitment to place rather than space, or, in Heideggerian terminology, to the nearness of *raum*, rather than the distance of *spatium*. This stress on place may also be construed as affording the political *space of public appearance* as formulated by Hanna Arendt (Frampton 1983: 162).

Frampton's suggestion of a return to 'place' and 'defined boundary' in the context of the universal triumph of the 'non-place urban realm' and apocalyptic growth of the megalopolis is coloured by the ideas of Martin Heidegger (1993) who in his seminal work of *Building Dwelling Thinking* introduces the German word for space and place (*Raum*), contrary to the Latin or antique abstract understanding of space (*extensio*, *spatium*) as an endless continuum of evenly subdivided spatial components or integers.[4] *Raum* designates a place that is freed for settlement. It means a space for which room has been made, a boundary. But '[a] boundary' Heidegger remarks, 'is not that at which something stops, but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing' (Heidegger 1993: 356). Based on this interpretation Frampton comes to the conclusion that "the condition of 'dwelling' and hence ultimately of 'being' can only take place in a domain that is clearly bounded" (Frampton 2002a: 85). 'Only such a defined boundary', he emphasized, "will permit the built form to stand against the endless processal flux of the megalopolis" (ibid.: 85).

On the other hand, Frampton reminds us of the importance of Arendt's statement where she writes: 'Only where men live so close together that the potentialities of action are always present can power remain with them' (Arendt 1998: 201). This is of high importance taking into account the social dilemma of the extensive modernization of the twentieth century which disintegrated the permanent values of

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[4]Heidegger has never talked about architecture and urban planning systematically, but has made extensive use of architectural references for conceptualizing his approach to space, place, dwelling, and other architectural concepts. For more details, see Shirazi (2007, 2014).

society, atomized public buildings into a network of abstract institutions, disrupted the organic connection between the people, and generated an isolated society where the inhabitants leave separately and in a disconnected manner. Frampton argues that the 'bounded place-form' as a public sphere produces a 'space of human appearance' in which people live closely together and thus the potentiality for action is always present. The 'bounded domain' presents a vivid urban life full of social contacts and cultural awareness, in contrast to the ideological concept of 'community without propinquity' proposed by Webber (1968), in which a 'non-place urban realm' devoid of any public sphere is introduced.

This potentially liberative 'bounded domain' opens the user to manifold experiences (Frampton 2002a: 86), works as a 'public sphere', to use Habermas's terminology,[5] and is a political realm for the embodiment of the collective. The qualitative character of place, hence, not only arises from its social meaning but also implies establishing an articulated realm for our 'coming into being'. Frampton concludes that 'The receptivity and sensitive resonance of a place—to wit its sensate validity *qua* place—depends on its stability in the everyday sense and second, on the appropriateness and richness of the socio-cultural experience it offers'' (Frampton 1996b: 444).

This defined boundary in the urban context could be realized in the form of an 'urban enclave', derived from reinterpreting traditional typologies of streets, urban blocks, quarters, and so on, an 'urban morphology' which may entertain "the prospect of creating or sustaining 'cities within cities'" (Frampton 1982b: 45). This approach becomes more meaningful when one considers the existing extensive tendency to universalism, instrumentalism and commodification of culture. By means of creating 'urban enclaves' and establishing micro-environmental contexts, the rapidly growing sense of placelessness in megacity regions may be suspended and the inhabitants may have the opportunity to live close to the essences and origins. Frampton writes:

> Critical Regionalism would seem to offer the sole possibility of resisting the rapacity of this tendency. Its salient cultural precept is 'place' creation; the general model to be employed in all future development is the enclave—that is to say, the bounded fragment against which the ceaseless inundation of a place-less, alienating consumerism will find itself momentarily checked (Frampton 1983: 162).

This strategy of place-form should be considered by every architect in every commission within the rapacious developing urban settlements and where necessary, 'the work should create its own micro-environmental context' (Frampton 1998: 15) in various forms from a single building to an urban complex. The urban pattern of 'low-rise, high-density' can be considered as the most suitable

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[5]The idea of the Public Sphere (*Öffentlichkeit* in German) has been theorized by Habermas in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere—An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (German edition 1962, English Translation 1989). For Habermas events and occasions become public when, in contrast to exclusive affairs, they are available for all. Related to the notion of the 'common world' as suggested by Arendt (1998), the public sphere is a realm of our social life, open to all, in which something approaching public opinion can be formed.

morphology for urban enclaves. Frampton argues that in fast developing cities in which techno-commercial logic increases distribution of high-rise structures, shopping malls, and so on, the traditional city form, above all the 'low-rise, high-density' pattern, provides us with some helpful pointers.

2.5.2 Tectonic/Scenographic

Frampton argues that under the current status of architecture which reduces the architectural expression to the status of a commodity, culture is more 'scenographic representation' than architectonic, and 'only serves to strengthen the scenographic or imagistic reception/perception of built form' (Frampton 1988: 60). In this condition, instead of recapitulating avant-gardist tropes or falling into a historicist pastiche, 'We may return to the structural unit as the irreducible essence of architectural form' (Frampton 2002b: 92). This indicates that building is more tectonic[6] than scenographic, and is first and foremost an act of construction rather than a discourse predicated on the surface, volume and plan. He writes: "Building is ontological rather than representational in character and that built form is a presence rather than something standing for an absence. In Martin Heidegger's terminology we may think of it as a 'thing' rather than a 'sign'" (ibid.: 93). Tectonics synthesizes the two modes of the technological and scenographic: the former as the pragmatic response to a given condition and the latter as a mask or symbolic content embodied in the surface of a work, and thus, above all, 'a poetics of construction' (Frampton 1998: 231). Tectonics alludes not to a mechanical revelation of construction, but to the potentially poetic manifestation of structure in its original Greek sense as an act of making and revealing.

In contrast to the overwhelming scenographic character of contemporary architecture, there are some architects who go beyond the superficiality of scenography and produce a tectonic piece of architectural work. For example, Kahn's unique contribution to tectonics is rooted in this belief that 'tectonic structure, rather than mass form or type, must be pursued as the first condition of monumental form' (Frampton 1995: 209). In other words, Kahn's architecture rejects any relation to historical form, and instead inclines towards being modern but not utopian, referential but not eclectic. The geometrical essence of archetypal, universal forms imbued with the tactile presence of subordinate components such as the arch, window and door grants his architecture a tectonic character in which the

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[6]A term of Greek origin, tectonic is derived from *tecton* and signifies a carpenter or builder, and this stems from the Sanskrit *taksan*, referring to the craft of carpentry and the use of an axe. Moreover, the Latin term *architectus* is derived from the Greek *archi* (a person of authority) and *tekton* (a craftsman or builder). The term 'tectonic' appeared in English for the first time in a glossary in 1656 meaning 'belonging to building'. This term appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century in a modern sense with Karl Bötticher's *The Tectonic of the Hellenes* and Gottfried Semper's *The Four Elements of Architecture*.

avoidances of how it is made may be seen and comprehended. Kahn's tectonic attitude is well incorporated in the Kimbell Art Museum[7] where the interplay between tectonic form and changing light is manifested throughout the space in which 'one dominant tectonic element, namely a barrel vault, determines the overall character of the piece' (ibid.: 238). In this building, the stereotomic of the earthwork is integrated into the site in a proper way, and the rite of passage provokes a tactile experience through which:

> We find ourselves returned to the tactility of the tectonic in all its aspects; to a meeting between the essence of things and the existence of beings, to that pre-Socratic moment, lying outside time, that is at once both modern and antique (ibid.: 246).

Jorn Utzon's architecture represents two interrelated principles, the constructional logic of tectonic form and the syntactical logic of geometry. These principles, according to Frampton, are united through a concern to topography, climate, time, material and craft, and give a particular character to his buildings, as we can see in the case of Sydney Opera House where the Semperian distinction of earthwork and roof work[8] is clearly perceivable. In Bagsvaerd Church[9] Utzon's tectonic approach is strongly present (Fig. 2.1). A combination of the occidental and the oriental, the Nordic Gothic Revival and the pagoda form, this church refers to the celestial vault of the Christian tradition in the shell form and presents the Semperian elements in the form of earthwork, hearth (altar), roof work and infill wall.[10] Of Utzon's architecture Frampton writes:

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[7]Kimbell Art Museum accommodates the art collection of the Kimbell Art Foundation. The main building, designed by Louis Kahn, manifests his individual and significant architectural thinking on space, memory, structure and tradition. Recently Renzo Piano, the Italian architect, who had once worked in Kahn's office, designed an extension to the museum that was respectfully in the spirit of Kahn's building.

[8]Semper distinguished between two separate material procedures in built form: tectonics of the frame (roofwork) and stereotomics of compressive mass (earthwork). While the former addresses members of varying lengths conjoined to encompass a spatial field, the latter is constructed through the piling up of identical units (the term stereotomics deriving from the Greek term for solid, *stereos* and for cutting, *-tomia*)" (Frampton 2002b: 95). This distinction has some ontological implications:'[f]ramework tends towards the aerial and the dematerialization of mass, whereas the mass form is telluric, embedding itself ever deeper into the earth. The one tends towards light and the other towards dark. These gravitational opposites, the immateriality of the frame and the materiality of the mass, may be said to symbolize the two cosmological opposites to which they aspire: the sky and the earth. Despite our highly secularized techno-scientific age, these polarities still largely constitute the experiential limits of our lives' (ibid.).

[9]Completed in 1976, this church is located on the northern outskirts of Copenhagen.

[10]After seeing a model of a Caribbean hut in the Great Exhibition of 1851, Semper proposed 'four elements' as an anthropological construct comprising: (1) a hearth, as the symbolic, public nexus of the work, (2) an earthwork (podium), (3) a framework (structure) and a roof considered together and (4) an enclosing membrane (wall) or the woven infill framework. He also attributed certain crafts to every element: metallurgy and ceramics to the hearth, masonry to the earthwork, carpentry to the structural frame, and textiles to the art of enclosure, side walls and roof.

Fig. 2.1 Bagsvaerd Church, interior view (Author)

> Utzon believes that the poetics of built form must derive in large measure from the totality
> of its tectonic presence and that it is this, plus an essential critical reflection on the status of
> the work in hand, that constitutes the mainspring of architectural form (ibid.: 292).

2.5.3 *Avant-Garde/Arrière-Garde*

Frampton criticizes different modes of avant-gardism, claiming that it presents a
superficial attitude towards history, the past and even the present. For example,
Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto was anti-classic, anti-Gothic and pro-industrial,
intending to 'abrogate memory and to proclaim a new and universal culture which
would be predicated on nothing other than naked instrumentality' (Frampton 1982a:
22). This brutal instrumentality, celebrating the triumph of the machine, denied that
the past, or even the present, was oriented towards an absolute future based on the
eternal omnipresent speed, and conceived architecture as a gigantic machine
determined solely by the laws of material resistance, statics and dynamics.
Consequently, the human being was reduced to a blind instrument for realizing this
absolute destiny, without any relationship to the past; memory, tradition, history.

   In the condition of extensive avant-gardism, Frampton states, making architec-
ture is possible only through a critical practice with an arrière-garde attitude;
establishing distance from the Enlightenment myth of progress on the one hand, and
the reactionary return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past on the
other. Arrière-gardism has to oppose intensive modernization as well as an unre-
alistic and formal return to the past: 'A critical arrière-garde has to remove itself
from both the optimization of advanced technology and the ever-present tendency
to regress into nostalgic historicism or the glibly decorative' (Frampton 2002a: 81).

Only through such a critical arrière-gardism are we are able to establish and enrich a resistant but generative culture, at the same time that we take advantage of the universal technique.

2.5.4 Topographic/Artificial

The extensive technical and universal approach to the site in modern architecture, Frampton argues, culminated in a condition of placelessness, transformed the architectural work to a free-standing object, and thus turned the built form into a commodity free from any culture-based linkage to the topography. To resist commodification, instead of constructing a totally flat site through massive earth-works, achieved through bulldozing the existing topography, the work of architecture should propose a more dialectical relation to nature. It should do this by highlighting the topography of the site, or in Mario Botta's words by means of 'building the site':

> The specific culture of the region—that is to say, its history in both a geological and agricultural sense—becomes inscribed into the form and realization of the work. This inscription, which arises out of 'in-laying' the building into the site, has many levels of significance, for it has a capacity to embody, in built form, the prehistory of the place, its archaeological past and its subsequent cultivation and transformation across time. Through this layering into the site the idiosyncrasies of place find their expression without falling into sentimentality (Frampton 2002a: 87).

This passage demonstrates the Critical Regionalist approach to the site. By means of 'building the site', the culture of a region, consisting of the 'prehistory' of the place, its 'archaeological past', and its subsequent 'cultivation and transformation' across the time, is embodied in the built form or put into the site. Thus, 'building the site' implies not only a physical construction, but also a 'cultural intervention'; constructing the existing site by means of a multidimensional rereading or reinterpreting of its 'history' devoid of any superficial and formal references. Therefore, 'building the site' opposes the optimum physical usage of universal technique and intends to create an optimum 'cultural landscape' rooted in the tradition and history.

A number of architects have employed this strategy to deal with the particularity of place. Luis Barragan's architecture is very tactile, sensual and earthbound, inspired by his childhood memories and his lived experience of nature, landscape and local architecture, 'An architecture compounded of enclosure, stelae, fountains and water courses; an architecture laid into volcanic rock and lush vegetation; an architecture that refers indirectly to the Mexican *estancia*' (Frampton 1992: 318). Grounded on the specific topography of the site and linked to the texture of the local fabric, Alvaro Siza's architecture is a response to the urban landscape of the Porto region. His works are based on a tight deference 'towards local material, craft work, and the subtleties of local light; a deference which is sustained without falling into the sentimentality of excluding rational form and modern technique' (ibid.: 317).

From another point of view, Critical Regionalism resists the universal approach of Modernism towards the artificial—for instance, artificial light and climate. For example, against the modern attitude toward light which favoured the exclusive use of artificial light in art galleries, ignoring the very character of the local light—a static application of universal technology—Critical Regionalism would employ top-light, to avoid the injurious effects of direct sunlight, while gaining the benefit of the changing ambient light of the exhibition space under the impact of time, season, humidity and so on. This phenomenological approach to light would guarantee 'the appearance of a place-conscious poetic—a form of filtration compounded out of an interaction between culture and nature, between art and light' (Frampton 2002a: 87). Similarly, the universal ventilation system of remote-controlled air-conditioning prescribed for all times and all climatic conditions is essentially refused by Critical Regionalism since it neglects the particularity of 'place' and its 'characteristics'. For instance, the fixed fenestration of buildings in hot-dry or even moderate climates is intended to maximize the efficiency of air-conditioning systems, but in fine weather, they cannot be opened for natural ventilation (Frampton 1998). Thus, Critical Regionalism highlights the natural characteristics of the site and avoids the imposition of artificial features at the expense of the existing forces of the environment.

2.5.5 Tactility/Visuality

Western attitudes to perceiving the environment, Frampton argues, are essentially image-based and perspectively oriented, as is reflected in the etymology of the term 'perspective'. The word perspective implies 'rationalized sight or clear seeing' and neglects the contribution of the other senses of hearing, taste, smell and touch to the process of perception. The priority of vision and sight over other senses, on the other hand, reduces 'experience' to 'mere information, to representation or to the simple evocation of a simulacrum substituting for absent presences' (Frampton 2002a: 89). This one-dimensional experience or 'far-experience' leads to the 'loss of nearness'. This interpretation is reminiscent of Heidegger's discussion about new technologies where he emphasizes that the existing frantic abolition of distances conducted towards a 'uniform distancelessness' never brings us close to things, and nearness is more an existential mood than a physical one (Heidegger 1971: 166). To meet this challenge, Frampton advocates 'readdressing the tactile range of human perceptions' (Frampton 2002a: 89) as a complement to perception, resisting the historical privilege of vision and sight rooted in Renaissance architecture, and criticizing the 'rationalized sight' of perspective which underlines 'formal representation' at the expense of tactile experience (Frampton 1988: 62).

In fact, the supremacy of vision is not a modern phenomenon, but has a long history in western culture. As Pallasmaa suggests, classical Greek thought privileged the accuracy of vision. For Plato vision was the greatest gift to humanity, for Aristotle the most noble of the senses (Pallasmaa 1996). This ocularcentric tradition

was advocated in the Renaissance and even later in the ideas of prominent modern architects such as Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius.[11]

To get beyond the dominance of the vision, the tactile needs to be highlighted, since the tactile gets close to the things, captures their materiality, and employs the entire body as the site of perception:

> The tactile opposes itself to the scenographic and the drawing of veils over the surface of reality. Its capacity to arouse the impulse to touch returns the architect to the poetics of construction and to the erection of works in which the tectonic value of each component depends upon the density of its objecthood. The tactile and the tectonic jointly have the capacity to transcend the mere appearance of the technical in much the same way as the place-form has the potential to withstand the relentless onslaught of global modernization (Frampton 2002a: 89).

A number of architectural works provoke the tactile. In Aalto's Säynätsulo Town Hall (1952), for example, there exists a palpable tactile sensitivity. The brickwork of the stair—as well as the treads and risers—provokes the kinetic impetus of the body in climbing the stair, and thus our body feels or 'reads' this different character in contrast to the timber floor of the council chamber: 'This chamber asserts its honorific status through sound, smell and texture' (ibid.: 89) and leads to an existential, bodily experience of the space through the entire body. In Church of the Light by Ando, one observes a 'kinaesthetic character' not only as the result of the permanently changing pattern of light, but because of the sound of the footfall on the wooden floor, together with the smell of cement and wood (Fig. 2.2). Frampton writes: 'For Ando, the main hope for our survival resides in our tactile awareness rather than in distanciation effected by the power of sight, our ocular senses having long since been overwhelmed by mediatic abstraction' (Frampton 2002c: 317).

2.6   The Theory of 'In-Between': Critical Regionalism

Critical Regionalism could be understood as a contemporary interpretation of the regionalist approach to the built environment which has been manifested in various different ways through the course of history. In the way it is spelled out by Frampton, it combines together two lines of thought: the critical thinking of Frankfurt School and the phenomenological thought of Heidegger. Although it criticizes the modernist approach to the built environment for its reductionist attitude, it condemns Postmodern architecture for its scenographic interpretations from history and the past as well. Thus, Critical Regionalism is not disposed to produce starchitecture; rather, it is practiced by some regional schools which stand out from the overwhelming trajectory of styles and follow a marginal resistance that,

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[11]Juhani Pallasmaa provides a detailed and thoughtful discussion on the production of vision-oriented architecture through the course of history, with a focus on its philosophical origin. See Pallasmaa (1996).

Fig. 2.2 Church of the Light, Tadao Ando, interior (Author)

although critical of modernization, 'never abandons the progressive aspects of the modern architecture legacy' (Frampton 1983: 327).

Critical Regionalism stands against contemporary placelessness and calls for a return to the potentiality of *Raum* in providing a defined boundary, and to the public sphere and its capability for bringing people close to each other. It advocates a

'hybrid world culture' entailing a cross-fortification of rooted culture and universal civilization and their permanent exchange. Moreover, it observes architecture as a tectonic practice rather than a series of scenographic representations. It also introduces a critical arrière-gardism in its Gadamerian sense to restrain any vulgar avant-gardism. For Critical Regionalism, site-specific factors such as topography and natural forces are the means of highlighting tectonics and linking them to place. The tactile is as important as the visual; Critical Regionalism invites the bodily closeness and condemns the kind of visually based remote-experience advocated by information science. Finally, Critical Regionalism achieves these goals not through sentimental formal reference to the past and local elements, but by an indirect reinterpretation of them. "Critical Regionalism opposes the sentimental simulation of local elements, tending instead to reinterpret them. It may also derive those elements from foreign sources. It intends to create a contemporary place-oriented culture, or a regionally based 'world culture'" (Ibid., p. 327).

Two essential points make Critical Regionalism a significant departure point for our discussion: theorizing the 'in-between', and highlighting reinterpretation (what I refer to as *Khalq-i Jadid* in the Persian context: see chapter three). On the one hand, Critical Regionalism situates itself in a space in-between, setting a 'site of confrontation and dialogue' where two poles of extremes could exchange, interact and unite. And, it is this position in-between that makes this theory applicable to the context of Iran and the Middle East, where as shown in the first chapter, the confrontation of the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, has been, and still is, a decisive challenge. Dichotomous principles of Critical Regionalism provide a space in-between where two poles of dichotomy are present in a status of 'and-both' instead of reducing the challenges to a critical status of 'either-or'.

On the other hand, Critical Regionalism advocates authentic reinterpretation as a practical strategy produced out of the space in-between. In the process of reinterpretation, any direct and scenographic reference is avoided, since as Frampton points out, 'The fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place' (Frampton 2002a: 82). What is important in a critical regionalist approach is the process of reinterpretation by which the particularity of a given place is discovered and incorporated into the architectural building. As Woolsey spells out, 'Critical Regionalism is a dynamic balance between timeless universal architectural principles and the modifiers of people, places, and events…It is a process through which an infinite number of architectural solutions might be produced' (Woolsey 1991: 322).

Thus, Critical Regionalism as an architecture of reinterpretation goes beyond a set of solid construction codes and physical regulations derived from existing local materials, domestic crafts and vernacular forms, and creates ever-changing, but place-specific architectural interpretations. It is a regionalism of liberation, rather than a regionalism of restriction, to use Harris's terminology (Harris 2007: 58). Critical Regionalism is an exclusive approach, as well as an inclusive one, in the sense that it absorbs the emerging modes of thought of the current epoch, but reinterprets them to chime with the specific character of the region.

To summarize, Critical Regionalism is the 'theory of in-between'. It produces a mediatory space where dichotomous concepts negotiate, confront and reconcile. It presents architects, urban planners and urban designers with a number of general concerns with regard to the peculiarity of any given region, and makes it their task to peculiarize these general concerns by means of reinterpreting them in the light of the characteristics of a given region and place, to bring forth a never-ending stream of creations: *Khalq-i Jadid*.

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Chapter 3
Space-in-Between

In this chapter, I focus on the case of Iran as a place where the quest for Critical Regionalist architecture and urban design has acquired a singular character, thanks to the work of leading architects such as Houshang Seyhoun, Kamran Diba, Nader Ardalan and Hossein Amanat. I then go on to discuss how in an era dominated by modernization and universalization, a sense of resistance emerged that attempted to reconcile Iranian-Islamic culture and Modernity, to present a critical reading of both Western and Islamic interpretations, and to find a middle way that neither rejected the West and its advantages, nor neglected the history and culture of the nation. In this way, an intermediate approach appeared in which two extremes coexist in a continuous but generative tension, a situation which helped to bridge the gap between West and East, Modernity and Tradition, the universal and the particular, civilization and culture, and thus introduced a Critical Regionalist architecture and urban design that garnered worldwide recognition. This approach to place-making, which I refer to as the 'space-in-between' approach, is mainly observable in the works of a number of leading architects and urban designers such as Kamran Diba, Nader Ardalan, and Hossein Amanat,[1] and will be studied under different themes such as the public sphere, the poetics of construction, bodily experience, architectural archetypes, and the dialectic of presence in detail, supported by different illustrations. Introducing the term 'urban oasis', I conclude that this Critical Regionalist approach created a perfect 'urban oasis' as a 'space-in-between' where, to use Norberg-Schulz's terminology, setting-into-work of place takes place.

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[1]I have focused my analysis on these three architects, as I believe they are the most prominent figures whose thoughts and works are significantly associated with the principles of Critical Regionalism during 60s and 70s. During this period, we may find single architectural works with Critical Regionalist flavour, but hardly can find an architect whose works and thoughts have continuous dialogue with Critical Regionalism.

3.1   The Search for 'In-Between'

As mapped in the first chapter, there was a growing tendency towards modernist and universal architecture and urban planning in twentieth century Iran, advocated by the policymakers and academia, so that during 60s and 70s universal principles of modern architecture and urban planning became the ruling discourse. Policymakers attempted to play a distinguished role in the region, present Iran as a modern country in terms of technological, cultural, and social achievements and have a voice in the international sphere. To be sure, architectural and urban constructions could act as places of manifestation, where official slogans could be incorporated, realized and take tangible form before the world. Thus, both academia and professionals participated in this mission of manifestation: while academics taught principles of international style in design studios, professionals, educated in the same academic institutions, implemented these principles and followed their rationality. In the professional sphere, the ruling discourse was intensified by the international consultancies and offices that were, themselves, an integral and active part of the production of international discourse.

Ironically, precisely during the period when modernization and universalization held sway in Iran, a fragile intermediate discourse was incrementally growing in the field of architecture and urban planning which was unique in character and approach. This trend attempted to reconcile Iranian-Islamic culture and Modernity, to present a critical reading of both Western and Islamic interpretations, and to find a middle way that neither rejected the West and its advantages nor neglected the history and culture of the nation. In this way, the emergence of an intermediary condition came to light, a condition in which the two extremes were supposed to coexist in a continuous but generative tension, a position which intended to bridge the gap between West and East, Modernity and Tradition, universal and particular, civilization and culture.

Although the main architects within this persuasion appeared later in the 1960s and 1970s, the prominent figure was undoubtedly Houshang Seyhoun (1920–2014), who, in the 1950s, introduced a highly able blending of the principles of modern architecture with forms and materials taken from traditional Persian architecture. A graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts in Tehran and the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, and influenced by the ideas of André Godard, he served as Dean of the Faculty between 1962 and 1968 and played an important role in the architectural education of the next generation of Iranian architects. Rejecting the formal duplication and imitation of Western architecture, he believed in learning from the principles of traditional Iranian architecture while drawing from the advantages offered by the technical achievements of the modern world.

In his designs can be observed an adaptive reinterpretation both of the architectural language of prominent modern architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, and of the technical and formal legacy of traditional Iranian architecture, 'an unconstrained capacity for blending elements of the modern language of architecture such as the *plan libre* with materials and forms taken from the Persian architectural

tradition' (Micara 1996: 55). This attitude is well reflected in his monumental buildings in which direct/indirect references to metaphors and traditional architectural forms and geometry are translated into a modernist architecture. For instance, in the tomb of Avicenna (Abu Ali Sina) in Hamadan (constructed in 1951) he presents a poetic combination of syntactic and semantic references in order to create a monument which manifests the mystical as well as the philosophical character of Avicenna (Fig. 3.1). A similar approach has been employed in his later monumental works, for example in the Omar Khayyam mausoleum (1959–63) and the Kamal-ol-Molk mausoleum (1959–63) in Nishabur, and Nader Shah mausoleum (1959) in Mashhad (Fig. 3.2). All in all, Seyhoun should be considered as a modern architect who believes in modern architecture, its principles, vocabulary and compositions. As Wellman (1998, p. 13) puts it, 'Geometrical and pure forms, such as squares, circles and equilateral triangles, are used logically and extensively throughout his works, always bearing in mind beauty and proportion'. Thus, in his architectural works, his intention is not going beyond 'the modern', but localizing and settling 'the modern' on and within the syntactic and semantic context of Iran. At most, he intends to adapt modern architecture to the 'Iranian climate', that is, to its cultural and social context. Thus, the historic references observable in his monumental works are not postmodern in intention, but rather, modern in character; which distinguishes his architecture from later Postmodern architecture. On the other hand, the regionalist aspect of his architecture is not critical of modern architecture, but an extension of it. His architecture, in other words, differentiates itself from modern architecture, in that he introduces a personal narrative of modern architecture which is, or intends to be, essentially Iranian.

Starting from mid 60s and cultivated in early 70s, contemporary with the deep criticism of the Modern Movement and the genesis of Postmodernism at the international level,[2] some Iranian architects tried to 'elaborate an authentic Iranian architecture, drawing on the city and buildings of the past' (Katouzian 1996: 38). In their works, 'The primary values of architecture rather than the forms are brought into evidence, defining a more intellectual and abstract idea of tradition' (ibid., p. 62). The leading figures of this trend were Kamran Diba, Nader Ardalan and Hossein Amanat. The works of these architects were prominent and influential for different reasons. They introduced a way of making architecture which transcended the existing dominant styles and employed a critical approach intended to challenge the barriers to the modern and international style in the Iranian context, which at the same time never fell into the trap of reproducing historical symbols and signs redolent of a nostalgic sentimentalism towards the past. In this sense, they resisted the dominant construction culture, criticized inhumane and problematic aspects of

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[2]Postmodernism in architecture has its roots in the critiques of functionalism, reductionism, rationalism, and aesthetics of modernist architecture and international style, mainly articulated during the 1960s and consolidated in the 1970s. A main starting point was Robert Venturi's book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) followed by a series of architectural works by Charles Moore, Michael Graves, Philipp Johnson, James Stirling, and others during the 1970s and 1980s.
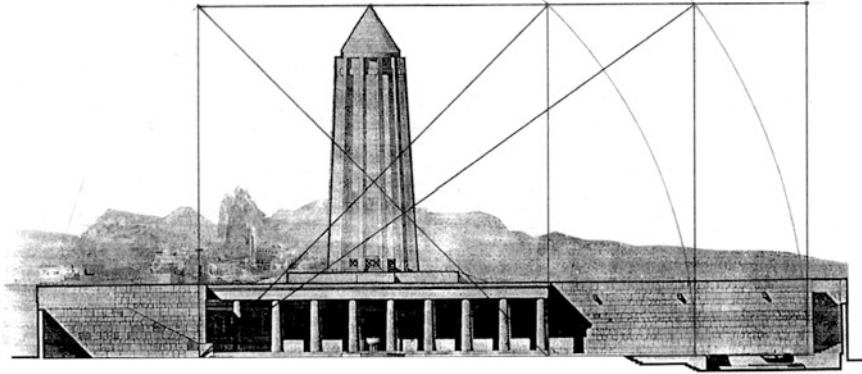
Fig. 3.1 Avicenna Tomb, Houshang Seyhoun (Seyhoun 1998)

Fig. 3.2 Nader Shah Tomb, Houshang Seyhoun (Author)

the international style, appreciated dormant values of the traditional built environment without naïve and blind reproduction of its forms, and thus created a 'space-in-between' which intends to draw benefit both from the achievements of the modern and the lessons of tradition. This resistance, imbued with the creative reinterpretation of the traditional prototypes presented itself against the

placelessness of universalism and created urban enclaves coloured with difference and significance. Avoiding superficial reproduction gave these works a sense of honesty; the buildings show their structure in a tectonic way and reveal themselves as they are.

These particularities render the works of these architects 'critical regionalist', to the extent that we can refer to them as a significant manifestation of the theory of Critical Regionalism in the field of architecture as well as urban planning, with the argument that in terms of distinctiveness, originality and authenticity, the outcome was not only unique in the context of Iran and the Middle East, but prominent and noticeable at the international level.

The remainder of this chapter introduces the manifestation of Critical Regionalism and the production of 'space-in-between' in the architectural writings and works of Kamran Diba, Nader Ardalan and Hossein Amanat. It does this from two perspectives: 'towards space-in-between' and 'within space-in-between'. While the latter explores diverse dimensions of the space-in-between and their manifestations in architectural works, the former shows how architects obtained a deep understanding of 'the in-between' and its urgency and how they contextualized it in the context of Iran.

3.2   Towards 'Space-in-Between'

The move towards 'space-in-between' did not happen in a vacuum, but was generated and promoted by a set of beliefs that convinced architects to define their way forward and orient themselves. This awareness, of course, was contextual in nature, derived from a deep understanding of the character of a given place. This move was characterized by the acknowledgement of an identity crisis which called for cultural continuity supported by a sense of resistance against the dominant modes of space production, as well as a wish to establish international exchange and dialogue with the world.

3.2.1   Identity Crisis and Continuity

A critical approach to the dominant architectural and urban planning discourse and the way this discourse interpreted the very ideas of Tradition, Modernity, technology, and progress is an integral part of these architects' critical thinking and what makes their attitudes singular and unique. A main argument present in their literature and writings addresses a state of crisis that has resulted from the imposition of doctrines regarding progress, development, and urbanism, imported from the west but irrelevant to the sociocultural particularities of the given context.

Diba observes an 'identity crisis' in Islamic societies which derives from the overwhelming presence of Western values and principles, that stand against their

indigenous lifestyle. He writes: 'The West, master and maker of the twentieth century, has imposed its values and forced its superior methods of science, technology and production onto less-developed societies. Loss of independence and perhaps a perceived humiliating subjugation to Western ideas and values has brought about an identity crisis in Islamic societies' (Diba 2002: 119). Pointing to the cultural schism between the West and the Islamic society he argues that ironically, despite identical calls to produce authentic architecture within Islamic societies, on the ground there is a dominant tendency towards reproducing Western-style metropolitan life in all its dimensions from high-rise buildings up to mega-urban structures. Diba believes that despite some endeavours to undermine this dominance, what is lacking is the kind of constructive dialogue and communication among the Islamic nations, that might foster cultural interrelations. Diba concludes that the existing trends towards generating identity remain superficial and non-influential, since 'while Islamic societies are arguing over the design of the buttons, the suit itself is being produced according to the Occidental model' (Diba 2002: 120). In this context, Diba talks about the necessity of 'continuity' in the Islamic world, since a radical planning and policy-making shift in the direction of extensive modernization and technology that disregards cultural realities will fail (Diba 1980a, b: 40).

Diba gives us a more tangible example of how the imposition of Western values and lifestyle leads to sociocultural disorder and challenge. According to Diba, two enemies of Islamic societies can be observed, namely high-rise buildings and uncontrolled vehicular traffic. Muslims, he suggests, must avoid vertical density and create horizontal developments, and they should separate vehicular traffic from pedestrians, so as to give priority to human beings and their social interactions. Although one may challenge the applicability of this approach in a time of over-population and extensive demand for housing, as most of the mega-cities of the Islamic world experienced in the second half of the twentieth century, this concern has been sufficiently convincing for Diba to apply it to his urban planning schemes, particularly the Shushtar-No scheme, as will be explained later.

The imposition of imported urban planning systems onto the traditional city and the consequent drastic change of lifestyle this entails, coupled with the lack of a convincing alternative and substitute, manifests the identity crisis in Islamic cities. Ardalan (1986) argues that despite a number of achievements and gains made by Iranian architects and planners following World War II, such as a growing awareness of the past and Iranian history as a departure point for an introspective and anticipatory approach to the built environment, there were nevertheless remarkable losses. These included the loss of traditional the Iranian way of life as the result of the destruction of many residential quarters in the old towns of Iran, the loss of the pivotal role of the mosque in the community and the loss of familiar human scale to the built environment. The latter is of high importance, since this loss was not replaced by any new spatial order so that 'This inability to fill the void caused by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and secularization is a commonplace problem confronting all rapidly transforming traditional societies' (ibid.) which fostered alienation and unrest. This void is the space of identity crisis; a

space of uncertainty, disorientation, confusion and scepticism. To fill this gap, or to bridge it, the first step would be to recognize and acknowledge its existence, and as we can see in the writings and thinking of the architects in question, they demonstrate an advanced sense of recognition and understanding about the character, nature and dimensions of the gap.

In other places, Ardalan presents a more elaborated image of the crisis resulting from the forced imposition of Occidental values and beliefs onto cities of Islamic culture and proposes a generative return to principles imbued with a constructive re-evaluation of the dominant concepts of progress in order to generate a 'regional sense of identity'. Ardalan argues that while in Islamic culture the progress of individuals, families and communities has been measured in terms of both metaphysical and material growth, in the Occident, since the industrial revolution, 'inordinate emphasis has been placed on the material and personal ego satisfaction of the individual' (Ardalan 1980b: 6). As the result of their total forgetfulness of the spiritual and reflective aspects of human life, Ardalan argues, humankind has been 'imprisoned within the concrete and limited dimension of quantity' (Ardalan 1974a: 14). This has been aggravated by the increasing anthropocentric concerns of material consumption, leading to the depletion of world resources, food insufficiencies and increasing social strife. All this necessitates a re-assessment of the dominant mode of progress, which leaves little room for a balanced approach to reality. This dominance has culminated in a state of crisis in cities: 'The concept of the megalopolis, the dispersed city images of the 'Ville Radieuse' of Le Corbusier and the sealed glass towers of Mies van der Rohe have created false ideas of form, totally alien to the ecological and cultural constraints of this spaceship earth' (Ardalan 1980b: 7). This makes cities and buildings characterless, as Amanat (2007) puts it: such buildings could be located anywhere, regardless of their original location.

In the Islamic world, according to Ardalan, the dominant pattern of 'development' incorporated into the planning strategy of applied master plans culminated in an agglomeration of 'development pockets' and socially segregated 'enclaves', which were connected by transportation networks. What is missing is 'any perception of order at a human, pedestrian scale; all that is evident at the human level is traffic congestion and long delays between destinations' (Ardalan 1980b: 12). As a result of the emergent paradox, namely 'the sensed need for governments to display advancement, contrasted with the inevitable disruption and alienation which the advancement brings' (ibid.: 13), contemporary settlements 'tend to be ignoble places of alienation to their inhabitants, incapable of inspiring respect in either local citizenry or in that of other cultures' (ibid.: 8). In this condition, Ardalan argues, 'although it is impossible to demolish all the glass skyscrapers in the desert of the Middle East, it is possible to indicate their limitations and commence a transitional period of doing with less' (ibid.: 7). The reasonable approach is, he states, to consider the real treasury of insight and wisdom that lies hidden in traditional cultural values and indigenous settlements which might resolve the existing dilemmas of misplaced architecture. This approach attempts to discover principles rather than styles and thus tries to capture essences over appearances, to anticipate

and meet the needs of tomorrow. In this sense, what is needed is an authentic search
for sources and principles with which to establish a 'regional sense of identity' and
to promote 'the psychological benefits of continuity in the face of rapid change'
(ibid.).

The importance of a 'regional sense of identity' is in line with the necessity of
creating a 'space-in-between'. A regional sense of identity implies standing
somewhere in-between; between the dominant manifestations of universal confor-
mity and the dormant character of local identity and thus benefitting from a state of
constructive confrontation and productive dialogue. As will be seen later on, most
of the writings and architectural works by the selected architects aim to theorize and
provide practical pointers for this 'regional identity'.

3.2.2 Architecture of Resistance

In an era of identity crisis dominated by the superior Occidental values of science,
technology and production (Diba 2002), omnipresent 'characterless' architecture
(Amanat 2007), and the hegemony of imported models of development and pro-
gress which brought a social world focused on material consumption and alienation
at the expense of spiritual and reflective dimensions, to swim against the main-
stream and act against hegemonic order implies demonstrating a state of resistance
and struggle. This resistance has a twofold character in Diba's works: resisting the
wishes and forces of the clients and decision makers who are representatives of the
dominant space production culture, as in the case of Shushtar-No and the Garden of
Yousef-abad; and resisting the dominant modernist housing and construction trends
by means of reinterpreting traditional culture to a modern language, as in the case of
Shushtar-No and Imam Reza Shrine.

Diba shows himself very acute in upholding his architectural ideas and princi-
ples against the unthinking requests of his clients. In the Garden of Yousef-abad
(1966–69) he struggled to preserve an old but less important building as a bridge
linking the complex to the past, providing a reservoir of tradition—despite the fact
that he was forced by the client to demolish it. In the case of the new developments
around the Imam Reza Shrine in Mashhad, he was against any modernist radical
interference in the existing urban context and resisted destroying the old urban
texture. He tried to call a halt to the realization of a proposed development plan
which sought to erase the existing old urban fabric in order to provide room for new
additions and developments. Although he ultimately failed to convince the higher
governmental authority and they went on with their plan, he never confirmed the
project (Diba 2010: 145). In another attempt to 'humanize the urban environment'
and to fight against the nonsensical reproduction of high-rises and western-style
housing projects which were not suitable for Iranian culture, Diba invited inter-
national professionals and critics to develop a set of guidelines setting out criteria
and principles proper to Iranian urbanism, something that was generally under-
valued by decision makers (Diba 2010: 194–5).

For Diba, Shushtar-No was a reaction to the influence of Western values in Iran, at a time when the dominant construction style was irrelevant to the everyday life and traditional mahalla-based[3] lifestyle of Iranians (Diba 1998: 87). There was an economic boom due to high oil revenues in the 1970s and as a result of the growing need for accommodation facilities, rapid housing production was put onto the agenda by policymakers. Prefabricated or industrial housing was proposed as a quick solution to meeting housing needs. As will be elaborated in more detail, with Shushtar-No, Diba tried to resist this trend and open up new perspectives on the question of dwelling in terms of social programming, urban layout and housing prototypes. Diba's social concerns also convinced him to reject commissions to design private villas and homes, with the exception of a house and studio designed for the sculptor Parviz Tanavoli.[4] Since the dominant architectural tendency was towards private buildings and villas, while public and institutional architecture was mainly neglected, Diba focused on social architecture and public space.

Ardalan's search for 'indigenous style' in his architectural work could be also understood as a form of resistance against the dominant and ruling tendency towards 'international style'. Referring to the Iran Centre for Management Studies (now Imam Sadiq University) he argues that this project coincided with a growing interest among certain Iranian architects in seeking to create a kind of Iranian modern architecture, an 'indigenous style' (Ardalan 2009: 23) which was a place-specific interpretation of modern architecture. It is exactly this line of thought that seeks to produce a culturally-specific, locally applicable dialect of modern architectural language, which although following some of the latter's principles and lessons, tries to go beyond its dogmatism and orthodoxies.[5]

It is probably due to the critiques of these architects with regard to Modernism and modern architecture on the one hand, and their inclination towards traditional and historical forms on the other, that some critics categorize to their architectural works as Postmodernism or Iranian Postmodernism. However, for different reasons this naming seems to be inadequate despite the fact that it happened at the same time as the emergence of Postmodernism. First, as will be discussed in detail in this chapter, references to history and historical symbols were mainly indirect and the result of reinterpretation rather than the simple assemblage and eclecticism found in

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[3]Iranian cities were divided into a number of *mahallas*, normally translated as 'neighbourhoods,' based on ethnicity or religion. They normally presented a socially cohesive society with a strong sense of attachment and belonging, enjoying a set of local amenities offering necessary everyday functions such as a mosque, *hammam* (public bath), local bazaar, and so on.

[4]Parviz Tanavoli (1937) is an Iranian sculptor and painter. As a close friend of Karman Diba he made a number of sculptures to be located in his architectural assemblages, including Shafag Park and Niavaran Cultural Center.

[5]This resistance was not always a simple approach taking into account the power of the opponent. Ardalan in 2004 talks about a sense of passivity regarding the wishes and visions of architect's clients, where he has been the passive receiver of 'their self-expressions and their most cherished visions for their future' (Ardalan 2004: 75). Further he explains how the trend of globalization has imposed international images imbued with the market forces of product branding and high-tech construction systems, leaving no room for regional cultural relevance.

postmodernist architecture. Second, there is no reference to, or dialogue with the pioneers of postmodern architecture in their writings and statements. The established dialogue with the leading world architects which we are going to discuss in the coming section, was not limited to the leading figures of Postmodernism, nor did they exercise any direct influence on the writings of the architects in question. Ironically, architects and theorists who were influential for these architects, such as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, were mainly in the modernist vein, or like Louis Kahn can be ranked within its critical extension.

From another point of view, an anti-modernist approach, as expressed by the architects in question, does not necessarily imply abandoning Modernism in favour of Postmodernism, but rather indicates staying 'within' the vocabulary and discourse of Modernism while applying a critical approach to its disadvantages. For example, while Diba appreciates modernist architecture and follows its architectural and spatial achievements to the extent that his architectural compositions appear essentially modern, he extensively criticizes the modernist approach towards the built environment and its vulgar inattention to the particularity of place and the given sociocultural context. He thus advocates a modernist anti-modernism which gives his works a sense of individuality and personality. He mentions that he belongs to that generation of architects who introduced Modernism from abroad, but his understanding of Modernism is not limited to its physical dimensions, but goes beyond this to touch upon its psychological and social dimensions as well. This encouraged him to seek for a mode of synthesis in which modernist values can be reinterpreted according to the particularity of the place and adapted to the context. To be sure, Diba's architectural compositions are modernist in appearance; he uses modernist vocabulary but combines it with a social and humane programme that accords with the social life of the people. In this sense, his architecture is more an 'appropriated Modernism', or 'place-specific Modernism', rather than a historical postmodernism. He is simultaneously a protagonist and critic of Modernism, but he stands within Modernism and criticizes it from within. Consequently, his interpretations and references to history and the past is a modern reinterpretation, not a semiotic Postmodernist one. In fact, as will be elaborated in chapter five, Iranian Postmodernism emerged some 10–15 years later during the 1980s and 1990s, when the postmodern architecture was an influential international style.

3.2.3 Dialogue on the Margin

Although the architectural discourse produced by the architects in question was introduced in this account as marginal, it was marginal in the sense that it emerged and grew beyond the dominant modernist doctrine. Standing outside the governing discourse, however, it established two lines of dialogue with the world; a theoretical dialogue with the leading thinkers and philosophers of the day and an architectural dialogue with distinguished international architects. Nader Ardalan's architectural thinking and working significantly contributed to the first type of dialogue. In

several cases, he refers to philosophers and thinkers from the field of mythology, semiology, religion philosophy, and comparative world philosophy, such as Toshihiko Izutsu (1914–93), Joseph Campbell (1904–87) and Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1933).[6] Among these, the role of Seyyed Hossein Nasr is the more crucial and significant, to the extent that one could argue that Ardalan's architectural writings are architectural contemplations based on Nasr's philosophy.[7] Ardalan says that after graduation, returning to Iran to work as a professional he became familiar with the philosopher Nasr, who deeply inspired him (Ardalan 2006: 82) and encouraged him to learn more about famous Iranian Sufis and sages such as Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi (1155–1191), Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) and Rumi (1207–1273).

This influence is clearly observable in the book *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* authored by Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar (1973), the most prominent Iranian contribution to international scholarship of the given period. Although this book mainly focuses on Persian architecture, its arguments and explanations, which were innovative and pioneering of its kind, have made it a 'classic text' for scholars, students, as well as professionals. This prominent text systematically studies Persian architecture from a theoretical perspective, as Nasr puts it in his introduction: 'The present book is the first study to be made of the traditional architecture of Islam in its Persian setting from the point of view of the traditional principles involved' (Nasr 1973: xi). The book starts with a forward by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, the most eminent figure in the Perennial Philosophy of Sufism, to whom as we read in the opening words of the 'acknowledgments', Ardalan and Bakhtiar are deeply indebted, so that, as mentioned before this book could be understood as a successful architectural epilogue to Nasr's philosophy and thought. The central message of the book, on the basis of which the arguments have been set up and developed, is stated right at the opening of the Foreword section, where Nasr (1973) states that 'There is nothing more timely today than that truth which is timeless, than the message that comes from

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[6]Seyyed Hossein Nasr (b. 1933), now Professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University, emerged as a leading figure and expert in Islamic philosophy, especially Sufism and Mysticism. As the head of the faculty of literature at the University of Tehran and founder of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy under Empress Farah Pahlavi, his handful of publications, extensive contacts with internationally recognized figures such as Henry Corbin and Toshihiko Izutsu, and his standing with younger intellectuals, made him an influential individual in the intellectual sphere in Iran during the 1960s and 1970s.

[7]It should be noted here that although Nasr is considered as 'traditionalist' in philosophical discourse and his viewpoints belong to 'Perennial Philosophy,' Ardalan's architectural thinking and work could not be categorized as 'Traditionalism' in architectural discourse, as some authors such as Grigor (2009: 164–66) would claim. On the one hand, the co-authored book *The Sense of Unity: The Sufi Tradition in Persian Architecture* (1973), despite following Nasr's philosophical doctrine and thinking and hence reflecting his extensive appreciation of 'tradition,' appears deeply in favour of new, creative, and indirect reinterpretations theorized under the concept of *khalq-i jadid* (New Creation). In addition to this, Ardalan's architectural works as the manifestation of creative reinterpretations distance themselves from what one normally understands as 'Traditionalism' in architecture. His works are more tied up with 'regionalism,' 'localism,' or similar discourses in architecture.

tradition and is relevant now because it has been relevant at all times … To speak of tradition is to speak of immutable principles of heavenly origin and of their application to different moments of time and space' (ibid: xi). The book intends to discover and illustrate fundamental principles of Sufism, such as the 'dignity of the inner' and 'unity in multiplicity', reflected and expressed through works of art in general and architectural buildings and urban textures in particular. Although this book hints at concepts that are essential to phenomenological discourse and architectural phenomenology, such as discussing 'the sense of place', 'cardinal directions,' 'architectural archetypes', and 'principle architectonic elements', it is more indebted to the Perennial Philosophy and symbolic language of Sufi tradition than phenomenology. The description provided in the final chapter that leads from Masjid-i-Jami to Maydan-i-Shah presents a humane and vivid interpretation of these spaces through a pedestrian's eyes, though the explanations put more focus on the formal and spatial characteristics of the urban components.

The other line of dialogue, namely, dialogue with distinguished international architects, is indicated in various ways. Ardalan explains that he has been inspired by a number of leading figures, such as Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier and Josep Lluís Sert in the course of his education in the USA (Ardalan 2006: 82). But the architect and thinker who most influenced Ardalan was Luis Kahn (Ardalan 2005), who wrote a letter of recommendation to Chicago University Press to publish the book *Sense of Unity*. Ardalan states that Louis Kahn always had a divine and metaphysical dimension to his thoughts and designs and geometry was used by him as a tool for realizing a sublime ideal (Ardalan 2000). Of particular significance was Kahn's interpretations from tradition. In a later lecture, referring to the words of Louis Kahn, Nader Ardalan states that:

> The world of archetypal paradigms, the perennial metaphors of civilizations can be a guiding light. Louis Kahn said in Isfahan in 1979: 'Traditions are as golden dust falling in space. If one but had possibility of grasping this golden dust, we would possess the powers of anticipation of the future'. (Ardalan 2004: 81)

Diba points to the influence of Le Corbusier on his works (Diba 2010: p. 64). This influence, for instance, is well observable in the Garden of Yousef-abad, his first project, where the buildings demonstrate a Corbusian composition. In other of his works, such as Jondi-shapour University and Shushtar-No, Louis Kahn's style of composition is present. In Jondi-shapour University the general composition of the buildings, combination of brickwork and concrete, the geometry and layout of large-scale openings (particularly circular openings in Gymnasium and Faculty Housing and rectangular openings in administration building) are reminiscent of Kahn's architectural style.

While designing Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Diba was inspired by the Miró Foundation[8] in Barcelona designed by Josep Lluis Sert (Diba 2010: 127).

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[8]The Fundació Joan Miró (Joan Miró Foundation) was designed by Josep Lluís Sert i López (1902–1983), a Spanish architect and city planner. Opened in 1975, it is a museum of modern art honouring the painter Joan Miró.

The roofscapes of these works are similar in concept and character, with this difference that in the former, light catchers are intended to control the light and purify it to make it appropriate for the interior, in the latter they are there to flood the interior with the captured light, to make it illuminated.

The dialogue with leading international architects reached its zenith with a range of international congresses held in Iran, that included the contributions of important international architects and urban planners who were to some extent practicing outside the domain of star-architecture. The first International Congress, titled 'The interaction between Tradition and Technology', was held in 1970 in Isfahan. Attending this conference were a number of internationally recognized figures such as Louis Kahn, Paul Rudolf, Buckminster Fuller and Georges Candilis. The presence of Louis Kahn dominated this meeting; his philosophical approach and concepts were very influential upon the Iranian architects of the time. In his speech he elaborated his poetic understanding in relation to tradition, history, and design, which was well appreciated by the Iranian architects and professionals who were looking for theoretical frameworks through which they could appreciate their own historical architectural heritage.

The second International Congress of Architects (1974), entitled 'Towards a Quality of Life' was held at Persepolis. Chaired by Mohsen Foroughi, it gathered leading figures such as James Stirling, Lluis Sert, Kenzo Tange, Hassan Fathy, Charles Correa and Moshe Safdi. A number of participants of this congress including Sert, Safdi, Doshi, Candilis and Ardalan, worked on *The Habitat Bill of Rights* commissioned by the Ministry of Housing and Development. This book was presented at the United Nations Habitat Conference in Vancouver (1976). The book's introduction starts by calling attention to the rapid degradation in quality of life, a fact it claims to be observable in the declining personal, familial, and social conditions of human habitat, the declining cultural, social, and natural character of the environment, the abuse of natural resources, of industrial technologies and products and the increasingly chaotic nature of the interactions between the humanity and the nature. In this context, the Bill of Rights was a timely wake-up call to revisit dominant trends towards the built environment and development, and an appeal to reflect on the past and its potential to provide us with some pointers to move towards the future. The Bill, which mainly targeted developing countries, was a clear critique of modern architecture and urbanism, its principles, and its short-comings in providing acceptable living spaces for human beings, and proposed a return to community and locality. Highlighted among the principles, concepts and concerns proposed for the Habitat Bill of Rights were the human scale, cultural experiences, the built environment, harmony with the nature, the provision of land and a balance between opposites. Making a transition towards a more humane architecture and urbanism in which there was equal emphasis on physical and non-physical aspects was the main objective of the bill (see: Ardalan et al. 1976).

This international dialogue paved the way towards opening up the market to international companies and key figures. As a consequence, a number of international architects were commissioned to design major projects. Kenzo Tange designed the Tehran Hotel, Hans Hollein worked on the Glassware Museum

renovation and Alvar Aalto designed a museum in Shiraz. It was partly based on this international exchange that as Ardalan puts it 'In the late 1970s, Iranian professionals numbered among the leading international practitioners of architecture and planning' (Ardalan 1986).

3.3 Within 'Space-in-Between'

The 'space-in-between' theorized and produced by the architects in question was a perfect manifestation of the theory of Critical Regionalism precisely as a 'theory-of-in-between'. This manifestation of 'space-in-between' can be described, analyzed and understood through a range of concepts essential to the idea of Critical Regionalism as narrated and explained in the second chapter. In the sections that follow, the dimensions of 'space-in-between' will be discovered, discussed and exposed.

3.3.1 Public Sphere

Kamran Diba's architecture and architectural thinking introduces a broad attention towards the social aspects of human life. To go beyond the one-dimensionality of the built environment and its reduction to physical aspects, he has advocated a keen interest in discovering and intensifying human interaction and activity. This enthusiasm convinced him to extend his postgraduate studies into the field of sociology for one year (Diba 2010: 115). In this regard he writes, 'I became fascinated by the laws that govern social systems. Understanding social situations not only introduced a new challenge and a new dimension to my work, it led to an anti-architectural attitude' (Diba 1981: 8). Right from his childhood in the high-density areas of Tehran, the social life taking place on the streets made an impression on Diba. 'I was intrigued by the social expression in street life, by the groups idling on street corners, by the people parading the shopping streets who almost touched each other out of a penetrating sense of curiosity and concern, by neighbourhoods as territories, and so forth' (Diba 1981: 8). This experience was coupled with that of Italian towns and their piazzas, where social life is integrated with architectural expression.

Based on this background Diba defines building as 'a social event'. Within a building, the physical reality of place is essentially interconnected with human interaction and the two are by nature inseparable. 'I deliberately attempt to build an environment which multiplies and enhances the quality of interaction' (Diba 1981: 8). The task of the architect, thus, is not to meet functional needs, but to provide space for social activities and interactions. Diba refers to this strategy as a 'human interaction-intensification programme', which means, 'enhancing the quality and quantity of human interaction by means of physical, spatial

organization' (Diba 1981: 54). Diba even goes further and states that instead of modernist housing projects, which are incompatible with the lifestyle of Muslim societies, we have to concentrate on 'community development, rather than on housing' (Diba 1980a: 40). Community development, in this sense, has to consider the architectural, social and cultural particularities of the given context, rather than reducing dwelling to its material and financial dimensions.

Diba's obsession with public space has been present from his first architectural work, namely the Garden of Yousef-abad (Shafag Park). Into this garden he intended to introduce the idea of a 'neighbourhood and community centre' and hence planned a community centre with two small libraries, a workshop, a community hall, and other related facilities so that 'the park was not only a place to spend the late afternoon in summer, with fountains, waterfalls, flowers and shady trees, but also a place for the community to meet and participate in social matters' (Diba 1981: 16). Diba's interest in the public was so high that even the sculptures designed by Parviz Tanavoli are located within the public space and integrated into everyday life; they can be touched and used by passers-by (Fig. 3.3).

To provide a location for socializing Diba designs an 'architectural promenade' with which different components of the complex are linked together and integrated. For example, in Jondi-shapour University (now Chamran University) a pedestrian

Fig. 3.3 Garden of Yousef-abad, sculpture by Parviz Tanavoli (Author)
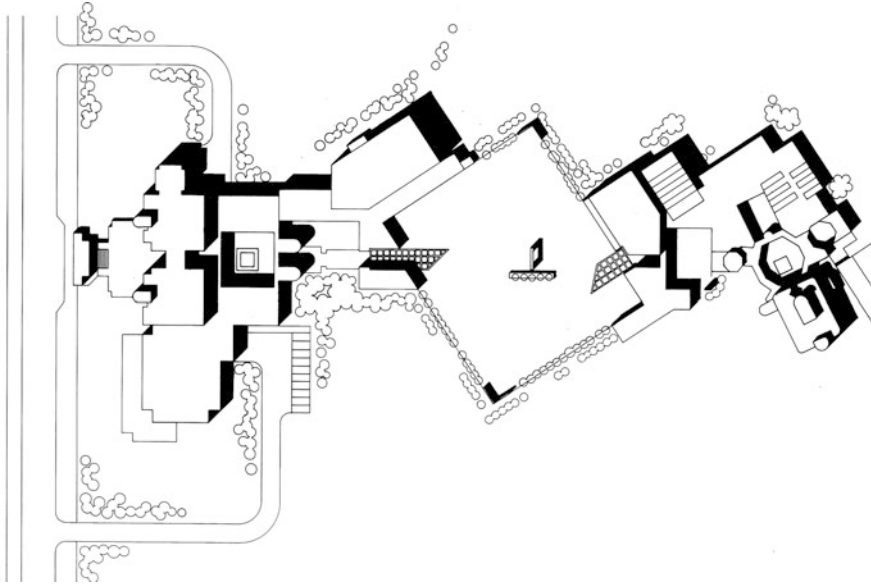
Fig. 3.4 Jondi-shapour University (Kamran Diba)

walk accommodates different activities and types of building, and as a changing axis, gives integrity to the complex (Fig. 3.4). This axis, which has been partly realized, starts from the Student Union and Cafeteria on the street border and takes one through a narrow passage to an open courtyard surrounded by shops and a teahouse. It continues to the small university mosque and turns in the direction of the elevated level of the agricultural water channel, along which a number of sport facilities are located including open courts, a gymnasium and a stadium.

In the Garden of Niavaran, originally planned to serve as the office facilities for Farah's Secretariat, Diba proposed the dedication of the main part of the complex to cultural facilities, thus opening up it to the public. In this sense, only a part of the complex was used for administrative purposes, the rest became available for public and cultural activities. But Diba's attention to the social dimension of the built environment was not limited to single architectural buildings or complexes, but extended to whole urban settings as well. The aim of encouraging social interaction is well reflected in Shushtar-No, where Diba talks about a 'social agenda' (Javaherian and Diba 2005) for the entire town (Fig. 3.5). A main pedestrian and social 'spine', consisting of a series of paved squares, lush gardens, covered and shaded resting places, fountains and running water, lined with schools and bazaars, has been designed to stimulate socialization. All streets and passages culminate in this spine, encouraging people to socialize (Diba 1981).

A dramatic combination of the concepts of garden, public space and roof garden is presented in the Tehran Centre for the Celebration of Music project (1978–79) designed by Ardalan, a combination of a 2000-seat Concert Hall, Experimental
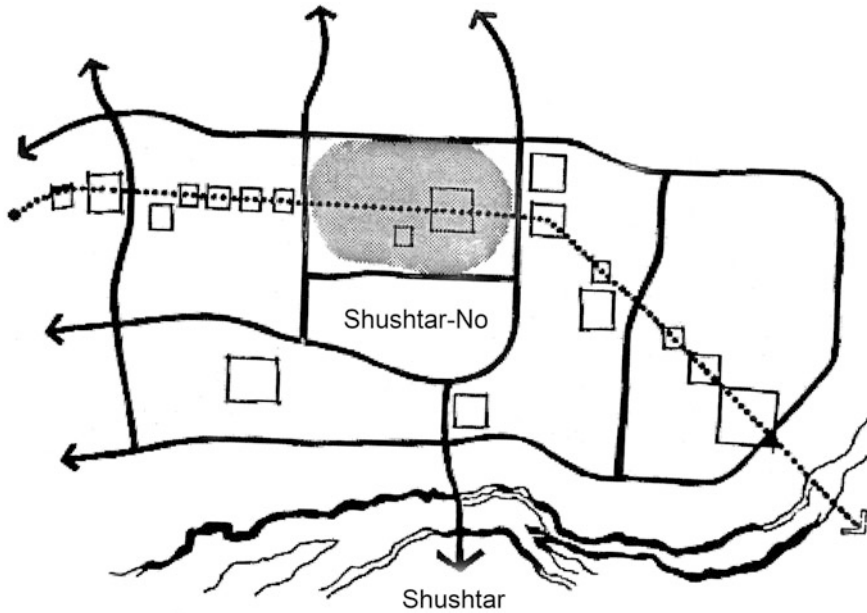
Fig. 3.5 Shushtar-No, diagram of public spaces (Kamran Diba)

Music Hall and a Conservatory for Music for the City of Tehran. In this project, the roofscape is transformed into a public urban space, or urban garden, which brings together the nearby gardens of the City Theatre, Roudaki Hall and Polytechnic Campus. This complex was also supposed to upgrade the existing adjacent urban tissue, that included a significant 1930s brickworks (Fig. 3.6).

3.3.2 Poetics of Construction

In the works of Kamran Diba a sense of 'poetic revealing of construction' or a 'poetic tectonics' can be perceived which goes against the tendency towards nostalgic, scenographic sentimentalism; architectural works reveal and disclose their 'being' and never conceal themselves behind covers and veils. In this way, they are open to be sensed and perceived as what they are. In the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the exposed concrete, the beach cobbles, and the copper, all reveal themselves as they are; a phenomenological revealing of the essence (Fig. 3.7). Thus, the building shows its 'building'; its manner of being constructed and erected. In the Gymnasium of the Jondi-shapour University the combination of concrete and brick, emphasized by the solid volumes with exposed spaces and technical facilities, reveals the function of space (Fig. 3.8).

Fig. 3.6 Tehran Centre for the Celebration of Music, section (Nader Ardalan)

Fig. 3.7 Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, materials on façade (Author)

The poetics of construction reaches its climax in the Namaz-khaneh (Praying-room) in Laleh Park, designed by Diba (Fig. 3.9). The minimalist nature of this work reduces the mass and enriches the space. The rotation of two cubic volumes creates an abstract space in which the play of the light and shade are mingled with the body and soul and thus invites us to contemplation and intuition. The brutality of the material, where the concrete exposes the trace of its wooden

Fig. 3.8 Namaz-khaneh, interior (Author)

framework and metal armature, depicts a sense of purity in which all claddings and coverings have been diminished and put aside; a condition of non-belongingness. In this way, the building manifests its building, its way of construction. Inside, everything has been reduced to the concrete walls: what exists therein is 'what it is', the maximum of purity and sincerity. Here we sense the 'place' *par excellence*; two

Fig. 3.9 Azadi Tower, façade (Author)

cubes create a sacred place, with their inter-rotation where the being of the work is the work itself, a perfect manifestation. This work does not refer to anything outside of itself, it is itself as it is. This phenomenological manifestation touches the body and calls all the senses to participate; this condensed space can be sensed through the entire body.

In Amanat's architectural geometry lies the very hidden logic of the work. In all his architectural works there exists a geometric order, either directly or indirectly inspired by traditional geometric patterns. This geometrical hidden logic, thus, gives his works a poetic sense embodied in the modern, but historically-imbued reconstruction of space. The most prominent example is the Azadi Tower (Shahyad Tower) which can be characterized as the 'poetry of geometry'; a poem in which the solidity of geometry is softened by the delicacy and elegance of the arches, ornaments, and colours, generating a lyricism in which the inner geometrical logic never undermines the manifestation of the architectural vocabulary. Looking at the monument, one feels, perceives and recalls the history and tradition in its phenomenological meaning. It is this potentiality that introduces the monument as a national symbol for both the totally contradictory pre- and post-revolutionary eras[9] (Fig. 3.9).

Generally speaking, the poetics of construction can be studied through three fields of manifestation: light, technology and wall.

Poetics of light: A theoretical interpretation of 'light' has been provided by Ardalan in his article 'Colour in Safavid Architecture: The Poetic Diffusion of Light' (1974). Very much influenced by the language and vocabulary of the book *The Sense of Unity* (1973) this article shows how 'light' (in Persian and Arabic *Nur*) is considered Absolute existence in spiritual thought, while 'darkness' is analogous to the phenomenal world; light is everythingness, while the shadowy world embodies the phenomenon of nothingness. While the paradox of light and darkness is clearly situated, Ardalan argues, the empirical world unfolds:

> Thus in the world of darkness and shadow, light appears; and in the world of essential nothingness, there is motivation towards everythingness and a saturation of the senses: visually through illuminated spaces, shapes and colours; audibly in speech, music and divine incantation; tangibly through silken, polished, incised or textured surfaces; odorously in fragrant rose gardens and musk perfumed bodies; and finally in taste, in the saffroned rice offerings (*nazr*) where through invocation one symbolically consumes the Divinity into his very being. (Ardalan 1974b: 166)

This paragraph suggests that light and its continuous challenge and interaction with darkness makes the world visible and this interaction, to some extent with its

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[9]As will be explained later in this chapter, the Shahyad Tower was constructed to serve as a symbol of Persian sovreigns. Inaugurated during the 2500 year anniversary celebration of the Persian Empire (1971), it has the symbolic meaning of gate opening upon the Great Civilization which the Shah promised. Ironically, this square became the demonstration place for various forces in opposition to the Shah from diverse levels of society with different ideologies before the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Taking the name of the Azadi Tower (Liberty Tower) after the Revolution, it became the location of Revolutionary demonstrations and ceremonies such as the celebration of the national day of 22 Bahman (the day of Revolution), and the international symbol for Tehran and Iran. After the construction of Milad Tower in 2007, there is a deliberate tendency to introduce this new tower as the symbol of Tehran and Iran, presenting it as the highest technical achievement of Revolutionary Iran.
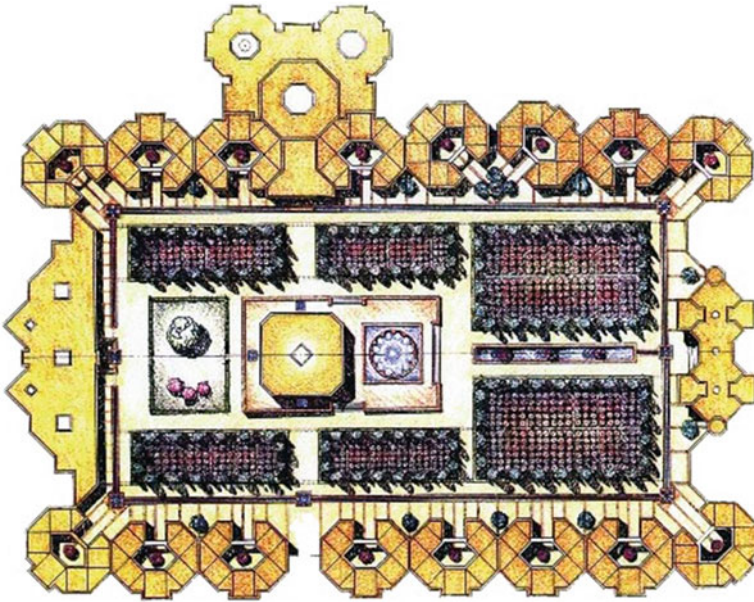
Fig. 3.10 Imam Sadeq University, site plan (Ardalan)

spiritual connotations, has been well reflected and manifested in the works of the selected architects.

Light is a very impressive element in the Iran Centre for Management Studies (now Imam Sadeq University). Due to the special structure and layout of the complex which offers a hierarchy of spatial order from public (garden) to private (student rooms) one observes a hierarchy of light, a gradual softening of light, from the absolute brightness and luminosity of the garden to the changing luminosity of the small courtyards to the purified and delimited light of the interior rooms (Fig. 3.10). As Yucel (1989) puts it, 'The contrast between the outdoor light of the enclosed garden and courtyards and the darker rooms and halls also accentuates the spatial sequences and the morphic order of these sequences'. This hierarchy of light, however, does not please some users, who complain about the insufficient natural lighting in some interior spaces (see: Yucel 1989).

In the works of Diba, light is not a free, wild illumination, but a purified and coordinated one. Natural light is tamed and restricted by the architectural elements and is incorporated into the body of the building. A prominent example is the light catchers of the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, where the function of a typical wind catcher is transformed into a light catcher, through which light enters into the interior after a process of reorientation (purification) (Fig. 3.11). In some cases, the presence of light is intensified by the dominance of darkness and this grants the space a sense of mystery and ambiguity. For example, in the Niavaran Cultural Centre a small opening pours the light into the interior and poetizes the

Fig. 3.11   Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, Light catcher (Author)

space. Thus, light does not overwhelm the space with its full presence, but through its limited presence (Fig. 3.12).

The play of light in the Heritage Organization Headquarters, designed by Hossein Amanat, presents an astonishing manifestation through different typologies of opening and apertures. The limited and purified admittance of light into the interior creates a space which is more dark than illuminated and thus the presence of lightness is much more perceptible than the darkness. The light comes into the interior either through the large windows on the first floor, small openings of the second floor, or apertures on the roofs; a deliberate typology of lightening which lets the light enter depending on the spatial quality needed in the interior. In the Azadi Museum too, the controlled nature of the light admitted highlights the presence of light against the dominant darkness of space.

Domestic Technology: Tectonics is essentially related to construction technology. In the works of the architects in question, there is a deliberate tendency towards using locally accessible construction techniques, materials, and labour so that the outcome is highly context-oriented and familiar. The materials employed are mainly from local or regional sources, and subtly reminiscent of the past and the labour and construction technology is mostly locally available.

As a result of seeking economies in the construction of Imam Sadeq University, from the beginning 'locally available materials and craftsmen' (Kassarjian and Ardalan 1982: 23) were used. The masons were also partly from Kashan, where the

Fig. 3.12 Niavaran Cultural Center, interior (Author)

tradition of constructing vault structures had been maintained. The construction technology employed was average and locally available; except for the wooden frames and furniture which were fabricated externally (Yucel 1989). The materials employed were basically in line with spatial functions and reflect spatial sensitivity; they gradually soften from exterior to interior, for example, from brick to smooth plaster. Brickwork and vaults give this building a sense of familiarity and enhance the intimacy of space, especially in the accommodation spaces where a higher sense of privacy is required. Within the student rooms, the symmetrical arrangement of space, vaults and interior finishing are all reminiscent of traditional buildings and spaces.

In Shushtar-No there exists an intentional attitude towards the use of local technology and labour. Load-bearing walls were made out of locally made bricks; the concrete and brick-working techniques use were those available locally. The contractor was local and the majority of the labour force (90%) Iranian, the remainder being Afghan. Artisans were also employed for decoration tasks, while professionals (architects and engineers) were 95% Iranian.

From a technological point of view, Azadi Tower could be suggested as the zenith of the approach giving a vital role to locally adapted technology. Marble stones (1500 pieces in 1500 sizes), the shapes of which calculated by computer programs, were extracted from the Jushgan region (Isfahan), and supplied by the

local expert Ghanbar Rahimi, a knowledgeable stone manufacturer. Except for the structural maps, all the design and construction was carried out by Iranian experts, companies and craftsmen. The main contractor was Mohammad Pourfathi, a reliable and skilful contractor and the main supervisor was Iraj Haghighi. The heavy doors of the underground museum entrance were made from Granite (from Hamedan), while floor stones were brought from Kurdistan.

Tectonics of the wall: The wall is a pertinent element of Diba's architecture, to the extent that one may call his architecture the 'architecture of wall'. In his architecture, walls are not elements of separation; they reject and admit at the same time. Walls keep us far from the interior and preserve our distance, while calling us to discover them by means of making us curious. The wall presents a condition of in-between; it is the realm of confrontation and contradiction: interior and exterior, rejection and admission, linkage and separation, here and there, are all present in this in-between. What makes the wall distinctive in the works of Diba is the wallness of the walls: walls are manifested as a 'wall', with no ornament or decoration. Walls have no 'flashiness', but create ambiguity, Diba says (Diba 2010: 133). They are pure walls which intend to reveal their wallness as such. The walls, in other words, are essentially tectonics. In praise of the wall, Diba writes:

> It is my pleasure to design a simple wall. You may imagine it very superficial. A wall can be a rigorous work of architecture, a barrier, or preserve a mystery. A simple wall exhibits the sense of separation, personality, security, and ownership. And finally, a wall is something that shows us direction and prepares us to enter into the realm of architecture and be present there. I am so crazy about building a simple wall!. (Diba 2001: 22)

In the Garden of Yousef-abad, the traditional geometry and solid character of the garden wall is transfigured into a porous wall drawn around the garden to delineate a soft border around it which invites and separates at the same time. In the Garden of Delgosha (1969–72), Diba kept the geometry and interior intact and built a permeable wall around the garden 'providing generous peek-holes to establish an in-out dialogue and for outsiders a hint of what awaits them' (Diba 1981: 107) with some highlights like the entrance (Fig. 3.13). In the Namaz-khaneh, the wall is the architecture per se: the wall is the only component of the building and place and space are created by walls. In this case, all the architecture is reduced to the wall, and all the architectural elements and components emerge from and are generated
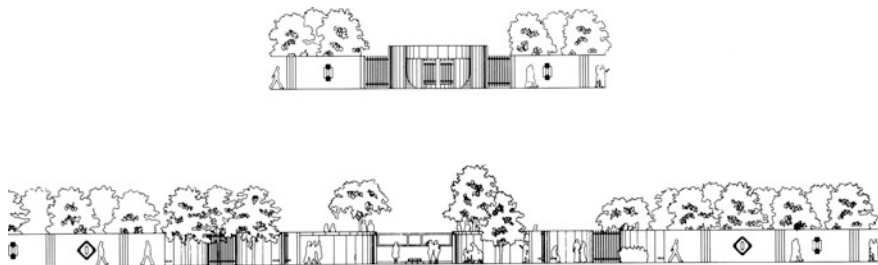
Fig. 3.13 Garden of Delgosha, wall surrounding the garden (Karman Diba)
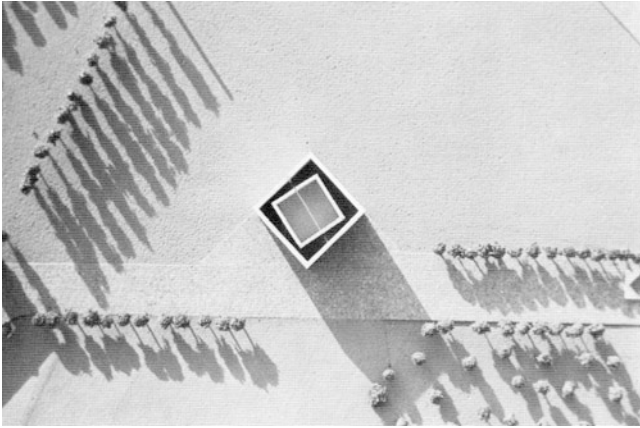
Fig. 3.14 Namaz-khaneh, model (Karman Diba)

by the wall; the combination of the walls makes floor, façade, roof, interior and exterior manifest (Fig. 3.14).

In the Friday Mosque of the Shushtar-No the wall plays an essential role in the definition of space. In this project, three layers of walls surround the interior 'to further remove the core of the mosque from daily intrusions' (Diba 1981: 220). To reach the interior, one has to pass through a three-fold walled threshold and enter the central space in a hierarchy of approaching. The typical hierarchy of entrance in traditional Iranian architecture which is a combination of in-between spaces from the outside to the inside is here reformulated as a three-fold walled space.

Walls in the works of Amanat are pure, heavy, and basically constructed from brickwork, distributing a sense of security and dignity. This purity and solidity makes the openings perceptible from the outside and increases the presence of light from the inside. The Heritage Organization Headquarters is a good case through which to gain an understanding of Amanat's approach to wall-making.

3.3.3 Bodily Experience and Tactility

A significant feature of the works of the architects in question is the way they promote bodily experience, stimulate the tactile, and call for a multi-sensory perception of space with full engagement of all the senses; namely, the entire body. Ardalan presents a philosophical insight into the role of the five senses in perceiving the world. He states that the concept of *wahdat-i wujud* (unity of existence) is structured upon the simultaneous knowledge of two basic aspects of the Absolute: His Transcendence (*tanzih*) and His Immanence (*tazhbih*), the latter referring to the measurable knowledge easily accessible through man's five senses and his faculty of rational discourse (Ardalan 2002: 10).

The bodily habit of living and perceiving space is essentially cultural, partly rooted in the social structure of the collective life. Diba explains how the way Iranians take a walk reflects their existential bodily structure and thus walking becomes a bodily experience in which the entire flesh is engaged. Taking a walk, in Farsi '*gadam-zadan*', is not based on a predicted destination and distance, but is more an expression in time and space. He writes:

> One sifts one's body with a moment of pause from one foot to the other, feeling one's weight against gravity… In this everyday experience one is not aware of exerting physical energy. As a consequence, one can sustain a constant rhythmic movement through time and space which allows introspection, contemplation and communication. (Diba 1981: p. 9)

This statement shows how Diba is aware of and concerned with the subtle existential behaviours of Iranians rooted in their understanding from human existence and the built environment. Diba describes how this sensitivity to habits and behaviour forced him to intervene once, when he saw a European person eating Persian food in a European manner and thus wasting the food, instead of enjoying the dish in a Persian manner.

In the Garden of Yousef-abad, the kinesthetic experience of the environment is enhanced by the sunken childs' playground and the strolling pathways which culminate in the central piazza, coloured with the sound of a waterfall. In Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, bodily movement plays a vital role in the perception of space. The galleries arranged around a central courtyard are connected through a ramp passage and thus the body descends gradually into the underground. In the main hall, a central ramp leads the spectator into the lower level. In this circulation, one becomes aware of moving up and down, accompanied by the mysterious penetration of the light into the galleries through the light catchers and the subtle openings which grant a view to the interior courtyard.

The central pool in the Faculty of Business Management, a prominent work of Amanat which embodies the very idea of courtyard and garden, serves as a gathering instrument and thus encourages all the senses to be involved in the experience of the built environment. The pool, which due to its centrality is located some steps lower than the level of the surrounding greenery and buildings, collects the built and natural environment together at the same time, and brings life and coolness to the hot atmosphere of summer time.

A full bodily engagement is required to perceive the Azadi Tower. Essentially a monument to be perceived and experienced through the eyes, and hence at the first glance an architecture of vision, this monument is perceivable only if discovered from within: in itself a contradictory conception. Located at the centre of a huge square, this monuments towers into the sky and manifests its glory. However, to comprehend the monument requires making a journey in which not the vision, but all the senses are called into play. Experiencing the interior is realized through descending a staircase which, awakening the kinesthetic sense, brings us into the mysterious underground world. The heavy stone door is the access to the interior. Discovering the interwoven dark spaces, where the limited light intensifies its ambiguity, the entire body is engaged in perception. The lack of any vista makes

vision curious, the dominant silent awakens hearing, the odour of the underground space stimulates sense of smell, and one is encouraged to touch the wall for better perception and understanding. This bodily perception continues while climbing towards the roof. This climb recalls the primordial sense of climbing minarets and towers. Again, heavy walls of the narrow space hinder the vision and hence provoke other senses.

3.3.4 Architectural Archetypes

The original Greek meaning of the term archetype is 'original model' or 'original type'. Intensively used by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) an archetype refers to a pervasive pattern, idea or image within the collective unconscious. In architecture, archetypes are basic forms from which later variations and combinations may derive (Thiis-Evensen 1987). According to Ardalan and Bakhtiar, architectural archetypes such as garden, courtyard, socle, porch, and gateway are generative forms, qualitative in nature, and don't suggest any size, material or technique (Ardalan and Bakhtiar 1973: 67). Archetypal forms come together and set out a kind of common imagery which Ardalan refers to as a 'visual language', expressed in a multiplicity of dialects related to the ecological and cultural regions of the Islamic world (Ardalan 1980a: 18). In fact, Ardalan believes in an identifiable 'language of symbolic forms' in the Islamic world, 'an identifiable standard architectural language behind the numerous dialects that Islamic building speaks' (Kassarjian and Ardalan 1982: 24). A main source of the existing dialects is ecological diversity. His study of mosque architecture in the Islamic world shows that the majority of mosques share a common visual language in which some typical components are present: mihrab, minaret, gateway, courtyard, portico, place of ablution, plinth and dome.

Ardalan suggests that the archetype of the garden has two manifestations: '(1) Bagh (garden), a manifestation of the centrifugally oriented form of the microcosm, symbolizing the manifest (al-zahir) and tazhbih dimensions of the Absolute, and (2) hayat (courtyard), a manifestation of the centripetally oriented form of the microcosm, symbolizing the hidden (al-batin) and tanzih dimension' (Ardalan 2002: 10). In his architectural works, these two manifestations are present in different forms and combinations. In Imam Sadeq University, two architectural concepts of the garden (char-bagh) and Madrassa are combined to constitute the principal order of the complex (Fig. 3.10). The source of inspiration was Hasht Behest Pavilion (literally the Eight Paradises), a seventeenth century building of the Safavid period with a four-arched, mandala-like layout. Located at the centre, this pavilion moves into the four directions of the garden via its porches. The next element of inspiration was the Madrassa, the place of classical education in Iran, generally consisting of a courtyard (garden) at the centre, surrounded by educational and residential rooms. In Imam Sadeq University each spatial unit (the living courts) consists of four rooms and a central living room, around a hexagonal open

Fig. 3.15 Behshahr Headquarter, general view (Author)

space which provides environmentally comfortable conditions in the summertime. These units constitute 16 clusters surrounding a rectangular courtyard/garden at the heart of the complex. This is accessed by four gateways, the most important being the eastern entrance. The library building is located at the centre of the courtyard, like the pavilion in a traditional garden.

While in Imam Sadeq University the prototypes are interpreted more directly, offering material hints to be perceived and recognized, in Behshahr Industrial Group Headquarters the courtyard prototype is reinterpreted in a very modern way in which the pointers to the past are hidden and concealed. This is accelerated by the use of a construction method employing prefabricated concrete, a mass-production technique which is the ideal manifestation of Modernism and international style (Fig. 3.15). From the exterior, the concrete building portrays the vocabulary of the international style, with some indirect hints at traditional motifs such as *muqarnas*[10] decorations in the entrance area. Some architectural schemes have reduced the massiveness of the building, such as the rise and towering of the building from an arcade at the pedestrian level to the projected volumes at the top. From the interior, however, a different world is revealed. One enters into a microcosm, a well-defined courtyard with a sunken garden (*godal-bagcheh*) and surrounding cascading levels. Putting the exterior and interior perception of space together, one may argue that this building introduces an advanced example of the idea of mingling archetypes with a mass-production construction method through

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[10]*Muqarnas* is a type—the most complicated type—of *Kar-bandi* for covering the interior side of domes, vaults, or arches. See also footnote 16.

an innovative reinterpretation of these two modes. In this building, the solidity and hardness of mass-production has been attenuated by means of the subtlety and mildness of archetypes.

In Amanat's architectural works the archetypes of garden and courtyard have been a main source of inspiration. While in the Cultural Heritage Organization Headquarters, courtyards are arranged alongside the east-west axis of a Bazaar-like space, in the Faculty of Business Management the courtyard is the heart of the complex, while other secondary courtyards make spatial connections with the anticipated future adjacent components. In the Iranian Embassy in Beijing—a complex consisting of the chancery, the ambassador's residence and reception building, a Persian language school, and some related facilities—the very concept of courtyard, spelled out in Iranian houses to divide the private from the semipri-vate, is the source of inspiration for the spatial organization of the complex. An exterior courtyard (*hayat-e biruni*) guides visitors to the central pavilion, while the interior courtyard (*hayat-e daruni*) is largely dedicated to the Ambassador's private residence. A diagonal axis, in contrast to the gridiron structure of the city, makes space for a succession of fountains, reminiscent of those found in Persian gardens, to provide a charming vista and welcoming atmosphere for the Ivan of the reception pavilion inspired by the Hasht Behest Pavilion of Isfahan (Fig. 3.16).

It could be argued that Amanat's architecture manifests itself as 'the architecture of interconnected courtyards'. In a number of complexes such as the Cultural Heritage Organization Headquarters, the Faculty of Business Management, and the Iranian Embassy in Beijing, not a single courtyard, but a series of interconnected courtyards establish the spatial layout of the complex. While in the Faculty of Business Management the courtyard is located at the heart of the complex, in the two others the central component is a building: the reception pavilion in the Iranian Embassy and the Bazaar-like axis in the Cultural Heritage Organization Headquarters. These interconnected courtyards make the complex into an urban compound, rather than a single structure (Fig. 3.17).

The archetypal architecture is also the backbone of the Azadi Tower. It repre-sents an innovative reinterpretation of *Chahar-Taq*,[11] where four huge columns rise to the heavens and join together to form four arches, upon which are located two main exhibition floors that culminate in a dome over the upper level. This creative reinterpretation may be considered to be an argument for the eternality and potentiality of archetypes to be continuously reproduced in new forms and formats, in this case to shape the spatial essence of a modern monument.

In Diba's works the archetype of the courtyard has been interpreted and con-cretized in three different schemes and scales: individual courtyard, complex courtyard and urban courtyard. The individual courtyard belongs to single build-ings, where a central courtyard as the spine of the building gathers different

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[11]*Chahar-Taq* literally means four arches. It is an archetypal form consisting of four arches based on four bases located on the four corners of a rectangular space making a dome on the roof. This form has been used in old fire temples, and was later developed into more complicated domes in the Sassanid and Islamic periods.
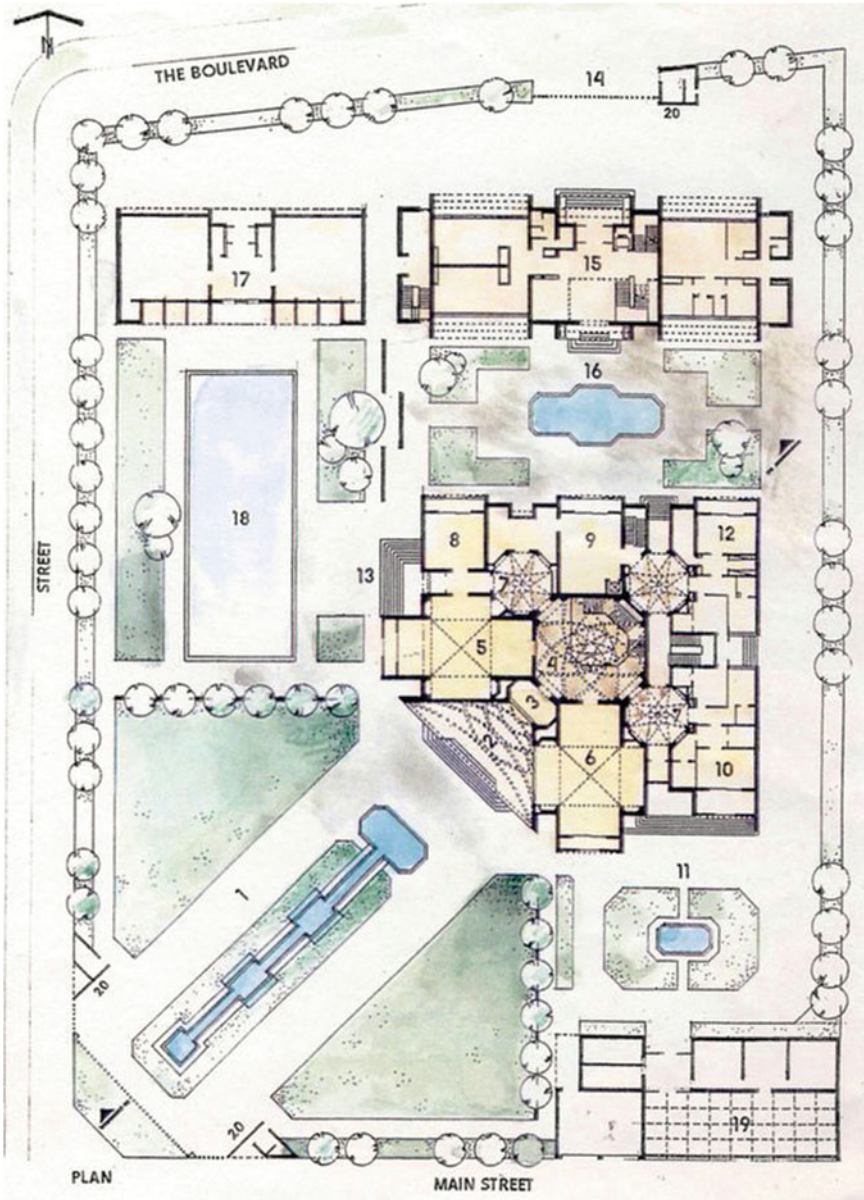
Fig. 3.16 Iranian Embassy in Beijing, site plan (Hossein Amanat)

components and integrates them into one entity. The complex courtyard is used for
public complexes consisting of different, but interconnected courtyards. The urban
courtyard, on the other hand, is in the service of the community and is a large-scale
arena which connects urban components together.
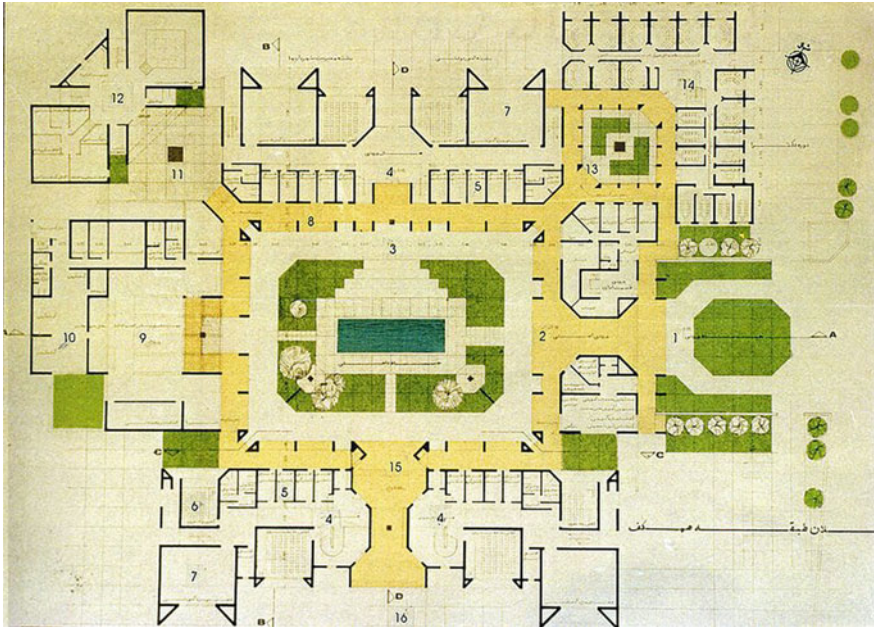
Fig. 3.17 Faculty of Business Management, site plan (Hossein Amanat)

In the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, the central individual courtyard, which also functions as the sculpture court, is the core of the complex, around which all the galleries have been arranged. This courtyard creates a delicate microcosm where all the natural elements such as sky, wind and water are combined with the man-made built environment. Occasional openings to the courtyard from the interior welcomes the eyes of visitors to a natural scene and invites them to relax after contemplation artworks in the galleries. Within the courtyard, one is completely embraced by the work; the subtle skyline of the building distracts one from the exterior and one feels oneself to be in a different world, embraced by the sky (Fig. 3.18). In the Niavaran Cultural Centre all the buildings have been arranged around a sunken central courtyard, which is entered through a gate followed by a narrow bridge over a moat, emphasizing the significance of the complex and differentiating it from the surroundings.

In the School of Human Sciences (1975) different schools of Literature, Languages and Social Sciences with individual courtyards are connected to each other and thus create a complex courtyard, 'an open-ended axis interconnecting with a variety of courtyards, providing space for outdoor reading, so prevalent in Iranian study habits' (Diba 1981: 156).

In Jondi-shapour University the Student Union is connected to the university mosque through a spacious courtyard surrounded by shops and teahouses. This arena serves as a collective space for students and academics. The idea of an urban

Fig. 3.18 Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, view to the courtyard (Author)

courtyard is successfully embodied in the Shuhstar-No, where the central axis of the complex serves as a social spine and gathers all the urban components together in an open public green space. In the first phase of the complex, this urban courtyard acquires a particular character, because it was considered to be 'a total architectural unit, more like one building rather than loosely organized units within an urban structure' (Diba 1981: 180; Fig. 3.19).

3.3.5   Arrière-Garde Avant-Gardism

As elaborated, the architects in question were critical of the governing definition of progress and development, claiming that its implementation in the Iranian context has brought about a state of sociocultural and urban crisis. They were also trying to stay on the margins while going beyond the dominant discourse of modernism and resist its hegemony. All this implies that they advocated a reflective attitude towards the past, at the same time seeking innovation and creativity; an arrière-garde avant-gardism which was neither imprisoned in the past, nor blinded by the future, but understood tradition as a continuous entity.

The arrière-garde approach to the memory of the past and its subtle traceable presence in architectural works can be understood as congruent with the architects'

Fig. 3.19 Shushtar-No,
public spaces of the
residential neighbourhood,
model (Kamran Diba)
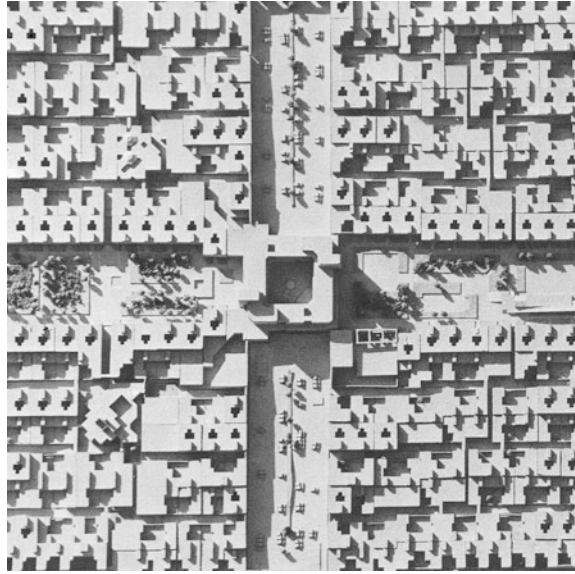
understanding from tradition. As Ardalan puts it, tradition is an evolving, progressing
and developing entity (Ardalan 2000). This soft perception of tradition as a source of
inspiration enables architects to refer to the traditional dimensions of the built envi-
ronment, while representing them anew, adapted to the conditions of the modern life.
This approach to tradition and the past was well expressed by Louis Kahn in his speech
delivered in Isfahan: 'Traditions are as golden dust falling in space. If one but had the
possibility of grasping this golden dust, we would possess the powers of anticipation
of the future' (Ardalan 2004: 81). In this sense, tradition is not adhered to in a
reactionary way that seeks to imprison us in the past, but is caught hold of to anticipate
new worlds and move towards never-ending authentic recreations. This meaning of
tradition is present in the architectural works of the architects in question.

Going beyond the formal aspects of tradition, Ardalan states that we should not
restrict ourselves to brick out of respect for our culture, history and tradition
(Ardalan 2000: 175). Here brick is a metaphor for 'the formal', while what matters
is 'the spiritual': it should be discovered and unearthed from forms and physical
configurations. This is why he was looking to 'build a bridge' to the past in Imam
Sadeq University (Kassarjian and Ardalan 1982).

Diba mentions that he was always seeking for a 'local style' (Diba 2010: 125)
inspired by the indigenous architecture of Iran. He has been inspired by two fea-
tures of Iranian vernacular architecture: the monolithic tissue of mud brick and the
roofscape of Iranian cities. The material used for the mosque of Jondi-shapour
University is wheat-coloured brick, a material reminiscent of the monolithic envi-
ronment of the Iranian cities. This is also the case in the Niavaran Cultural Centre,
where the finished concrete has a greenish-yellow tone to be blended with greenery

to produce a monolithic atmosphere. In the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, inspired by the roofscapes of Yazd and Kashan, the roof is not only for visual pleasure, but was planned to be open to the public and used by the pedestrian.[12] Shushtar-No has been designed to be sympathetic to the cultural values of Iranian society and maintain 'a traditional continuity'. As Diba explains, 'Its outstanding characteristic is a tightly-knit fabric physically reminiscent of Islamic vernacular architecture; this encourages a high degree of social interaction and collectivity' (Diba 1980b: 41). In the Garden of Yousef-abad, Diba deliberately preserved an old dilapidated building based on the 'nostalgic dimension' it would grant to the project and its reflection of memories of the past.

'Tradition' and 'the experience of the past' is a continuous phenomenon in the sense that it is incorporated into the body and preserved as a bodily memory. Amanat (2007) states that even in his recent architectural commissions and works, the memory of the past is essentially present and determinant; all that he has seen during his journeys and observed in the lanes of Yazd and Kashan and in the mosques, *Ab-Anbars*, *Ivans*, and houses is still with him. To put it another way, they have been registered as bodily experience and are unconsciously recalled through designs and drawings. For him traditional architecture is like a poem; full of mystery which is discovered step by step. To discover its essential beauty you need to go deeper and deeper. He states that when you enter a house or a mosque 'You enter first a small dark chamber, then a big, open courtyard, then move into another chamber. Like beautiful poetry, you start from this verse and enter into another' (McPhedran 1995: 13).

3.3.6   *Khalq-I Jadid*

As explained, the main concern of the architects in question was capturing and presenting the essence of tradition without reducing it to the formal reproduction of symbols, signs and forms of the past. This process of reinterpretation which intends to introduce new manifestations of the hidden aspects and essence of the tradition has been usefully theorized by Ardalan under the concept of *khalq-i jadid* (new creation) and *ta'wil* (hermeneutics). In his article 'The New Creation' (Ardalan 1974a), Ardalan describes a cyclical understanding of time (in ancient Greek culture, for example) as opposed to the linear nature of Christian time, the latter consisting of a progression of moments, the former based on repeat performances of archetypal events. He argues that the Persian Islamic conception of time integrates these two notions, whereby a cyclical motion repeats the very act of the first creation. Unlike the static view of creation which understands it as a once-only phenomenon, the dynamic view, based on the concept of spiral time, perceives creation as being in a continuous state of re-creation; 'At every instant, instant after instant, the same eternal process of annihilation and recreation is repeated' (ibid.: 13). This is what

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[12]This function of the roofscape of the Museum is not now operational; access to the roof is not made available to the public.

Ardalan refers to as *khalq-i jadid* in which phrase the Farsi word for 'new' means 'a cyclical manifestation of archetypical ideas' (ibid.: 13). In fact, the cyclical manifestation of archetypal ideas could be suggested as the essential approach of Ardalan to the concept of 'tradition' as a timeless entity which should be subject to an eternal act of re-creation. Archetypal ideas in architecture and urban planning are well documented in his co-authored book *The Sense of Unity* (1973) in such as concepts as garden, socle, porch, gateway, dome and *chahar-taq*.

An authentic *khalq-i jadid* or re-creation, however, is possible only if we grasp the quality and qualitative aspects of 'Persian tradition' through the process of *ta'wil* or spiritual hermeneutics, by which one is able to 'free the purely physical reality from its quantitative prison and have it ascend to its archetypal origin' (ibid.: 14). Without *ta'wil*, Ardalan puts it, 'all that was to be said would have been said long ago' (ibid.). Traditional architectonic forms are important sources for 'new creation', and ready to be reinterpreted through *ta'wil*. It is the task of the architect to study and examine this open glossary.

In Imam Sadeq University there is a deliberate juxtaposition of prototypes and spatial patterns, where the traditional patterns of the Madrassa and the Persian Garden are combined together. Here, the traditional 4-Ivan pattern of the Madrassa in which the accommodation and teaching rooms are arranged around the central courtyard is combined with the geometry of the garden, where the entrance building and the central pavilion are located alongside the main axis. While the accommodation units—as the basic spatial units of the complex—are based on a combination of rooms around a small courtyard, a central courtyard with the library at the heart of the complex gathers all these spatial units and gives them integrity. In this sense, the complex is an intelligent reinterpretation of two basic traditional spatial patterns (Fig. 3.20).

In this building the principle of privacy is also reinterpreted in an innovative way. A hierarchy of privacy can be observed, that starts from the central courtyard (open space), and progresses to the semi-private, semi-public side-courtyards of the accommodation spaces located around the central open space. This hierarchy of privacy is important when the special character of the complex is taken into account, whereby education and accommodation have to take place alongside one another. In this sense, while the central courtyard belongs to the complex (public), the side-courtyards around which the student rooms are located provide them with a small open space, a collective place dedicated mainly to a limited number of students. This space-in-between functions as the interior courtyard for the private accommodation. In general, as Yucel (1989) confirms in his Technical Review Summary, this project does not use any formal decorative motifs or formal elements of traditional Iranian architecture, but 'Its connotations to tradition are more spatial, morphic, syntactic, symbolic and abstract'. In other words, this building is an innovative reinterpretation of traditional architectural principles, a *khalg-i jadid par excellence*.

The Heritage Organization Headquarters by Amanat consists of different shops, exhibition spaces, an auditorium, an open air theatre and administrative offices. It was originally designed to promote and conserve cultural heritage by means of

Fig. 3.20 Imam Sadeq university, aerial view after construction (Nader Ardalan)

providing places to serve as workshops for master artisans, thus contributing to the revival and advancement of traditional fine arts and crafts. The essential character and function of the complex as a combination of workshops and shops was sufficient to inspire the architect both spiritually and spatially with reference to the Iranian Bazaars where a set of shops are connected to each other alongside a corridor (*Rasteh*)[13] but linked to other commercial or urban facilities through courtyards or Caravanserais. In this complex, an entrance courtyard, reminiscent of Persian gardens, leads to an open entryway (*Hashti*),[14] the eastern wing of which is linked to a vaulted shopping space (*Bazar-che*)[15] consisting of a series of niches where handicrafts are to be manufactured and sold. This leads eastwards to the central hall for events and exhibitions, which is a domed octagonal space like the traditional *Chahar-su*,[16] demonstrating a modern interpretation of the traditional construction technology in which structural ribs facilitate the transformation of the octagonal base into a spherical dome. This complex shows a creative and

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[13]*Rasteh* literally means straight route and passage. In a Bazaar it refers to main arteries which consist of a set of shops arranged alongside the main route.

[14]*Hasht* means eight, *hashti* refers to an octagonal space. A *hashti* is a mediatory space between the gate and interior spaces in traditional Persian buildings, including houses, mosques, Madrassas, and so on.

[15]*Bazaar-che* means small Bazaar.

[16]*Chahar-su*, literally meaning four directions, and normally refers to the intersection of two routes in the traditional Persian Bazaar.
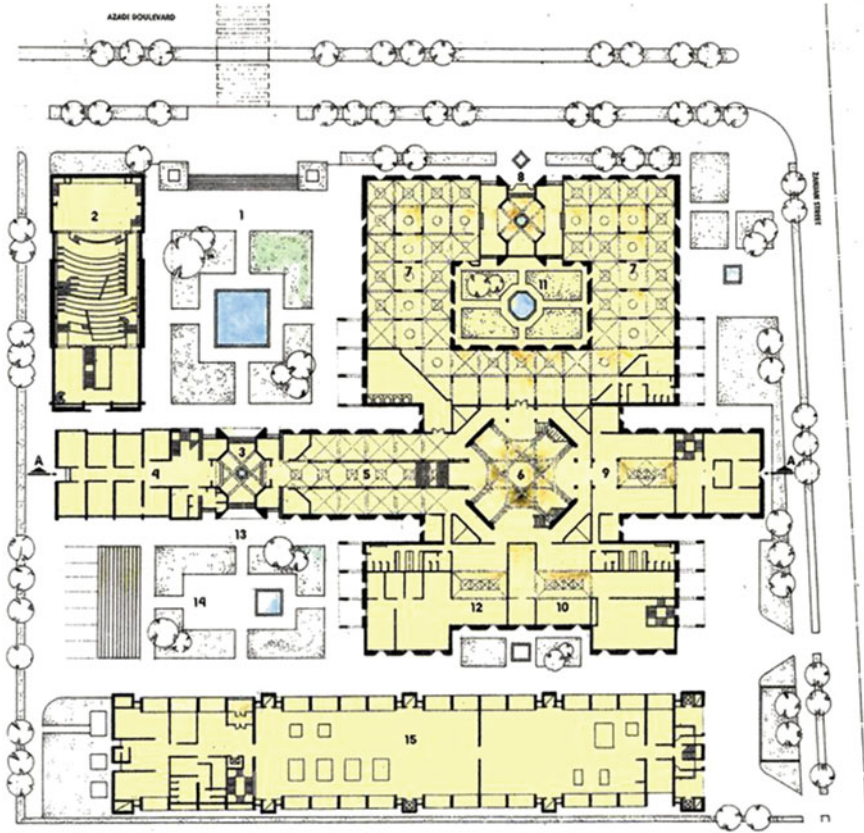
Fig. 3.21 Heritage Organization Headquarters, original site plan (Hossein Amanat)

innovative reinterpretation of traditional space with both direct and indirect refer-
ences to the past, to provide a modern space for traditional manufacturing
(Fig. 3.21).

The Faculty of Business Management also presents a creative reinterpretation of
traditional concepts and ideas. Completed in 1980, this building has been organized
around a central *hayat* (courtyard) inspired by the spatial layout of the traditional
Madarassa concept. Two smaller courtyards are connected to the central component
at two northern corners housing library and postgraduate departments. In this
scheme, portals of the main axis are either entries (eastern portal) or make a
transparent connection to the southern open space and thus provide space and
facilitation for any future extension. This brickwork building which makes what is
largely indirect formal reference to traditional architecture is modern in appearance,
but carries with it the sense and feeling of traditional space. The central pool
multiplies the established interior reflecting the open sky (Fig. 3.22). Within the

Fig. 3.22 Faculty of Business Management, view from the courtyard (Hossein Amanat)

buildings, skylights pour the light into the darkness of the interior, softening the solidity of the brickwork.

Hasht Behest Pavilion and Persian garden is the departure point for Amanat's design for the Iranian Embassy in Beijing where a water axis, at a 45° declination from the conventional north-south axis of the city, culminates into the spacious Ivan of the reception pavilion; an introverted building with an open space at its heart, connected to three other smaller Hashti's—the fourth one transformed to the entrance Ivan—which serve as a mediatory space for the surrounding rooms (Fig. 3.23).

Shushtar-No presents a creative reinterpretation of the traditional dwelling, endowed with the prerequisites of modern life. Aspects of a creative reinterpretation of the traditional way of dwelling and urban planning include the urban layout of the complex with its close-textured urban tissue and narrow streets, dead-end passages, thick walls and small windows, making the environment more comfortable; and the rooftops which are accessible for evening sleep. The traditional concept of the room as a flexible and multi-purpose unit has been the basic module for housing layouts (Diba 1980b: 42). 'We planned two and three-room housing units which could become a four, five or six-room house as the family's standard of living improved' (Diba 1980b: 42). This flexible configuration, what Diba calls 'soft furniture' (Javaherian and Diba 2005), enables the inhabitants to move between different spaces to avoid or enjoy the sunshine at different seasons. Rooms are medium sized, at 5 × 5 m, 4 × 4 m, and 3 × 4 m, the latter being the smallest. On this flexibility Diba writes: 'Our goal was akin to writing a script for human

Fig. 3.23 Iranian Embassy in Beijing, view to the Ivan of the reception pavilion (Hossein Amanat)

interaction, anticipating all possible action and yet leaving room for spontaneous improvisation within the given architectural spaces' (Diba 1980b: 43) (Fig. 3.24).

A particular mode within Diba's reinterpretation method and his unique approach to *khalq-i jadid* is the way he subtly deconstructs and reformulates principles of traditional architecture and urbanism to achieve a new layout and configuration. This process of de-familiarization creates a field of tension in which the familiar and the unfamiliar are put together in a dialectical interaction. For example, in Shafag Park he deliberately creates an organic and natural environment which stands 'against the traditional idea and geometry of Persian gardens' (Diba 1981: 16) in which the gardens are walled and protected with a clear geometry and hierarchy. This de-familiarization of the garden gives it the capacity to acquire a
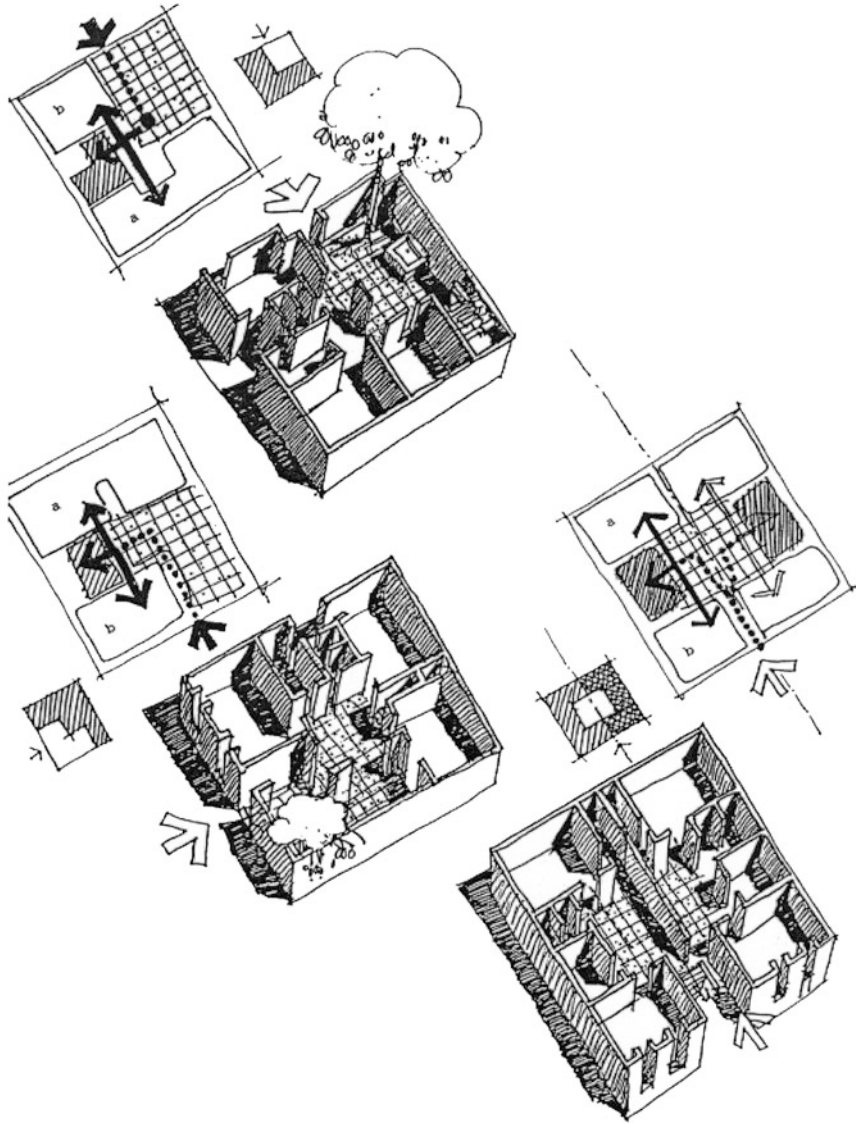
Fig. 3.24 Shushtar-No, typologies of residential units (Kamran Diba)

new function where it is no longer limited to the purposes of recreation and refreshment, but incorporates a social agenda and works as the community centre. This attitude, on the other hand, also presents a type of de-construction of the past, since 'Persian culture is individualistic, family-oriented and anti-community' (Diba 1981: 11), and thus the least amount of attention is given to the architecture and appearance of the public streets and spaces.
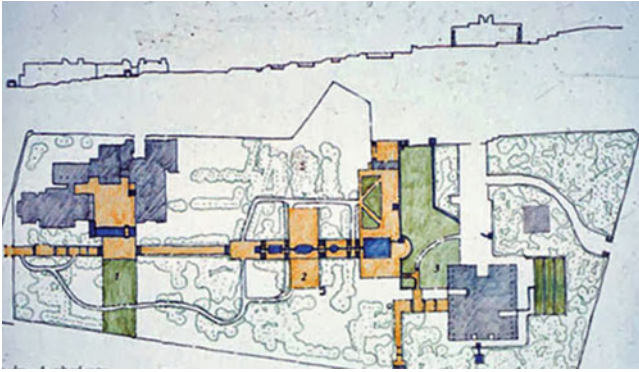
Fig. 3.25 Niavaran Cultural Center, site plan (Kamran Diba)

In Niavaran Park, three elements of the traditional Persian garden, namely the entrance building, the path (water course), and the pavilion, are reformulated; two main buildings of the entrance and destination are located out of the main axis so that the visitor perceives a sense of simultaneous familiarity and unfamiliarity (Fig. 3.25). In the Garden of Delgosha (1969–72) in a similar way, Diba deconstructs aspects of traditional architecture, where, as in the Niavaran Park in which the entrance and the destination elements have been dislocated from the main axis, here the two ends of the main axis have been designed in a modern way with a modern composition. The most remarkable point in this work is the way Diba deconstructs the garden wall: traditionally all the garden walls used to be solid and massive to strongly segregate the interior from the exterior, but here the wall has been cut into occasionally, providing openings into the interior. The wall, thus, loses its solidity and massiveness and stands in a mediatory position; it admits, at the same time that it excludes. This de-construction, however, does not reach a total de-construction but remains as a generative dialectics: it stands somewhere between Tradition and Modernism, in an in-between condition which is not so much *neither-nor*, but rather *and-both*.

In the Friday Mosque project in Shushtar-No the position and combination of the mosque has been intelligently deconstructed. Typical for the Friday Mosques which used to be located right at the centre of a complex, here this building is located in isolation from the residential and commercial sections, alongside an axis which connects the western and eastern parts together. On the other hand, the hierarchy of the entrance to the mosque is unique of its kind, reformulated by means of passing through a three-fold wall which surrounds the core space.

In Imam Sadeq University the principal element of the wall, which plays the central role in demarcating space in the traditional Persian garden, is deconstructed and reconstructed as a complex of interconnected cells containing accommodation rooms for the students, with a small courtyard at the centre. Here, the wall is not a single element, but a complex of spatial cells connected to each other.

The function of 'Ivan' has been deconstructed in the Faculty of Business Management to produce a space of flexibility for future extensions. Traditionally

working as spaces of entrance to a covered space or serving as transitional spaces, the southern Ivan of the building, inspired by the concept of a 4-Ivan Madrassa, is a gateway to an open space and serves as a transparent connection to the adjacent courtyard for further expansion.

3.3.7 Dialectics of Presence

Khalq-i jadid, or the never-ending process of reinterpreting the essence of the past and tradition in new ways and formulations, generates a field for the 'dialectics of presence', that is, the simultaneous presence of the old and the new, the particular and the universal, place and space. This dialectics of presence creates a site of confrontation in which two poles of opposition generate a continuous negotiation. In this confrontation, there is no clear triumph of the one side, but rather a never-ending dialogue, and hence the user of the space is not located in a field of severe tension and distraction, but is invited to contemplation and experience. The dialectics of presence is where the space of confrontation and reconciliation takes place; what I termed it as 'space-in-between'.

Diba refers to this simultaneous presence as a dialectical process. He says that his architecture was always an endeavour to synthesize tradition and Modernism as the result of a dialectical interaction (Diba 2010: 68). He argues that tradition as such may halt creativity, while blind avant-gardism may ignore cultural roots; in the context of Iran what is important is bringing both modes of being together. In the Garden of Niavaran, the pre-existing garden and the imposed geometry provide a subtle site of confrontation, where the old text has been written anew with a modern geometry. This generates a juxtaposition of the old and the new that is perceptible by the visitor: the memory of the past is recollected simultaneously with the experience of being in a new and modern environment.

Ardalan looks at the presence of oppositions, or dialectics of presence, from a different perspective. He argues that one of the theoretical bases of traditional Persian architecture is the concept of 'complementarity', in the sense that two opposites are put together to create a new entity: 'If the surroundings are hot and dry, what one builds is cold and wet; together they create a new unity'. (Ardalan 09: 24). The idea of paradise is a perfect manifestation of this concept, with a garden that is located at the heart of a desert, walled and isolated.

In Imam Sadeq University Tradition and Modernity are deliberately put into dialectical tension and dialogue. On the one hand, the modern educational system is incorporated into the traditional spatial pattern and geometry of a Madrassa. The students are accommodated directly within the educational space in the rooms arranged around the central courtyard, similar to a traditional Madrassa. On the other hand, two modes of traditional and modern construction are present: while the brickworks, white plastering, and arches recall the traditional architecture of the past, the exposed concrete-work shows the willingness of the complex to draw benefit from the advanced technology of the age. This simultaneous presence

Fig. 3.26 Imam Sadegh
University, spiral staircase of
the library (Keivan Jourabchi)

reaches its zenith in the spiral staircase of the library. Very modern in form and appearance, and in clear contrast to the way a staircase was traditionally imagined, it towers imposingly from the lower to the upper floors and links two levels together. This dynamic staircase within the static configuration of the surrounding space symbolizes the dynamic character of knowledge and science, and this makes sense in a library building which is the heart and reservoir of knowledge (Fig. 3.26). The dialectics of presence, namely being in a space-in-between, between the past and present, or here and there, has been well portrayed in the words of an American visiting scholar to Imam Sadeq University, who expressed the feeling of being 'somewhere between Oxford and Cambridge (England) and the theological colleges of the holy city of Qom (Iran)' (Yucel 1989).

In the Heritage Organization Headquarters three fields of presence interact in a dialectical manner: the combination of modern facades and volumes; the traditional layout of the ceilings in the interiors (using a modern performance of traditional coverings such as *Kar-bandi*)[17]; and the 'and-both' type of spatial composition

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[17]*Kar-bandi* refers to the interior shell of a dome, vault, or arch. As a combination of function (covering) and aesthetics (decoration) it is based on a geometrical order consisting of a series of interconnected filling surfaces. *Muqarnas*, *Rasmi-bandi*, and *Yazdi-bandi* are three types of *Kar-bandi*.

Fig. 3.27 Heritage Organization Headquarter, exterior view (Hossein Amanat)

through which both modes of space, namely 'the traditional' and 'the modern' are juxtaposed (Figs. 3.27 and 3.28). This superimposition and continuous interconnection of different fields of presence offers the visitor or user the pleasure of experiencing different spatial senses of place. The viewer feels themself simultaneously here and there, in the past and the present, old and new, while not being able to fix and localize themself in a definite locality.

The Azadi Tower, a compact museum of Iranian architectural history, is the most prominent complex where the dialectics of presence reaches its zenith. Designed by Hossein Amanat, a 24 year-old, freshly graduated architect who won the competition (21 entries in total), this building was planned to be inaugurated during the 2500 year anniversary celebration of the Persian Empire (1971). This monument was intended to represent the rich history of the country and demonstrate itself as a gateway to a modern and advanced Iran and Tehran, the Great Civilization towards which the Shah and the entire nation were supposed to be progressing. In the course of time, an extension was added that included an underground museum glorifying 25 centuries of the Persian Empire to provide an exhibition space for visualizing this dignity.

A set of references to Persian architecture provides a departure point for the design of the complex. The plan of the square has been driven from the ceiling pattern of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan and is spread over the two halves of two eclipses (Fig. 3.29). The main Monument (around 45 m high) has been located at the centre of this huge plaza (around 50,000 m^2). Four pillars (inspired by the archetype of *chahartaq*) rise and link together at the middle of the tower providing spaces for exhibitions,

Fig. 3.28 Heritage Organization Headquarters, interior space (Hossein Amanat)

culminating with a dome on the top. Twisted pillars construct four arches, the biggest of them in the east-west direction are reminiscent of the *Taq-e Kasra*, the Sassanid entrance arch to the Ctesiphon Palace, ending with a *Janagh-i* arch.[18] Beneath the arch, again, a geometric pattern of regressive lozenges (inspired by traditional *Rasmi-bandi*)[19] has covered two arches (Fig. 3.30). On the facades, a series of linear converging stripes intensify the height of the monument, leading to the top of the tower which is again reminiscent of the typical Iranian Seljuq towers such as Tughrul Tower.[20] The entrance to the tower is from the underground museum, entering from the eastern part. Four elevators, each located in a pillar, take visitors to the upper level. Heavy doors open into the interior, beginning with a corridor called *Gozargah-e Pishiniyan* (Ancestor's Passageway) (Fig. 3.31). Different facilities, including a library, administrative offices, and exhibition spaces, are located in the museum, illuminated through skylights built in concrete using geometric traditional patterns. Thus, the Azadi Tower is a narrator of Iranian architecture, representing a temporal/ local juxtaposition; incorporated into the archetype of *chahar-taq*, it rises from the

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[18]A *Janagh-i* arch is a pointed arch mainly used in Persian architecture of the Islamic period.

[19]*Rasmi-bandi* is a type of *Kar-bandi* for covering the interior of a dome, vault, or arch. See also footnote 16.

[20]This tower is a twelfth century Seljuq monument, 20 m in height, located in the city of Ray, Iran.
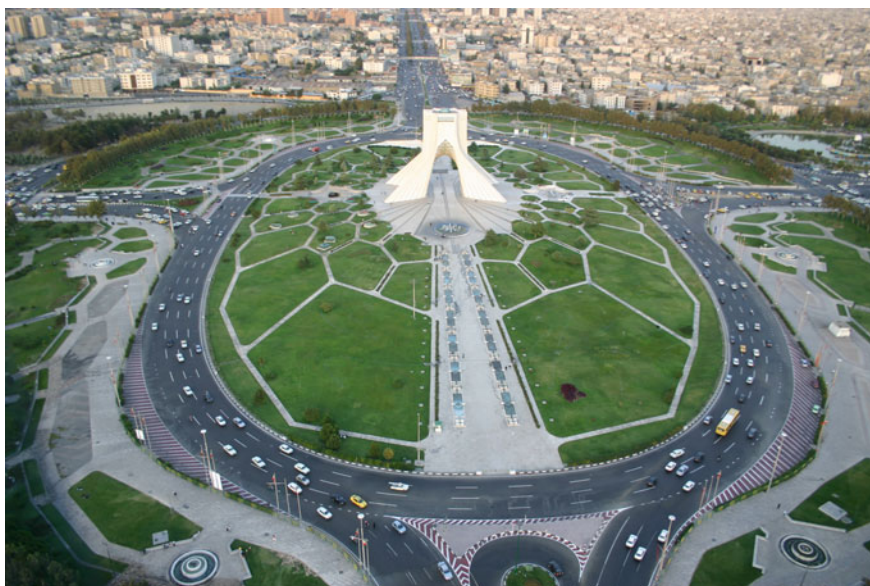
Fig. 3.29 Azadi Tower, aerial view (Azadi Cultural Center)
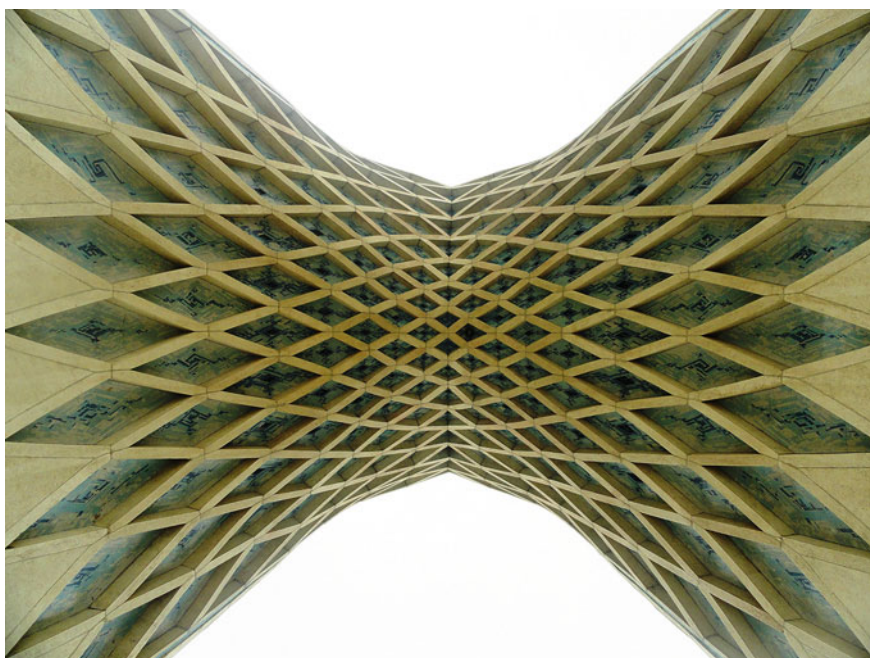
Fig. 3.30 The Azadi Tower, view to the modern rasmi-bandi (Author)

Fig. 3.31 Azadi Tower, entrance door to the underground museum (Author)

extended geometric pattern of the context, links the memory of Pre-Islamic Taq-e Kasra to the Islamic *Rasmi-sazi* and *Janagh-i* arch, and ends up with an allusion to Seljuqid Towers and Mosque domes (*muqarnas*).

From another perspective, the monument presents two sets of contradictory realms: interior-exterior and up-down. As a monument which intends to portray

dignity and glory, it towers from the underground and thus connects the earth to the sky. On the other hand, the exteriority of a monumental tower is linked with the interiority of the underground museum as well as an exhibition space on top of the tower. To put it in other words, while the exterior of the tower portrays the appearance (*Zahir*) of Iranian history and tradition, underground and interior spaces portray its spirit (*Batin*) which is full of ambiguity, mystery and concealment. Ironically, the 'image' of the Azadi Tower has been delimited by its exterior, visionary, eye-catching appearance; the bodily experience it provides has been neglected. The Azadi Tower, thus, is normally committed to memory through the visual sense, not by the body, although it invites a bodily experience, as elaborated earlier in this chapter.

3.4 Critical Regionalist *Par Excellence*

In the course of the chapter several references have been made to different architectural works by the architects in question to show how they manifest the principles, and embody diverse aspects of, Critical Regionalism. In other words, evidence has been presented to draw out dimensions of the Critical Regionalist architecture of the time, as thought and practiced by selected architects. However, the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art is the manifestation of Critical Regionalism *par excellence*, so that one may call it a leading example of a multifaceted prominent Critical Regionalist architecture in Iran and even in the Middle East. This building, by itself, demonstrates the capacity, potential and relevance of Critical Regionalism, and proves its feasibility and urgency. It is, based on a creative reinterpretation, an eternal piece of work which touches the body and the soul regardless of the time, locality, and personal background, and thus presents a perfect combination of locality and universality, old and new, pre-history and future, Tradition and Modernity, memory and inspiration.

This building manifests an indirect reinterpretation of the past in different ways. The layout of the complex is modern in composition but traditional in geometry (Fig. 3.32). The light catchers are reminiscent of the traditional wind-catchers of central Iran, together with the bright exposed concrete and roofscape which reminds us of the monolithic tissue of mud brick and the roofscape of the Iranian cities (Fig. 3.33). The central courtyard, a perfect reinterpretation of the archetype of the courtyard, is the core of the complex around which all the spaces are gathered, thus creating an introverted microcosm closed to the surroundings. This building also reveals a strong sense of tectonics: the exposed facades uncover the means of construction and the rising and towering of the facades depict a hierarchy of materiality from stonework to concrete and glass. The body and senses are awakened intensively, either by means of walking through the galleries and descending and ascending the ramps, or calling all the senses to perceive the sound, taste, texture, odour and delicacy of the space. Overall, the spatial experience of a modern building with modern functions (a gallery for contemporary art) directs us forwards, but
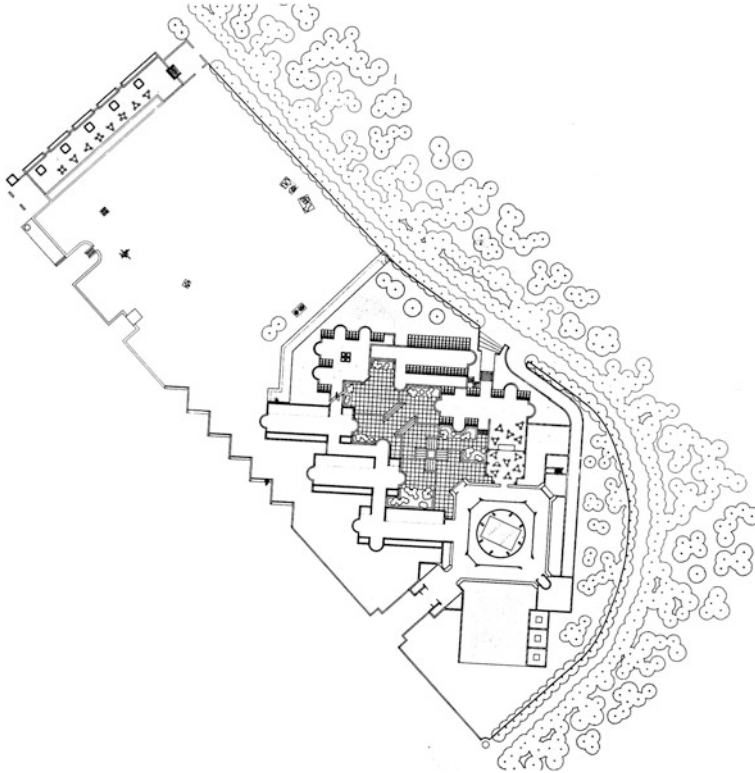
Fig. 3.32 Tehran Contemporary Art Museum, site plan (Kamran Diba)

recurring indirect references to history recall the past and thus move backwards, offering the visitor a sense of double-feeling, a status of 'neither-nor' and 'and-both'.

Gathering all these characteristics into an articulated entity this building creates a 'place' within the placelessness of the megalopolis, a place of tranquillity to which we wandering inhabitants can resort. It embraces our soul and flesh and guards the body against the assault of the mundanity and violence of the megalopolis. All together, this work is an excellent manifestation of Critical Regionalist architecture and a reliable pointer to its capacity and relevance.

3.5 Urban Oasis: Setting-into-Work of Place

Our analysis and discussion shows that the architects in question introduced a leading Critical Regionalist architectural movement at the time that Modernism and International Style was the dominant discourse in Iran and around the world. These architects identified an 'identity crisis' in Islamic societies including Iran as the result of the ubiquitous re-production of Western values and lifestyle in contrast to the

Fig. 3.33 Tehran Contemporary Art Museum, aerial view after construction (Kamran Diba)

indigenous lifestyle that is lived on the ground, and the extensive import of the modernist modes of construction and production of space such as high-rise buildings and homogeneous housing projects. Replacing a traditional lifestyle with imported ones without developing alternatives resulted in alienation, unrest, disorientation, and confusion, so that urban residents felt themselves imprisoned within the limited dimension of quantity and materiality omnipresent in the surrounding 'characterless' megalopolis. In this context, a call for a 'regional sense of identity' was proposed through which the dominant manifestations of the universal and dormant characters of the local establish a site of interaction and dialogue to produce a 'space-in-between' which united the two poles of the West and the East, the old and the new, the traditional and the modern, the historical and the innovative.

Criticizing the dominant modernist discourse implied standing outside of the mainstream and resisting its vocabulary, regulations and pressures. This is why the architects in question struggled to decline the implications of the dominant culture of construction, and present their beliefs even if this meant confronting the agents of power. This marginal movement, however, was not silent and passive, but established a twofold dialogue with the world; a theoretical contribution to scholastic

discourse and a constructive dialogue with leading architects. This contribution showed the will of the architects to present their words to a wider audience.

Our studies also showed that how principles of Critical Regionalism have been manifested in the architectural works of the architects. Diba expresses a clear concentration on the social dimension of space, interprets building as a social event, and advocates the enhancement of the quality of interaction through a programme of human interaction-intensification. The Garden of Yousef-abad was introduced as a neighbourhood and community centre to promote social interaction, an architectural promenade has been constructed in Jondi-shapour University to provide space for socializing, and in Shushtar-No a deliberate 'social agenda' forms the hidden backbone of the complex incorporated in the public spaces and collective green spaces. In the Tehran Centre for the Celebration of Music project (1978–79) Ardalan transforms the roofscape into a public urban space, or urban garden.

A sense of the poetic revelation of construction is perceptible in the architectural works where the essence and being of the building is expressed ontologically without any scenographic veiling. This reaches its zenith in the Namaz-khaneh (Praying-room), where the minimal presence of material allows the building to present its building in a poetic way. In this sense, we are not confronting a 'building' as an object, but 'building' as an ontological process of revealing. In the Azadi Tower the poetics of construction is cultivated through the poetry of geometry; a geometricized space incorporating the condensed history of the country reveals its structural being. Certain elements, such as light and walls, make the poetics of construction manifest. The hierarchy of light is accompanied with a hierarchy of material in the Imam Sadeq University, the purification of light through light catchers in the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, and the limited and controlled presence of light in the Heritage Organization Headquarters through different typologies of opening and apertures, all demonstrate the significant role of light in presenting the space. Walls are another element where the poetics of construction is revealed. They separate while connecting, expose while concealing, and elaborate while condensing in different ways: in one case transformed to the entire architectural work (Namaz-khaneh), in another case a border line (Garden of Delgosha), in another, a setting for an entrance ritual (Friday Mosque of the Shushtar-No), and in another example, in the form of border-spaces (Imam Sadeq University). Additionally, the search for local identity and style needs a commitment to the capacities of local labour and technology as well. In all these cases, there is an intentional attention to the power and quality of locally available materials and a confidence in the capacity of domestic labour.

To practice on the margins implied declining to accept the doctrines of the governing discourse, an integral principle of which was giving priority to the visual sense and believing in the supremacy of sight. Although the works introduced here present a visual pleasure, they actually invite all the senses to become involved in a comprehensive perception. To comprehend the work, the body should move around; here and there, up and down, left and right. Space is not a defined box before the eyes, but a horizontal and vertical combination of spatial cells, the agglomeration of which constitutes a spatial complexity. Combined around a

central courtyard or connected to each other through a series of courtyards, the body is encouraged to travel and sense these spaces; to take part in a kinesthetic experience with full involvement of the senses.

The architectural works introduced in this chapter have been new manifestations of original types; archetypal images. This quality not only gives the works a sense of antiquity and the past and thus links them to the heart of history, but opens up the eternal capacity of archetypes in being amenable to re-production in new compositions and arrangements. Archetypes of the *bagh* (garden) and the *hayat* (courtyard) have been widely employed, without having compositional and functional similarities. Thus, bodily memories are recalled in the process of creation and incorporated into the space, presenting a vivid and dynamic interpretation of 'tradition' as a continuous and evolving concept. *Khalq-i jadid* or 'new creation' is a process through which originals and archetypes were newly recreated. In Imam Sadeq University traditional patterns of the Madrassa and Persian Garden have been combined together. In the Heritage Organization Headquarters, the concepts of the Bazaar and garden have come together, supported by new interpretations from the *Rasteh*, *Hashti*, and *Chahar-su*. Diba gives an individual character to the practice of *khalq-i jadid* where the original patterns are subtly de-constructed and reformulated to achieve new configurations and spatial senses, like the Garden of Delgosha (1969–72) where a traditionally solid and massive surrounding wall is transformed into a porous, permeable wall.

The generated space, thus, is a 'space-in-between' which provides room for a productive 'dialectics of presence'; that is, the simultaneous presence of the old and the new, the particular and the universal, and place and space. The space-in-between, where the dialectics of presence takes place, is a site of reconciliation, not the triumph of the one side over the other. In the Garden of Niavaran, the pre-existing garden and the imposed geometry are superimposed and thus both are present. In Imam Sadeq University, Tradition and Modernity are set to negotiate and exchange with each other: the modern educational system incorporated into the traditional spatial pattern, the simultaneous existence of traditional and modern construction methods, symbolized in the central high-tech spiral dynamic staircase of the library located within the static configuration of the surrounding spaces. Azadi Tower, the condensed museum of Iranian architecture, is a perfect manifestation of the 'space-in-between', where a diversity of traditional and modern space intertwine, rise from the underground up to the heavens, and demonstrate a scene of unification. All in all, the selected architects introduce an essentially Critical Regionalist architecture and generate a 'space-in-between' which is the space for confrontation, exchange, and unification.

If the central principle of Critical Regionalism is place in its Heideggerian meaning, as Frampton puts it (Frampton 1983: 162), how does this process of place-making take place in the architectural works discussed. To respond to this question the concept of 'urban oasis' will be introduced and theorized, as a place-specific theory which catches the essence of 'dwelling' in the Iranian context and 'critical regionalism' as a theory of 'in-between'. This will be followed by a discussion of how this concept explains the process of place-making in the architectural works of the architects in question.

Modern architecture and urbanism has been widely criticized for creating a homogeneous, monotonous, characterless cityscape which lacks any profound sense of place (Frampton 1992; Norberg-Schultz 1980, 1985, 2000; Relph 1976, 1981; Lynch 1960). The result of the application of modernist principles at the urban scale was a characterless urbanscape, suffering from an absence of stimuli, surprise, and discovery; the 'loss of place'. This urban dilemma is referred to by Edward Relph as 'ubiquitous placelessness': 'A weakening of the identity of places to the point where they not only look alike but feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities for experience' (Relph 1976: 90).

Frampton argues that the megalopolis is a perfect manifestation of this 'place-lessness': a 'rush city' with ever-lasting re-production of 'mass' culture, extensive technological rationalization, and universal stereometric high-rise flat slab construction, which leaves no place for a true 'place'. As we learnt in Chap. 2, Frampton's proposed response to the dilemma of 'placelessness', resisting the triumph of the 'non-place urban realm', is returning to the capability of 'defined place' (*Raum*) in its Heideggerian sense, since a 'bounded domain', or an 'urban enclave' may resist the ubiquitous placelessness of our modern environment and give a halt to the endless processual flux of the megalopolis (Frampton 2002). The concept of the 'urban oasis' is a place-specific interpretation of an 'urban enclave' reflecting the essence of 'dwelling' as practiced in the Iranian context, and is thus a true manifestation of the 'space-in-between'.

The term 'oasis'—Farsi: آبادی (*Abadi*), Arabic: الواحه (*Alwahe*)—points to a 'place', a livable 'bounded domain' within the unlimited, monotone and extensive desert, in contrast to the surrounding dead and barren land. The word 'oasis' is from the Greek *óasis* (inhabited place), borrowed from the old Egyptian *waset*, which produced the Arabic *Wahe*. The Farsi word 'آبادی' is from the Middle Persian *āpāt* and denotes to a preserved, cultivated, and settled place, against the wild, barren, and non-inhabited surroundings. Thus, the foundation of a 'settlement' in the desert is associated with the creation of a 'place'; an 'oasis' which catches the essence of 'dwelling' in the desert.

Thus, an 'urban oasis' can be interpreted as an oasis in the context of the Megalopolis, a placeless modern city in which the surroundings are not a 'natural Sahara', but an 'urban Sahara', devoid of true life and prerequisites for authentic dwelling, in terms of environmental and mental conditions. In comparison with the natural desert, the 'urban desert' is a man-made phenomenon, but has the same characteristics as the desert: it is an infinite, monotone amalgamation of man-made constructions, which never provides 'dwelling' and lacks any authentic 'place'. The 'urban oasis' as a 'site of resistance' is thus an attempt to create a 'livable enclave' within the urban desert of the modern city, and thus to make dwelling possible, provide a certain sense of place for the inhabitants, and by means of integrating principles of sustainability provide them with a more sustainable urban life.

In this sense, the very idea of the 'urban oasis' has some significant characteristics. An urban oasis provides a site of resistance against the logic of the megalopolis and the 'urban Sahara' of the modern city, by means of establishing a bounded, defined place within the modern infinite 'rush city' to make dwelling

possible. The architectural configuration of an urban oasis is based on the indirect interpretation of the historical and cultural past, mingling with the advantages of new technology and modernisation. In this sense, it is a manifestation of simultaneous attention to the international and the local, hence an authentic 'space-in-between'. Moreover, an urban oasis provides a field of social contact and a sense of place, in which social exchange and communication is enriched.

As elaborated at the beginning of this chapter, it was noted that the architects in question acknowledged an identity crisis in society at that time as the result of the under-attended importation and implementation of non-local values and their physical manifestations, which Ardalan describes as 'urban chaos' (Ardalan 1980b). A main achievement of these architects could be formulated as their struggle to create an 'urban oasis' in the sense we have theorized it; places for a 'space-in-between' to resist the encroaching hegemony of the Megapolis.

The Behshahr Industrial Group Headquarters located at the heart of the city and surrounded by a landscape of placelessness creates a clear enclave and enclosed domain in which the harsh order of the exterior urbanscape disappears. A reinterpretation of the courtyard prototype, this building creates a genuine microcosm right at the heart of the megalopolis and cuts through the flux of mundanity by means of bringing visitors into the distinguished world at its interior. Although enjoying the benefits of the advanced construction technology of the time, namely prefabricated concrete, it conceals the solidity and hardness of the material behind the subtle aspects and dimensions of the courtyard, such as water and greenery.

Imam Sadeq University shows a different pattern of 'oasis'. By the time of construction the project was located in an isolated, barren alluvial fan in the north-western part of the city. Originally, the main reason for employing an introverted pattern influenced by the courtyard prototype of the Persian garden and traditional Madrassa was not to produce an 'urban oasis', but an 'oasis' within the dry, vast, harsh, and barren plain. Later, due to the rapid urban transformation of the city it was transformed into an 'urban oasis' which contrasts with the chaotic surrounding urban pattern. Nowadays, located within the intensively built urban fabric mainly developed after 1970s with no specific urban quality typical of the new modern developments in Tehran, it presents itself as an 'urban oasis' which tries to distinguish itself from the dominant architectural, urban, and environmental setting of the peripheral context; an 'urban oasis' within the desert of Megalopolis.

The 'underground-ness' of Amanat's architecture helps to give a unique character to his method of place-creation. A very significant feature of Amanat's architecture is the way his architecture is settled in the ground; sunken into the earth it rises up and expands on the ground, so that one may call him an 'underground architect'. As he puts it, 'I am very much an architect of inside' (McPhedran 1995: 12) and this refers to the sense of interiority his architecture presents. An outstanding example of this kind of architecture is the Pasargad Museum project, left incomplete due to the Islamic Revolution (1979), now under completion. Close to the tomb of Cyrus the Great on a plain near Persepolis, this museum was designed as an underground building, rather than one to be imposed on the landscape due to its vicinity to heritage monuments.

The Iranian Heritage Organization Headquarters, partially built before Islamic Revolution but inaugurated later in 1987 with some changes to the original design, presents a perfect microcosm within the chaos of the urban life of the megalopolis; an urban oasis *par excellence*. Different in layout and geometric configuration, the complex sits one floor under street level to create an urban enclave and thus strengthen the sense of entering into another realm; one set back from the mundane. As a complex of interconnected buildings linked through courtyards and collective spaces (*Ivans* and *Hashtis*) distributed along with spatial axes, this complex differentiates itself from its surroundings by means of establishing and introducing a different language and vocabulary where 'the past' meets 'the present' in a defined 'city in miniature' or 'city within the city'. A similar sense has been created in the Faculty of Business Management, where the introverted character of the complex and interconnected courtyards creates an urban enclave and hence a silent educational space within the chaos of the urban environment. Looking towards the central pool and garden, educational spaces face the interior microcosm.

Establishing an 'urban oasis' was an integral part of Diba's projects. Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, located at the heart of the city, creates a 'microcosm' which distances itself in terms of function and character from the surrounding environment. Located within the greenery of a large park on the edge of an arterial street, it neither links itself to the park nor to the cityscape, but as the result of an introverted spatial configuration derived from the reinterpretation of the archetype of the courtyard it invites the visitors into a new world whose greenery is different from that found in the adjacent park, and whose functional logic exists in contrast to the mundanity of street life. One feels disconnected from the outside world while walking through the space; the condensed presence of the cosmos is reflected in the interior space and courtyard. Distance from the surrounding world is also perceptible in Shafag Park through its sunken core and walls which demarcates the interior space from the exterior.

Shushtar-No is an urban manifestation of the concept of 'urban oasis'; it is an oasis within the harsh, barren landscape of the surrounding desert, and an urban community in contrast to the conventional doctrines of urbanism and urbanscape dominant in the professional sphere.[21] Following an 'ecologic adaptation' approach it minimizes the environmental effect of the hot climate to provide a livable space for life. On the other hand, applying a 'programme for human interaction-intensification' incorporated into a set of architectural and urban configurations such as individual, complex, and collective courtyards, it provides space for socialization and community life and thus creates an oasis which is essentially urban.[22]

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[21]Kenneth Frampton refers to this work as being among the first low-rise, high-density housing in the world on the scale of an entire town, based on the principles of Critical Regionalism (Khan 2000).

[22]Shushtar-No's current condition is far from the original image it aimed to present. After partial realization it was left uncompleted after the Islamic Revolution, and was intensively occupied by war-stricken refugees and other immigrants. For more details see: (Shirazi 2013).

In fact, the construction of an 'urban oasis' is an authentic manifestation of 'place-making'. An 'urban oasis' in the sense theorized and studied in the selected architectural works, to use Norberg-Schulz's terminology, is the 'setting-into-work' of place. A settlement, Norberg-Schulz (1980: 170) argues, sets truth into a work of architecture by means of building a boundary or threshold from which the settlement starts its presencing; a boundary in its Heideggerian meaning. An 'urban oasis', is thus the incarnation of the meeting point, a threshold which I have conceptualized as the 'space-in-between'; the site of confrontation, exchange, dialogue, and reconciliation of the dialectical concepts of inside/outside, here/there, East/West, Tradition/Modernity, local/universal, we/others.

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Chapter 4
The Narratives of 'In-Between'

This chapter provides space for the three architects, Kamran Diba, Nader Ardalan and Hossein Amanat, to express their obsessions and intentions in listening to the voice of place, discovering the demands of land, responding to them, and hence creating their narrative of 'space-in-between'. In this regard, I asked the above-mentioned figures to describe how they realized the necessity of resisting dominant trends and managed to find their own unique approach. Based on a challenging but informative written exchange and dialogue (designed to be tailor-made for each individual), these three prominent figures, who are now active in their profession, and in research and teaching, provide us with first-hand explanations of their original endeavours regarding the creation and narration of 'space-in-between' in their work. All interviews were conducted over the last 2 years; the final versions were received in April 2017.

4.1 The Poetics of Construction in Kamran Diba

During your architectural studies in the U.S., which tendencies were more popular in the field of architecture and urban planning and which theories were more influential? How were concepts like Tradition and Modernity interpreted by the governing educational system of the time?

It was called the international style, it was open and non-ideological, but with the monumental and ubiquitous presence of Wright, Corbu and Mies. Let us not forget this was before the advance of Postmodernism. To answer your question, there was no talk of going back to the past. Traditional architecture stayed within the confines of history lessons.

Note: All the footnotes for this chapter have been prepared by the author, M. Reza Shirazi, otherwise specified by name.

My time was before Venturi's attempt to synthesize Tradition and Modernity. In the late 50s and early 60s, during my school years, there was no interest in tradition.

After returning to Iran, how did you find the contemporary architecture of Iran from the point of view of architectural education in the universities as well as in the professional sphere? What was the main orientation of contemporary architecture in Iran and which trends were dominant?

There were diverse influences, some imported from France, Italy and US, with their homegrown derivatives. At Tehran University a modern version of the French Beaux-Arts style was the order of the day.

Taking into account domestic and traditional Iranian architecture and culture happened later for you, as you only began to study this field after you had learnt enough about Western architecture and culture. You have referred to this as a 'duality'. Did this duality finally occupy an intermediate condition, a condition of compromise and harmony between the two poles, or did it favour one side more than the other? In other words, how did you deal with this 'existential duality'?

I do not know in what context I talked about 'duality'. The duality that I think of today is not necessarily confrontational. To answer the question, the tendency to look at traditional or everyday architecture was the result of what I like to characterize as 'the quest for identity'. I do not like to make a big deal out of it; I just picked up ideas from here and there to contextualize my work. I was always conscious of avoiding clichés or the obvious. That led to the banality of American, and later Iranian Postmodernism.

Do you mean that a broad tendency in the direction of traditional form generates an architectural banality? What is the limit of this tendency? To what extent should we get close to the past?

We cannot quantify artistic or design tendencies. Any artistic tendency is open to being vulgarized. I would leave judgements about that kind of thing to the pundits. My personal experience is personal and cannot be formulated. All one can do is to search for an answer from individual work.

But your architecture seems to distance itself from the dogmatism of rational architecture and the 'form follows function' axiom. This is observable, for example, in the Niavaran Cultural Centre and Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, where non-functional dimensions are strongly present. If you were in favour of 'the quest for identity', as you put earlier, this removes your architecture from the solid framework of rationalism.

I am an avid follower of 'form follows function'. I disagree with this point of view. Where in the Niavaran Cultural Centre can you find irrational expression of inner function? I do not know… In that project, we have four parts and each part has its own unique and distinct expression.

Some consider that the architectural works of the late 1960s and early 1970s, to which your career also dates, could be characterized as 'Iranian Postmodernism'. To what extent do you acknowledge this idea and find it precise? Were you aware of the postmodernist architecture movement that was developing internationally while you were designing your projects, and did you have any exchanges with it?

Postmodernism came to my attention only after my career had been interrupted by the Iranian revolution of 1979. But my 'quest for identity' was rather subdued by contrast with the latter vulgarity of American Postmodernism. In the mid-70s I was invited by Mathias Ungers[1] to Cornell University Graduate School as a visiting architect, to work with the graduate students. Before me Aldo Rossi was there, I guess. Ideas of American and European Postmodernism were spreading. At the same time, Colin Rowe, at the same school in the Planning Department was making a big dent in urban planning and design ideas. The fact is, at the time I had already designed most of my buildings in Iran. Postmodernism had a liberating aspect; it broke the orthodoxy of Modernism. The exhausting commercialization or vulgarization of Postmodernism was responsible for its eventual demise as a valid design approach. But, to answer your question, about whether I consider myself an Iranian postmodernist, the answer is no, I do not consider myself anything. The truth was that I was searching, setting into context the national identity and above all making my personal mark.

I think you should separate the 60s and 70s in Iran, from post-revolutionary Postmodernism.

In this sense, can we compare your designs with the works of architects like Utzon, Henning Larsen, and late Aalto, who were modernist, while cultivating sensitivity to the particularity of 'place'?

Why not.

You have always highlighted the social dimension of architecture and your first realized work, Shafag Park, was based on this idea, since the main goal was to create a 'community centre' for the citizens (Diba 1981). *What was the reason for this emphasis on the 'public sphere'? Is this tendency rooted in Iranian culture and traditional architecture or is it derived from the lessons of modern sociology?*

You asked about 'social dimension' and 'community centre' in my work: in macro planning, or at the level of a housing project, the question for me is how to make a lively, cohesive and viable community. In traditional societies, the formation of a community was the result of natural growth. In macro planning in recent times, and in many instances today, we have failed to create a viable community. What we usually get is an awkward conglomeration of building mass, alien to social needs or community life. There is no doubt that, to build a community centre, or cultural centre is a modern idea, and there is no doubt, that on a small neighbourhood scale, this could bring the neighbourhood together in a central location—depending on how it is located and designed.

The project of the Children's Village is somehow different from your other works, and the difference seems to lie in the major role played by the natural environment. Introducing this project you have said that 'domestic architecture'

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[1]Oswald Mathias Ungers (1926–2007) was a German architect and architectural theorist with a rationalist approach. In 1968 he became a professor at Cornell University, a position he held up to 1975.

was the main departure point. Please explain how this was manifested in your design.

I am always learning lessons from the vernacular. Regionally and climatically, vernacular expression is usually subservient to local sociocultural paradigms, the availability of materials and climatic conditions.

We can sense a kind of 'poetic revealing of construction' in your works, whereby construction technology in harmony with the materials used reveals the 'being' of the building, rather than concealing it. Due to this approach, your architecture avoids a sentimental, nostalgic scenography, but rather enacts an existential tectonics. For instance, the Museum of Contemporary Art presents in full sight the exposed unclad concrete together with the projected coarse stonework, in full harmony with the glass and copper (Fig. 4.1). Why do you pretend to conceal the body of the building?

Although my architecture (design) has nothing to do with Mies van der Rohe, the concept of honesty of construction, or revealing a building's construction details, and materials, derives from his edicts. At the beginning, I even tried to show traces of the electrical or plumbing infrastructure on the finish surfaces of the interior. I did that in the interior of several of my early buildings.

So, was the main reason behind this an aesthetic issue? Or it was based on how you see, define the building, and what you expect from it?

The reason is twofold, namely to further accessibility and also to provide an added aesthetic element. I still do show the exterior signs of what is hidden from the exterior view.

It seems that you have another definition of the 'roof'; it is not solely a covering over the building to protect it against the wind and rain, but it is transformed into the body of architecture and forms a part of the landscape of the complex (in the case of the Museum of Contemporary Art) or the cityscape (the case of Shushtar-No). What is the source of inspiration for this idea and what it grants to your architectural works?

The playful roof idea comes from the roofscapes of the 'Kavir' or desert-fringed cities of Iran. In the Museum of Contemporary Art, Shushtar and other projects that remain unbuilt, the configuration of these ideas are manifested according to their context—basically, I wanted a particular expression of the skyline. When, in my student days, I visited the village of San Gimignano in Italy, the numerous towers built by competing families as prestige symbols, left a mark on me. I have said before that I learned immensely from Italian small- and mid-size historical cities. I was, and am fascinated by Italian Piazzas and their civic and architectural presence.

Although you have always stressed context and texture, in the Museum of Contemporary Art, at least in its current condition, one may observe a kind of inattention to the park on the one hand, and to the elements of the park on the other. What is the reason for this lack of dialogue with the surroundings?

On the contrary, the museum is designed in the context of the park. If you notice, the roof contour gradually gravitates downward and the view from the west and north is open to the park's verdure. At the time of construction, the building's street

Fig. 4.1 Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art, juxtaposition of contrasting materials (Author)

front opened onto the pedestrian sidewalk, the present fence is an afterthought by others. The building is oriented toward the street, rather than the Park, the idea being to create an inviting building, like the idea of a shop front, and to be able to attract passers-by. I consciously avoided the concept of a temple to ART, sitting in the middle of a park.

The northern sculpture garden, which could have made a link with the park, was never finished. At the time, I was the Director of the museum and we had an open-ended acquisition programme for sculptures. My idea was to make the gardening or landscaping complementary to the sculptures, not the other way around.

As a result, the lack of vegetation in the sculpture garden separates the museum grounds from the park. But if you look at my design for the grounds of the Carpet Museum, the link to the park is by a pedestrian gate; although this gate is closed. Or is it? I made another axis to the park from a big concrete gate, which is located in the north of the Museum of Contemporary Art's sculpture garden. To be more specific about your question, the park is under different ownership and management from the museum, so these projects are quite independent of each other.

In some cases, such as the case of Shahid Chamran University, we can see a Louis Kahn-like architectural composition: a mixture of brick and concrete with huge circular and square openings. This grants the work a monumental character. Were you aware of this similarity from the beginning? Why did you use this kind of configuration and composition?

Once upon a time, Louis Kahn gave a lecture at my school. He said you put individual buildings together around an open space and that will create a square or plaza. Next day in the classroom, our urban design professor Morton Hoppenfeld asked the class: what do you think of Khan's method of making a plaza? The class unanimously applauded Kahn's idea. Unimpressed, Hoppenfeld said: this is no way to make a square. The class, dumbfounded by his reaction, waited for him to tell us why. He simply said, you design the square and then place the building accordingly. This was a crucial moment in my understanding of what separates urban design from architecture, all said in a nutshell.

What I learned from Louis Kahn was to deconstruct architectural parts into separate entities and to reassemble them in a distinct and expressive way. The materials I used in my buildings were the basic indigenous and available materials. Exposed concrete came from Corbu and brick was a traditional local building material. I seldom worked on buildings that really needed lifts. To make significant low-rise buildings, you have to resort to a degree of monumental expressionism. Referring to your question about round openings, yes I had seen them in Khan's work.

In the Garden of Niavaran, there exists a unique dialectic. On the one hand, the old existing garden already has an established structure and character; on the other hand, the landscape of the new garden has been designed using a modern vocabulary. This dialectic of the old and the new leads to a synthesis through which we enter into a realm that is simultaneously old and new; it is memorable and joyful on the one hand, and modern and at the service of the new functions on the other. How do you explain and interpret this dialectic?

In the case of the Garden of Niavaran, I was basically responding to the constraints of the existing situation. I tried to separate the traditional and modern, simply in order to respect the garden's past history and the existing planting. Furthermore, a beautiful waterway was already in place, it only needed minor intervention. Unfortunately, this separation was not understood by an interfering architect who intervened later on and decided to improve the waterway and extend it up to the entrance of cultural centre, making a ridiculous dichotomy between

Tradition and Modernity.[2] Would it be alright to try to improve a painting by someone else? I hope you make a point about this issue of the scandalous and unnecessary interference inflicted by some architects on designs by other architects. To add insult to injury he went further, replacing the modern lamps that I had ordered from Italy! This is supposed to be a registered building on the National Heritage list and they do not even have a file on the original buildings. How can they know what is original and what is not? In a recent photo, the very important few steps through the concrete gate to the plaza of the cultural centre have been changed. No matter how small or insignificant the details seem to be, it is always wrong to change the original design—without any convincing reason for it.

The 'entering ritual' is very vital in your works. For example in the Niavaran Cultural Complex, the access to the central courtyard located on a lower level is by means of going through a concrete gate, crossing a bridge over a pool, and descending a number of stairs. This is also observable in other cases like the mosque of the Shushtar-No. What functional and symbolic meanings and implications does this 'entering ritual' have for you?

Ritual of entrance or penetration? A Freudian slip! But to get serious, this ritual is like the foreplay, getting there! So, why not make the best of it.

How do you treat light? Do you believe in a maximal or minimal presence of light? The poetic play with light in your works seems to be aimed more at controlling it, a kind of purification and management process, like the skylights of the Museum of Contemporary Art and the mysterious openings in the gallery of the Niavaran Cultural Complex.

I discovered the mystery of light through the work of Le Corbusier. Once you become converted, it never leaves you. You are so right; I tried to avoid intense direct light and tried to play with the mystery of controlled light and sight (Fig. 4.2).

The wall is a dialectical element of your architecture; it conceals and reveals at the same time, it rejects and attracts simultaneously, it veils but calls for openness. What is particular in a wall and what attracts your attention to its capabilities? How did you employ these capabilities in your designs?

You have brought up the question of the wall and this has made me go back to my teen years—like being put on the psychoanalyst's chair. When I was 15, I lived with my mother and sister in Tehran. And my father lived in Tabriz for a few years, trying to look after the family villages and our agricultural properties. My grandfather's house, in the Sheshgelan neighbourhood of Tabriz, was a complex of interconnected buildings and courtyards. Among these houses, which were eventually divided among five brothers and two sisters, there was a smallish modest house, where my father lived. One school year I joined my father in Tabriz and lived in that house. The front garden was a small claustrophobic courtyard, geometrically designed, with a smallish pool in the middle. On the east side of the

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[2]Here Diba is referring to recent renovations and criticizes new interventions which have damaged the original concept.
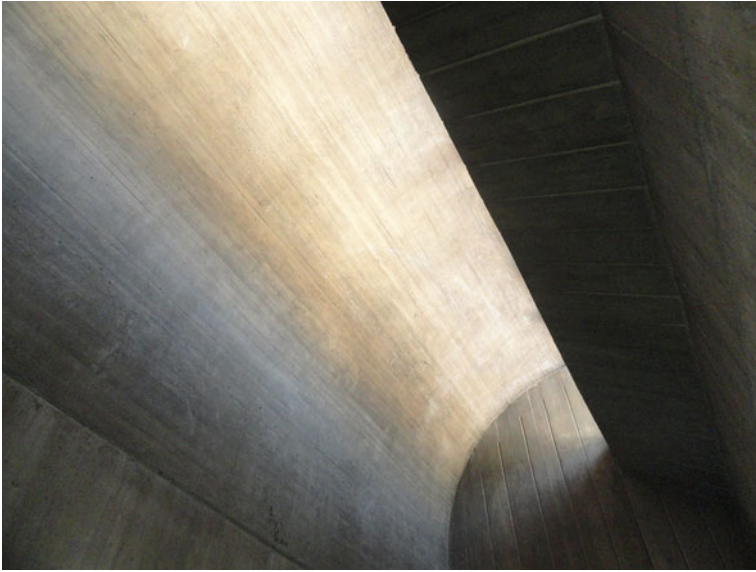
Fig. 4.2 Niavaran Cultural Complex, light catchers (Author)

garden, there was this big impressive wall. It seemed to be five metres tall and quite thick. This fat, ancient wall had gradually curved into our courtyard, creating a sense of insecurity or perhaps, when standing next to it, a sense of constant anxiety. From the other side of the wall, I often heard voices, mostly delicate female chattering, from people I never got to meet or see. The adjacent houses had separate entrances opened to other streets. I never figured out the neighbour's entrances— you have to attribute this to a complicated urban fabric responding to the requirements of the extended family system, and finally, to the inner complexities of a traditional urban fabric. As a result, the owners of those mysterious female voices, on the other side of the wall, were never to be seen by a 15-year old boy.

When, after World War II, the Soviets invaded Tabriz, our main family houses were confiscated and became the Officers Training School, and Military Command Headquarters. My dreams of romance with the neighbour's daughter were shattered when I learned that the separatist communist provisional government used to line up prisoners against the same wall and shoot them. That wall not only had to witness my teenage fantasies but was also witness to acts of atrocious barbarity.

Didn't I just tell you a story? Don't you think architecture is about storytelling? Yes, yes I truly do.

In Shushtar-No the old fabric of Shushtar is the source of inspiration. Putting two figure-ground plans of the old and new city side-by-side it can be observed that they are similar in having courtyards. But there are a number of differences as well, so that the old city is more solid than the new city. In other words, the built-up area of the old city is greater than that of the new city. On the other hand, in the new

city, the Euclidean geometry of the units (single buildings) is in harmony with the Euclidean geometry of the entire city, in contrast to the old city where the general pattern is organic. How do you justify this contradiction in terms of structure and geometry employed?

As the old city grew organically, according to chaotic pattern of rural land ownership, this incrementally gradual growth took place over decades,[3] and obviously lacked cohesion and planning logic. The old city was composed of individual buildings responding mainly to the position of the sun, the street and their immediate neighbours. It is obvious that building a new town or even a neighbourhood, today, the planners and designers are confronted with socio-economic issues, modern transport, infrastructure and the ideals or values of the contemporary era. All these decisions are compounded or compacted in one package. Consequently, the physical expression of final plan has a different matrix.

Nowadays, one of the integral issues of sustainable urbanism is the idea of compact urban form, but the size and dimensions of compactness, through which the highest efficiency might be achieved, is still under discussion. This idea is very present in Shushtar-No (Fig. 4.3). How do you define the idea of a low-rise, high-density approach in terms of dimensions and the extent of compactness? How did you employ this concept in Shushtar-No?

Compactness has to do with economy of land, infrastructure cost, urban psychology and tradition. If you study the physical distance needed for personal space across different cultures, in some societies the distance people from one another take in crowded places is much closer than in others. To be precise, compactness and being close to others is culture dependent. In this situation, we cannot ignore the element of income and class. In most situations, socio-economic metrics are the core determinant. There are no universal standards and guidelines for the planner.

In this project employing local technology was of high importance. Why do you consider this approach essential and how did you apply it? Doesn't this represent a kind of restriction which could prevent technical improvements?

I do not want to sound regressive. Higher technology should be economical and needs a technical justification. Experience shows that large-scale prefabricated and industrial housing, adopted for low-income groups can frequently make a rapid decline into a blighted area. It may sound ironical that I am saying these words, because Shushtar new town is already blighted, but this is not due to our design or planning, this has to do with the issue of ownership and absence of municipal control.

To answer your question, one of my objectives was to create local employment and skills. Introducing an industrial housing complex from the outside would have minimized local involvement or employment. The economic impact of building this town vibrated from old Shushtar to Andimeshk and Dezful.

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[3]See Diba (1981: 8).

Fig. 4.3 Shushtar-No, urbanscape (Author)

Green space is limited to the interior space of courtyards, except for the main axis of the complex. How can we justify this approach when in those hot climatic conditions, green space is of vital importance for cooling down the temperature?

We had an extensive project of forestation in the middle and immediate vicinity of the new town. Compact housing and narrow streets create shadows and channel the flow of air. Do not forget we are not making houses with swimming pools. This was a low-income-rented housing project.

You have also argued that the lack of an adequate maintenance system was a reason behind this decision. Why were you concerned at the outset with the question of maintaining the public spaces?

This is the problem of underdeveloped communities—a lack of care for public spaces.

Human being and pedestrians are given a key role, a very progressive idea which has been very successful in some countries. In this regard, car access is restricted to certain areas. What did you think about this strategy, and taking into account the behaviour of the inhabitants, to what extent could it be successful?

Unfortunately, the pedestrian-only streets are not respected, and with the absence of a controlling authority, residents drive their cars into the narrow streets. Even in the civilized world, if you have a traffic jam and there are no police controls, people will drive on the sidewalks, and do not respect the traffic lights—unless you live in Switzerland. The present situation is chaotic.

Here, let me raise a very crucial issue, what you referred to as 'municipal control' or a 'controlling authority'. How did you think about the management of this complex when you were in the process of designing and planning for it? Who was supposed to be the controlling authority? As there were some unique features, such as the idea of a car-free community, extra 'control' would have needed to be planned in for its proper implementation. Who was supposed to take this responsibility?

For any large-scale developing project, you need a development authority to control the construction of future phases. After the completion of the project, physical and social oversight of the project is paramount to its success or failure.

A new image of dwelling has been introduced in Shushtar-No in which the house is no longer a physical combination of different rooms, each with particular function, but instead consists of rooms with flexible functionality. Considering the way the modern lifestyle imposes particular behaviours, to what extent is a shift in habitat identity feasible? How could your efforts in the case of Shushtar-No support a shift in the paradigm of living?

Do not forget, from the late 70s living in lofts became desirable; after years of bourgeois uniformity, we went back to individualism in organizing our home environment. In Shushtar-No there is a diverse typology of housing and apartments (Fig. 4.4). What you are referring to is true of some single-family attached units. Iranian low-income groups do not have the same living pattern as that required by the Western lifestyle. The units were designed to be adaptable to any lifestyle.

The geometry and structure of the Iranian city was the source of inspiration in this complex; however, there are a number of contradictions which can be questioned. For example, the Friday Mosque has been located in isolation from the urban fabric, in between two separated parts of the city. Moreover, the main square of the city, which used to be located at the centre, is placed here at the beginning of the main axis. What is behind these deconstructions? A way to create the city anew? A kind of philosophical defamiliarization? Or something else?

The Friday Mosque, although it does not touch the residential and commercial areas, is connected with the main pedestrian thoroughfare and is sited on the top of

Fig. 4.4 Shushtar-No, view to apartment housing (Author)

a hill, giving it an imposing stature. This mosque represents the link between two physically and topographically separated areas of this town and is sited within the heart of green woodland. Look at the intimate scale and at the new town as a whole: this building is located at the heart of it. Look, nobody said I am a traditional fundamentalist. I believe in change, progress and innovation. I think when you posed this question you did not look at my first phase neighbourhood mosque integrated into the dense fabric of phase one.

The question is, how many Iranian cities have a living river attached to them? Dezful has one, but totally it is ignored by the old town plan. Looking out at it from a private dwelling, when the moon was shining on the silvery flow, I realized its magic.[4]

In planning and architecture, in order to make an unforgettable physical environment, one has to be open to take advantage of rare opportunities. Outside of the obvious reasons why the town centre is by the riverfront, the 'linkage' is a keyword. In the case of the Friday Mosque, the linkage of the two topological levels is the objective, and in the case of town centre, by means of the pedestrian bridge, the linkage of the old and new city.

You have written that Shushtar-No was a 'reaction' to the overwhelming trend in favour of Western architectural values in the third world and Iran, where vulgar Modernism dominated the development of the country in terms of construction. What was the meaning of standing out against the current architectural

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[4]Diba was the master planner of the historic city of Dezful.

conventions of the world and Iran, which were mainly based on the principles of modern architecture and international style?

It was not at all to be difficult or repressive. The problem is not ideological but practical. Although, there is a nonconformist contrarian strain in my personality, never the less, what I did had a natural logic. Western modern architecture was made by and for Western bourgeois society. To sustain this built environment we need an organized bourgeois society. In this case, it takes two to tango. To give you two examples:

Who is responsible for the disused spaces created by the construction of identical building apartment blocks for lower income groups, with their broken vegetation, pavements, balding green lawns and junk or rubbish scattered all over the place? Graffiti and unmaintained substandard hallways in common interior spaces? These are examples you can find from the Paris suburbs to sub-Saharan Africa.

After the Iranian revolution of 1979, I lived for a while in Cairo where I met and visited many well-to-do families' apartments. These people constantly switched between Arabic and French in their daily conversation, a sign of the old upper classes, and their European education and lifestyle. What was unusual and strange to me, was the poor maintenance conditions of these previous-century, Paris boulevard-style elegant buildings. The dilapidated entrance lobby attended by a shabby looking porter was in dire contrast to the scene that was revealed when the front door to these apartments opened. Welcomed by uniformed maids, you were invited into a bright and colourful Western lifestyle. I could have sung, a few times, 'happy days are here again'. To think of it now, this theatrical dichotomy was quite amusing. I put the question to a close friend. He said it was because the occupants cannot agree with each other. But, I think it was about not wishing to pay, and above all because they are not concerned with the image of their common areas.

One may sense another kind of resistance in your career. You have mentioned that in the case of Shushtar-No you spent much time in convincing the client to employ principles of domestic and Iranian architecture. Your focus on making architecture for the public encouraged you to refuse commissions for private homes, with the exception of the house for Parviz Tanavoli, a close friend of yours. Was this resistance a reaction to current methods of making architecture? What was the philosophy behind this resistance? What did you obtain at the end?

Let us say I was an ideologically oriented architect. My interest was in civic architecture. When I arrived in Iran as an architect in 1965, the local architects were more concerned with or excited about designing private homes rather than public buildings. I had to take a stand on this issue.

Among your realized works, with the exception of Shushtar-No, there is no significant gap between the initial goals and the functions they are supposed to have. But the situation in Shuhstar-No is awful and regrettable. What we observe now is a semi-ruined complex, far removed from its original ideals and visions. This gap can be seen from two perspectives: the incompatibility of the designers' vision and the target group's life conditions, or the imposition of external factors and forces that ignored the initial vision of the complex. What went wrong with this project?

Recently on television, I saw that the private compound belonging to Gaddafi was trashed in a single day. Of course, the architect did not plan for, or foresee, a revolution. The inhabitants of Shushtar-No are not the lawful inhabitants or owners of these units. This is a squatter situation, although without trendy music and people with unwashed long hair. The government agency which built this rental-only complex, was overthrown first by the revolution and second by the Iran–Iraq war, when refugees mostly took over unfinished units and urban facilities.

In the existing situation, there are some modifications which show the inhabitants acting in opposition to the ideas of the architect. For example, those windows facing the street at a low level have been all walled and fenced over in an unsuitable way. Is this the result of a miscalculation on the side of the designer, or the result of unplanned and precipitate changes by the inhabitants and their unexpected social behaviour?

In the absence of a management or controlling authority, people could drive on sidewalks, and squat even in Versailles. In these cases, we cannot have a barometer of judgement. Could you referee Real-Madrid versus the New York ballet?

Do you believe that if the houses were inhabited as planned by the lawful residents, they would not wall over the windows?

This Project was rental housing. It is obvious that the tenants do not have the right to physically change the accommodation to fit with their personal preferences.

Your late projects contrast with the earlier approach in your architecture, in the sense that modernist high-rise construction plays an important role. This is observable for example in the Mahmoud-Abad project. What is the reason for this contradiction?

The Mahmoud-Abad project arose from a programmed competition. This was also a bread and butter project, which saved our office financially. In this case, the client required a sea view for all rooms, which entailed a single loaded corridor high rise. What I did, I started from the ground upwards, creating a sloped mountain. In a flat landscape, buildings can create contours or ups and downs. Do not get me wrong, I am not against high-rise construction; what I questioned at the time, was its unconditional use as a symbol of progress.

In the two projects of the Isfahan Government and Civic Centre and School of Human Sciences of Isfahan, the architecture is more shaped by the urban fabric, than in itself creating an architectural volume. In other words, the mass and body of the work is more than the void and empty space. What is the reason for this approach?

These two unbuilt projects are an attempt to create an inner-oriented complex, reminiscent of the traditional urban fabric. The civic centre's exterior façade is expandable and open ended. Here we do away with the permanent exterior façade.

I built the first indoor sport facility building in Jondi-Shapour University (now Shahid Chamran) between 1972–76. Later on, the university chancellor, who did not believe in Master Planning, asked me to build an adjacent, and much larger, gymnasium. The natural position for this project meant obscuring the well-designed elegant façade of the previous building. This created a major dilemma for me—that

is, following site planning logic versus the architectural integrity of a building I had designed. Eventually, reason prevailed over ego.

Structure and façade are normally integrated and united in your works. In other words, façade is not an element attached to the building, but is a part of building itself; the façade is the exterior face of the structure to the extent that the building exposes its structure and construction. What does this unification mean for you?

Let us not forget that the concept of honesty of structure was one of the edicts of my student days.

This structural integration is observable in the prayer-house (Namaz-Khaneh) of the Laleh Park at its higher level: minimum mass with maximum manifestation. Here the concrete expresses both structure and building; the formwork, nails, and woodwork of the construction period are still observable. What was your intention with this piece of architecture?

This is a sculpture, which gravitates toward architecture or vice versa, it was a folly which survived its time. Once I told a friend 'If architecture was my wife, art was my mistress'. In this structure the essence of mosque architecture with its basic intrinsic elements are intact. In my book *Kamran Diba Buildings and Projects,* I have written about the concept or the reason for its being.

Your architectural works oscillate between two poles of direct reference to old and traditional architecture, as in the case of Shushtar-No, and an indirect reference, as in the case of the Museum of Contemporary Art. What is the best position between these two extremes, and which approach is more appreciated in your opinion?

I am a modernist at heart. As an artist or even as an architect, one always searches for ideas, which soon becomes the true soul of the work. At the time, I could not have found a better soul than our cultural heritage. Contrary to your statement, and unlike American postmodernists, I never made a direct reference to local traditional architecture.

Yes, you are right, when I think about this more precisely. Let me say 'more direct' and 'more indirect' references. I mean, in Shushtar-No one senses 'tradition' and 'history' more explicitly than in the Museum of Contemporary Art; in the latter, traditional spatial concepts are hidden behind the body of the work, while in the former they are formally present, like the brick-work.

A valid observation.

In the introduction to your collected works (Diba 1981) *you have written about the eating habits of Europeans, Persians and Chinese, explaining how a European's unfamiliarity with the Iranian way of eating a Persian dish at a nearby table was interpreted by you as a waste of Persian food, so that it was difficult for you not to interfere. Then you explain how strolling (gaddam-zadan in Farsi) is related to the Iranian temperament and has a unique rhythm, sequence and pace. This means for me that the difference in our 'habit' is rooted in our 'existence' and inner layers, which is itself rooted in culture and history. In other words, we have a prehistoric dimension which is reproduced in our actions. This is for sure important in the process of creating and designing space, since the users of the space are also important. How do you manifest this 'difference' in your works?*

You basically answered the question. What I do not understand is the 'prehistoric dimension'. Are you referring to Jung's collective unconscious concept? If so, I myself am not going back to prehistoric days, which are far removed from civilization, I am referring to the prevailing cultural modes of behaviour, which are always in a condition of transmutation. The best example is the sociocultural change that has taken place due to the Iranian revolution in this country. The present situation is an abrupt change from the past, and it has fundamentally changed the structure of social values. Therefore, this change embodies behavioural and subtle spatial changes.

Your question about how I deal with sociocultural factors? The obvious answer is everybody deals with these, to the level they are aware of them. I am aware of human behaviour and its physical dimension, in the decision-making process, and in my methodology, in my design. For instance, I try to control or promote social interaction. Of course, according to the desirability of the situation, in order to achieve that, you have to create models of potential patterns of human interaction, and design accordingly. To illustrate my point, think of a simple seating arrangement in a bus. If you place the seats back to back passengers never see each other's faces. But on the other hand, if you place these seats front to front you create an interactive social situation. In the latter case, people could interact, exchange a smile, try to ignore each other, socially stereotype each other, be intrusively annoying, become obsessive about making contact, or sexually attracted by someone. This mental theatre is produced by a simple seating arrangement.

Modern architecture is criticized for its overemphasis on 'vision' and a 'vision-based' approach; all architecture is reduced to its appearance and exterior expression, ignoring the other senses in the process of perception. To what extent was 'vision' crucial in your works and did you try to highlight other dimensions of 'perception' by means of involving the other senses—of hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling?

I am quite visual and space is important for me, although I feel I was a little timid and economical in dealing with indoor spaces. The methodology I used was to create social situations through a 'mise en scène' and I was always aware of the potentials of human interaction. I discussed some of this before. Let me give you another example. The lobby of an opera house is as important as its main hall or stage. When the music stops, in the intermission time, the audiences get a chance to interact with each other, that is part of the ritual. With this awareness, the architectural space created for the intermission must go beyond the need to use the lavatory or get a drink.

'Islamic Architecture' is one of the key issues in the scholastic sphere. You have criticized the dominance of Western culture in Muslim cities which has culminated in reproducing the same models and forms. You have written that, although there are some efforts to put Islamic economic, political, and social models into practice, little has been done to recognize the importance of the Islamic urban environment and the achievement of certain model communities, and no Islamic nation has ever communicated such ideas at a transnational level (Diba 1998)*. What do you mean by the efforts already made, and what we may achieve with this kind of exchange?*

What I am saying is that a so-called Islamic Architecture or urban environment has not been given attention. We do not have many new models or examples of such communities. There is not even a serious international book published on this subject.

Do you have any concrete suggestions in this regard? Is it the task of universities, research institutes, or international organizations to work on this?

All of these you just mentioned have a role to play.

You have elaborated the dominance of modernist architecture in prefabricated mass housing built after the economic boom of the early 1970s as due to suddenly increased oil revenues. You have concluded that the main lesson to be learnt from this phenomenon is that an Islamic culture cannot be discarded in national planning and policymaking as well as urban community design; we must maintain continuity with tradition (Diba 1980). *What do you mean by not 'discarding' Islamic culture and how was it discarded in this field? What does mean 'continuity with tradition' and what should be linked together to achieve this continuity? Isn't this 'continuity' a conservative notion which may restrict major progress?*

Although early in my career in Iran I tried to find a link with the past, I have to admit that I have favoured the primacy of today or tomorrow over the past. Let me rephrase this dichotomy of Tradition versus Modernism; let us simply say, past versus future. The past is gradually dying and the future is being made today. In the contemporary era, only subtle vestiges of tradition can survive. My early efforts in Iran were to make a link to our disappearing identity. Maybe, this effort was more nationalistic than Islamic. But, being a Tabatabai, which means that according to my family tree, I am a descendant of marriage of the children of Imam Hassan and Imam Hossein, Islamic culture is a part of my upbringing and psyche. I do not need to consciously think about it. My conscious effort has been to find a link with a common culture and to make a subtle physical link with the familiar. When one does town or community planning, this is a type of social engineering. One definitely decides upon or adopts a social setting or scenario. This brings planners or architects closer to the role of a film director. If planning is conducive to a warm and humane community life, then it is successful. I would like to bring your attention to an example, which tells the whole story. When I was a child in Tehran, only Christians lived in apartments; these apartment blocks were mostly three to four storeys high, and Iranian Muslims desired houses. During the Islamic Republic of Iran, the official policy encouraged high-rise living. In Tehran, community life and planning was totally ignored and destroyed. To survive in Tehran you need a private vehicle, which resulted in the worst possible traffic congestion and pollution. Now tell me, is this Islamic? Of course not, this is the worst possible Western urban model. It was not inherited from a century ago but was built in the time between 1980 and 2000. This is a parody of the Western lifestyle or community life and it was built during the Islamic Republic. But I must admit that they have been successful in maintaining the coverage of the headscarf over the forehead! When the lifestyle is Western it is absurd to make superficial Islamic rules that could be changed by the stroke of a pen. The so-called Islamic, economic, political or social model should lead to a more humane urban living environment; otherwise, it is only

window dressing. I think that the idea of 'Islamic culture' could be misinterpreted or reduced to outmoded socio-religious rituals. Religion, up to now, has been a potent force, which has influenced the dynamics of cultural change. In community planning, we deal with the physicality of people in one hand, and their behavioural or spiritual aspect on the other hand, which are influenced by current cultural paradigms. Needless to say, the basic communal needs of human settlement always stays the same, in spite of their location, unless in extreme environmental conditions like the North Pole or the Tropics where the climate has a dominant effect on the social and built environment. Do not forget contextuality: some of my past writings are addressed to certain or even site-specific situations, which could lack universality. To answer your question about 'continuity of tradition' that means, you do not take a family from a neighbourhood which is low rise and where people have direct contact with a small garden and corner grocery store, and in the name of progress, put them in a suburban high rise, dependent on a private car. In Paris I live in a central neighbourhood, I do not need to go beyond a 300 m periphery to survive without a car in the metropolitan area; on the other hand, look at the disastrous, relatively newly built, high-rise suburban experience in the Paris metropolitan area.

You have also concluded that we have to concentrate on 'community development' rather than 'housing'. This derives from your attention to social and cultural issues, since housing may provide a shelter for people; it is not necessarily capable of creating an ideal community with an active and efficient public sphere. Please give us more details about this conclusion.

I think of Shushtar new town and other disastrous housing projects all over the world. The investment should be directed towards the costs of creating a viable sustainable socio-physical environment. The physical cost of houses or apartments is only a segment or a tranche of the overall expenditure needed. We have to look at the problem in its totality and include shops, schools, transport, connection to workplaces, and so on; these are all the hard costs, but let us not forget the soft cost of management and maintenance that involves human resources. In budgeting and planning, we have to be comprehensive and avoid segregated undertakings, hoping for them to come together and make a successful whole.

You have mentioned that what you brought to Iran as one of the qualified architects of the second generation was 'Modernism'. Your approach was not limited to its physical dimension, but highlighted its psychological aspects, humane values, and Western ideas. Based on this, can you be considered as a modernist? What is your understanding of modern architecture? An incomplete project? Or a failed project?

Humanistic ideals, awareness of human rights, and a modern metropolitan lifestyle were experienced by Iranian students abroad. These values that are considered to be the accepted canons of a civilized society, were exported and disseminated throughout Iranian society. But the modernist movement was stopped and reversed by the creation of the Islamic Republic.

In spite of the revolutionary change, modern architecture and town planning somehow continued and thrived in the post-revolutionary epoch; creating a superficially modernistic physical environment and lifestyle, in contradiction to the aspirations of the intellectual elite and a good part of the population who were sensitive to such issues.

Let me ask then: to what extent are modern architecture and its principles valid and functional in contemporary society in general, and in the Iranian context in particular?

To a great extent and with regard to all aspects of contemporary society.

After the Islamic Revolution, it was impossible for you to get a commission in Iran, and you were not that interested in designing for a foreign context. What was the reason for this lacuna? Lacking a sense of belonging to the new place? Distance from origins? A sense of homelessness? Or something else?

Permanent dislocation and disruption will eventually change one's lifetime focus. Your question contains the answer to all of my dilemmas. I was convicted, along with lots of other non-political people, by the revolutionary courts. The decree is that you cannot undertake any business, hold any public position, or function as a normal citizen. As a result, you are condemned to minimum dwelling space and a vegetative existence. After more than 30 years, the Iranian regime has not reconsidered the situation and basically lacks a sense of justice. It would be normal to issue a national amnesty regarding the arbitrary summary rulings of hastily organized revolutionary courts. I wonder if they have ever heard of Nelson Mandela!

In some villas you designed later in Andalusia there exists a high attention to the 'sense of place' and 'local language'. Do they follow your already established architectural thinking but in 'another place', under different circumstances?

It is obvious that my methodology and approach to architecture did not drastically change. Monticello in Tyson, a postmodern example in Virginia U.S.A. is another testament to my thinking. But I should admit that, the Vernacular context is not universal in my work and could be compromised.

In the Ati-Saz project, we see a different or even contradictory architecture. Here there is no effort made with regard to the reinterpretation of Iranian architectural concepts, nor any implicit or explicit historical reference This is more a high-rise building employing the vocabulary of high-tech modern architecture. How should we observers interpret this project? An exception? A shift in style and thought? Compromising and ignoring any kind of resistance to the programme? Or something else?

The Ati-Saz proposal is a direct response to a comprehensive programme proposed by the client, and I happened to answer this in your previous question. I did say, 'the Vernacular context is not universal in my work and could be compromised'. I thought this project was big enough to generate exciting diverse activities in the heart of its neighbourhood. It was a big enough multifunctional machine to create and generate its own independent life.

4.2 Khalq-I Jadid (New Creation) in Nader Ardalan

Please provide some details regarding your architectural education in the USA and the dominant atmosphere of that time. It was coincident with some radical critiques of modern architecture, the international style and their inadequacies. What tendencies existed at the time of your education, what characteristics did they have, and who were the major and prominent figures?

Allow me to begin by observing that my international professional practice and academic research over the past 50 years has been based upon four principles of design that I have strived to maintain for the creation of a meaningful, sustainable Contemporary Architecture. For me, these four primary forces of design include Environmental Adaptation; Cultural Relevance; Functional Purpose and Innovative Technology. The successful and holistically integrated realization of these four principles can result in what I have termed: 'Luminous Design'.

In order to understand how this commitment and clarity to such a design philosophy developed, it may be instructive to review the circumstances that have shaped and nurtured my life. It is my understanding that the formation of a person commences before birth in the genetic structure of the individual, with inherent tendencies towards certain particulars and away from others. Upon birth, environmental/contextual circumstances further shape the individual. Therefore, my early childhood in Iran and my pre-college circumstances growing up in Washington, D.C and New York, especially the influence of living with the family of the German/American Architect, Gunter Arndt Sr., in New Rochelle, had much to do with my general vision of the world and more specifically my architectural formation.

From the age of five in Tehran, my parents noted a certain artistic tendency in me and thus I began every Saturday morning to attend art school (with my father's reward of a much-looked-forward-to crème puff afterwards) with an Armenian lady artist who taught me still life charcoal drawings—I distinctly remember a classic lion, which she greatly helped embellish—but in general, I loved drawing scenes from Hollywood movies: Superman saving a railroad bridge from collapsing; Tyrone Power on a battleship; Sabu in fabled Arabian Night Adventures. Upon coming to Washington DC, I was eventually enrolled at the Corcoran Gallery of Art and there excelled in charcoals and pastels, winning a number of prizes, which gave me greater self-confidence in the new environment of America.

In High School in New Rochelle, my best friend was the son of a German émigré Architect named Gunter Arndt, who had fled Nazi East Germany and having thus lost all his diplomas and credentials, being obliged to work first in a plywood glider factory, which informed him of the art of plywood technology. Eventually, he became a senior designer in a New York Architectural/Engineering Firm, and earned enough to renovate an old barn, where the family lived, on Long Island Sound. This wonderful man also kept a book of his lifelong dreams, which at the end of his life he carefully bound and presented to me—it was filled with joyous, mystical journeys, full of hand-drawn sketches of his search for inner illumination

and self-realization. However, long before that meaningful gift, it so happened, that my father's tenure at the United Nations had ended and they returned to Iran, but before that, it was arranged that I would continue my 11 and 12th years in New Rochelle High and live with the Arndts. During those 2 years, I helped the entire family to physically rebuild this barn from the inside out and became personally deeply appreciative and sensitive to the exactitude of millimetre measurements; the best practice of sawing wood; the unique differences of wood veneers and the hard work of rubbing lemon oil to bring out the inner shine of mahogany, whether it was on a wall panel or the floor boards of the small sailing boat they had. In School, I was naturally motivated to take Mechanical Drawing classes where I became proficient in hand lettering and the use of a 'T Square', triangle and compass. By graduation, I was attracted to continue my higher education in Architecture and earned an unheard of full Five-Year scholarship from the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects to attend the Carnegie Institute of Technology (CIT) in Pittsburgh, Pa. So, by the time I got to CIT at the age of 17, I was prepared.

Paul Schweiker was the new Dean of the School of Architecture at CIT (now Carnegie Mellon University) in 1956. He came from Yale where he had been Dean and brought with him Josef and Anni Albers,[5] who taught us Basic Design and the Bauhaus International School approach. My hand drawing and mechanical drawing skills immediately helped to distinguish me in the Freshman Year, but we had to compete with much older and more mature fellow students who were returning soldiers from the Korean War. We began with about 40, mainly male students, and upon graduation only 8 of the original entering class graduated the 5-year course. The dominant professional of the time in the school was Mies van der Rohe, who came to CIT in our junior year and greatly influenced many of the class. Although I admired his Barcelona Pavilion, I could not warm up to his international style minimalism that allowed him to design the Berlin National Library in black steel and glass, while repeating the very same form in the hot, humid climate of Havana, Cuba for the Bacardi Building, but in concrete. I remember asking him about this apparent dichotomy, which he shrugged off by claiming that 'Universal Space' trumped local context.

Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water Residence for the Kaufmann Family was somewhat nearby and our tour of it convinced some of us of this man's creative genius in 'placemaking' and the natural, sensuous use of materials. However, he had just completed the Guggenheim, which came as a shock to our puritan Miesian early exposure.

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[5]Josef Albers (1888–1976) was a German-American artist and educator, famous for his abstract paintings. He was invited by Walter Gropius to teach at the Bauhaus, where he became a professor. Under the Nazis he emigrated to the US and later held the post of professor at Yale University. Annelise (Anni) Albers (1899–1994) was a German-American textile artist, who ran several exhibitions worldwide. In 1925, Josef and Anni were married.

Other visiting critics included Fumihiko Maki, who was at that time in his 'Metabolist Period'[6]; the Mexican structural engineer, Felix Candela,[7] who freed us from orthogonal thinking; but for me, the perfect fit to my basic formation was Louis I. Kahn. His Newspaper Building near to Pittsburgh; his Richards Medical Laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania; the Trenton Bathhouse; and the wonderful charcoal and pastel travel drawings all attracted me tremendously.

By the 5th year, our Philosophy of Architecture teacher, the Austrian Architect Hans Vetter,[8] had started to penetrate into some of our psyche the merits of Hermeneutic Thinking, which also greatly helped me to appreciate Lou Kahn's work and words.

My history of architecture professor, Howard Salman, had given me the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem as my Senior Research Project to introduce me to my Islamic Heritage for the first time—this magnificent building built in 691 and as documented in such large portfolio formats by Ernest Richmond[9] or by A.C. Creswell[10] left a profound impression upon me, for its symbolism, architectural precedents and geometric perfection associated with this shell built over an ancient 'Foundation Stone' to which so many legends have been associated, was like a riddle that has to this day absorbed my attention.

And during this last year, I had to design a museum for the British figural painter, Francis Bacon, and his emotionally raw imagery. I remember that project as my strongest design, presented artistically on grey pastel paper with charcoal drawings. This was followed by a group Master Plan of a new town, for which I was selected as the lead designer.

Somehow, Le Corbusier had not made it to CIT at the time, and as a choice for Graduate School, I selected Harvard, where Jose Luis Sert and the CIAM team could instruct me regarding the merits and design approach of Corb's way.

The Graduate School of Design (GSD) was housed in Robinson Hall, a classical red brick edifice in Harvard Yard. We had a small class of 12 or so, most of whom graduated. Once again at 22, I found myself one of the youngest of the class, which was dominated by veterans who had had prior professional experience and had studied under Ralph Rapson,[11] and each had a very strong graphic ability. Our first

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[6]Fumihiko Maki is a Japanese architect (born 1925, Tokyo) and a member of Metabolism. Metabolism architecture advocated large-scale mega structures based on organic biological order.

[7]Felix Candela (1910–1997) was a Spanish-American famous for his contribution to the development of thin shells made out of reinforced concrete, known as *cascarones*.

[8]Professor Hans Vetter (1897–1963) was an Austrian architect and author.

[9]Ernest Tatham Richmond (15 August 1874–5 March 1955) was a British architect and worked in different places such as Egypt, Britain, France and the Holy Land. After the First World War he was recruited as Consulting Architect for Jerusalem.

[10]Sir Keppel Archibald Cameron Creswell (13 September 1879–8 April 1974) was an English architectural historian. He wrote and published extensively on Islamic Architecture in Egypt.

[11]Ralph Rapson (1914–2008) was an architect and educator. For several years he was the head of architecture at the University of Minnesota. He was an advocate of the modernist style and Bauhaus principles.

assignment was to design a Place of Worship—I chose a small mosque in a garden, with a particular design expression close to that of Lou Kahn. Professor Jerzy Soltan,[12] who taught with Sert and had been a close associate of Corb, liked the work and selected it as one of two to receive special merit—I knew then that I was secure in my path. The highlights of the GSD period were developing a close friendship with Dean Sert and conversations about how one can carry one's cultural heritage within one's soul—something Sert accomplished so well in his Courtyard House in Cambridge; visits to the New York Studio of Constantine Nivola, the sculptor friend of Sert's; but the most significant was Corbu's one and only visit to Harvard for the design of the Carpenter Art Center. The latter acquainted us more firmly with Corb's theory of design, although, in retrospect, the Carpenter Center today looks totally out of context, neither urbanistically working functionally with its site, nor environmentally with the cold climate, nor culturally with the architectural heritage of New England and Harvard Campus. Amazingly, Corb had built almost the same building in Chandigarh. Once again, similar to Mies, the modernist disregard for local culture and environmental context made me uneasy. Perhaps Corb's Chandigarh project was fit for its purpose/context, but fundamentally he was an Iconic form designer. However, Corb remains an enigma, as his Ronchamp Chapel still has a strong, emotional, mystically aesthetic appeal to me.

Once you returned to Iran, how was the academic and professional atmosphere? Was there any interaction between the architecture in Iran and the architecture of the world, and did the progressive universities have any influence on the domestic educational and professional institutions? What understanding held sway at the time, regarding traditional and modern architecture?

In the *Encyclopedia Iranica* article on Iran during this period, I commenced by a quote from the architectural historian Siegfried Gideon [who] wrote: 'History is not a compilation of facts, but an insight into a moving process of life' (Siegfried Gideon, *Space, Time and Architecture*); and continued: 'As this is a review of architecture during nearly four decades, it may be instructive to also review the four major architectural trends or theories that were also in play worldwide that impacted Iran during this period'. They commenced with the influence of the École des Beaux-Arts in France, where many of the Iranian architects studied and whose teachers helped establish the first school of architecture in Tehran. Next to come was the International Style of the Modern movement in architecture, which had a minor influence in the first of these four decades, but grew steadily to replace the Beaux-Arts school. Subsequently, the postmodern movement and then the Critical Regionalism approaches in the late 1970s influenced architectural thinking in Iran.

After my two years as the architect of the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) in the fields, during which time I had the opportunity to come to know the better consultants in Tehran, in 1966 I moved with my wife and two children to Tehran, where I became a senior member of the small architectural office of Aziz

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[12]Jerzy Soltan (1913–2005) was a Polish architect, who worked with Le Corbusier, and was Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at Harvard University, Graduate School of Design.

Farmanfarmaian. Aziz was recognized as one of the leading figures of the profession, an École des Beaux-Arts graduate who had until then taught at The Faculty of Fine Arts, Tehran University. But about that time, the dominance of the French-educated Iranian architects at the universities was slowly being replaced by the returning Italian, British and American graduates. Thus, Dean Houshang Seyhoun, noted French-educated architect of unique talent, was being replaced by Dr. Dariush Mirfenderski[13] at Tehran University and the educational curriculum was undergoing related revisions, which continued under Dean Dr. Mehdi Kowsar. Melli University (National University) was experiencing a similar transition.

This cultural transition was a pervasive result of the post-WWII influence of America in Iranian politics, economy and media that replaced pre-WWII influence of Germany and France in Iran. In architecture, the Beaux-Arts approach to design still carried great weight with such noted architects as Mohsen Foroughi having designed Mehrabad Airport; Ghiai[14] designing the New Senate Building, and Farmanfarmaian designing the Iranian Pavilion for the Montreal Expo in the vernacular of a caravansari embellished in blue glazed faience.

You have mentioned that 'the truth which was talked about in Harvard was different than truth of Iranian culture' (Ardalan 2006). This interpretation seems to be rooted in your mutual experience of the West and the East. What is the reason for this difference?

'Form Follows Function' has been attributed to the great Chicago Architect, Louis Sullivan, but this notion also pervaded much of architectural discourse in the post-WWII era of the West (Harvard GSD included). Up to the 1970s, function was defined as only relating to mechanical utility and technology. The philosophic belief of 'Modernism' and the 'International Style' had stripped out any need for reference to the natural environment or regional culture. These considerations had no functional role in design. During the period in question, this was the 'truth' not only at Harvard, but generally for Western architects, with the rare exception of F.L. Wright or some European architects such as Alvar Aalto and the climatic adaptation researches of Victor Olgyay (*Design with Climate*, 1963). However, during the same period the traditional acceptance in the East that adaptation to nature and indigenous culture were a necessity to survival and such figures as the Egyptian, Hassan Fathy, were living examples of it.

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[13]Mohammad Amin (Dariush) Mirfenderski (1931–2009) was an Iranian architect and educator. He graduated from the University of Florence. From 1968 to 1971 he held the post of Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Tehran. During this period, he revised the curriculum for architectural studies and gave it a new direction that was continued by the subsequent Italian trained Iranian Architect Dr. Mehdi Kowsar.

[14]Heydar Ghiai (1922–1985) was a pioneer of modern architecture in Iran, who studied architecture at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Tehran and at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris (1948–53). After his return to Iran he held the post of Professor at the University of Tehran. He designed and built a number of private and public projects.

You have been active in both fields of design and theory, but one may say that the theoretical aspect is more colourful than the practical one. Would you like personally to be referred to as an architect or as an architectural theorist?

In my opinion, design and theory are complementary to one another. Since 1962 when I designed my first building as a designer at SOM San Francisco, on the University of California Berkeley Campus, I have maintained over the last 50 years my professional activity as a design architect. My record shows more than one hundred designed building projects ranging from an entire town to at least 20 built architectural projects to even a series of custom designed chairs. I think that a third topic—research—is also vital to be placed along with design and theory. Without research into both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of planning, design and technology, one cannot be at the cutting edge of architecture.

Do you think that in the Muslim world as well as Iran design and practice need more attention or architectural theory?

In my experience, most architects in the Muslim world, particularly up to the twentieth century, were more focused upon practice and the more noted relied upon Western thinkers to generate their theory. Only when research, documentation and analysis of traditional patterns of regional architecture of the Muslim world, which has only taken place in some of these countries in the last 30/40 years, have a few of these architects developed enough working knowledge and self-confidence in principles of their traditions to begin to nurture theories based upon the integration of their regional architectural heritage, contemporary opportunities and world thinking. Hassan Fathy in Egypt, Rifat Chadirji in Iraq,[15] Mohammad Karim Pirnia[16] in Iran were some of the few who attempted to develop theories relevant to their Muslim cultures. We still have a long way to go to reach a mature, innovative Critical Regionalism of distinction that has a sense of identity for geographically diverse Muslim societies.

In your works and thought, the theory developed by Seyyed Hossein Nasr is very present. What is behind your attention to the philosophical thinking of Nasr, and to what extent has your architectural thought been influenced by his philosophy?

Architecture is the most holistic of the arts, as it encompasses a working and applied knowledge of environment, culture, practical function and scientific technology. Therefore, a philosophic framework for conceptualizing the mystery of ultimate reality is required in order to conceive a project in its broadest frame. This conceptual construct has received the best of world thinking since recorded times. Over these many years, I personally have learned to trust and rely on an experiential knowledge approach to glimpse this ultimate reality, as brilliantly formulated by Martin Heidegger, but previously conceived by the twelfth century Persian visionary, Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, who holistically engaged in a 'Trinal

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[15]Rifat Kamil Chadirji (born 1926) is an Iraqi architect and author. His works advocate a type of regional Modernism.

[16]Mohammad Karim Pirnia (1922–1998) was an Iranian architect, historian and educator. He has extensively written and researched the history and technology of traditional Iranian architecture.

Knowledge' approach that combined philosophy, metaphysics and logic. This multifaceted framework he termed 'The Red Intellect' (*Agl Surkh*). For me to become informed and better aware of such a framework, it has taken me through a long search that has included readings of the classic thinkers/poets from Hermes to Plato, Ibn Arabi and Mowlana; to contemporary Abstract Artists from Kandinsky to Rothko; and observance and discussions about ultimate reality with many remarkable individuals, such as my father (Abbas Gholi Ardalan, a man who observed his daily prayers, was a London School of Economics graduate and served in high senior positions in the fields of finance in Iran and the UN); my early teachers from Architect Gunter Arndt; Professor Hans Vetter; Louis Khan, who believed: *Your intuition is your most exacting sense; it is your most reliable sense;* the many years of extremely valuable study on Sufism with Dr. Hossein Nasr and Zen Buddhism with Dr. Toshiko Izutsu; intimate discussions on the topic with the two women to whom I have been married; friendship with my client Pir Vilayat Khan,[17] Master of the Chishti Sufi Order[18] of the West; and the continuing, many close encounters with architect friends, young and old, from all faiths, who have shared with me their mystical quest in life through architecture. Therefore, the quest has been very personal and broad, coloured by insights gained from many people— the unity is the perennial, intuitive, mystical interpretation of life, but structured with a philosophic and logical frame that has allowed my 'Creative Imagination' to blossom.

Archetypes are very significant for you and are of fundamental themes of your thought. In fact, archetypes are either formless or capable of being formed differently. Here the question is whether archetypes are reproducible forever? Can we take benefit from them in the time of globalization and internet without being reactionary?

YES! Here I would like to provide you with two references to the significance of archetypes and timeless truth, as I personally understand them:

'Archetypes are the essential forms (*suwar*) of the Divine Names. All things in the phenomenal world come into existence depending upon the level of preparedness to meet the essence of their Archetype'. Toshihiko Izutsu[19]

'There is nothing more timely today than that truth which is timeless, than the message that comes from tradition and is relevant now because it has been relevant at all times'. Seyyed Hossein Nasr.[20]

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[17]Vilayat Inayat Khan (1916–2004) was an acknowledged Pir of the Chishti Sufi Order of India and a graduate of the Sorbonne in philosophy, who following in the footsteps of his father, brought Sufism to the West. He commissioned Ardalan to design the 'Universal', a place of multifaith meditation in Suresnes, Paris in 1984. (Nader Ardalan).

[18]The Chishti Order belongs to the mystic Sufi tradition of Islam, one its places of origin may have been Chisht, a small town near Herat, Afghanistan, about 930 AD.

[19]Izutsu (1984).

[20]Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Foreword to *The Sense of Unity* by Ardalan and Bakhtiar. (Nader Ardalan).

As an architect, I view material forms as finite and the expression of archetypes as infinite. I sense the creative potential of the formless to be vital and 'pregnant' with possibilities. My creative imagination sees the structure of the reality of the universe as hierarchic, tiered in ascending levels from the materially measurable to levels only sensed by our intuition. Because the Absolute, through the world of archetypes, is the formless source of all creativity, 'it is possible to accept plurality as alternative voices in which the Absolute speaks to be understood by different audiences'.[21] Thus globalization and the advent of the Internet are only modes and tools by which the Absolute is made manifest. The key is remembrance of the source of this inspiration.

You have said that your interest in 'mandala' is that the essence of this notion is the reintegration of the elements with the whole, and you reflected on a society in which the history of thought and architecture has been fragmented and has to reach to a new synthesis (Ardalan 2005). *What do you mean by this fragmentation and disjunction? Is it a formal or conceptual one? How should this synthesis be and what should be synthesized?*

The 'Mandala' conception, as formed in the 1970s for me had three scales of concern: Global, Iran[ian] and individual:

Globally, the West dominated the world mindset ('Westoxification') and Eastern traditions or intellection, with particular relation to Iranian world views, were hardly considered of equal value from a Western point of view. Therefore, there was much disintegration and dysfunction in the ability of world cultures to hold a balanced, equitable dialogue with one another.

In Iran, there was a similar breakdown between different aspects of the society—between the 'moderns', the traditionalists and the common villagers.

Within the Individual, this lack of unity showed itself in people's life motivations—between material determinism and spiritual illumination; between Islamic value systems of morality versus contemporary moral and ethical values; in architecture between international style versus regional vernacular.

Everything seemed to exist in fragments of disconnection, therefore in my view, there was a great need for the scattered elements of these three scales to move towards a greater sense of unity—thus the Mandala symbol could serve as a meaningful mantra or focus for re-integration, especially in architecture.

Louis Kahn has always been your favourite figure. Please elaborate on his approach to Tradition and Modernity from two perspectives: from an international perspective, namely the peculiarity of his approach at the international level, and from a domestic viewpoint, what his architectural thought could offer to Iranian architects and architecture.

In the 1970 Isfahan Conference, Lou Kahn began his lecture with this quote of a Mowlana Poem, entitled 'The Beauty Within':

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[21]Smith (2003).

T'was a fair orchard, full of trees, fruit, vines and greenery

a Sufi there sat with eyes closed, his head upon his knee,

sunk deep in meditation mystical

"Why", asked another, "dost thou not behold

these signs of God the merciful displayed

around thee, which he bids us to contemplate?"

"The signs," he replied, "I behold within.

Without is naught but symbols of the signs."

The 'Batin/Zahir' (Hidden/Manifest) aspect of what Lou believed resonated with my beliefs about ultimate reality and its manifestation in architecture. In Lou's later writings, sketches and built work, his attention to the inner hidden space, illuminated with a transcendent light, dominated his designs. The exterior was merely a reflection of the inner quest. This is not only an Iranian quest, but a metaphysical quest that the history of humankind has witnessed, but ever since the European Enlightenment and Cartesian dominance of Logic to the exclusion of any other mode of comprehending the world, has been progressively pushed out of world consciousness. Lou therefore, demonstrated how to regain the beauty of the 'Within' in Architecture.

Subsequently, I had the good fortune to have Lou write a letter of support of our manuscript of *The Sense of Unity* to the University of Chicago confirming our conceptual approach. This was followed in 1973 when Kahn invited me to become the Iranian associate for the Abbas Abad Master Plan Project that he and Kenzo Tange were commissioned by the Queen to prepare. Regrettably for Iran, Lou died suddenly in 1974 and the project was later given to others. I was very much involved with him as he sought to bring a sense of transcendence to his architecture and a lot of my buildings have characteristics of Louis Kahn's thinking.

Referring to the words of Le Corbusier where he writes 'In every field of industry, new problems have presented themselves and new tools have been created capable of resolving them. If this new fact be set against the past, then there has been a revolution', you have contrasted the Western notion of time against the Persian/Islamic conception of time, arguing that the Western notion dominates much of the contemporary view of time (Ardalan 1974). *It seems you believe that Le Corbusier´s world is essentially coloured by the linear idea of time. What are these differences? Is this Persian notion of time applicable in the contemporary world of Iranians? What can this Persian notion offer to architecture?*

Corb was an enigmatic creator. To conceive and perpetuate the *Ville Radieuse* that put man in iconic objects of architecture isolated from nature was a travesty, while his Ronchamp was a mystical act of transcendent excellence. He was a showman and the linearity of his statements to dump the past into the garbage, was principally motivated to allow him to perpetuate his own new creations.

Your first architectural works in Masjid-Suleiman and your cooperation with Ghirshman[22] granted you some knowledge and a base for your later endeavours. What was this knowledge and how did it affect your future architectural thought?

Ghirshman allowed me to witness the precious care with which archaeologists value history—so patiently with artist paintbrushes did his team brush away the thousands' years of dust from a threshold stone of a Parthian ruin in Bard I Neshandeh near Masjid-Suleiman in Khuzestan. Before that huge stone was lifted, Ghirshman said to me, 'We may find gold coins below this stone dating the foundation date of this temple'. Sure enough, there were two such coins that marked the foundation date. The two impressions this event has left upon me: first, the value history can place on architecture—so do great buildings that might warrant remembrance in history; second, the love of ruins—the memory of how grand humankind thought and built—the importance of recording the past, analysis and synthesis of principles that can guide realizations for the future—the timelessness of great ideas.

Architecturally, this experience inspired my design of the 100,000 seat earthen stadium (*Azadi* Stadium in Tehran) that I designed in 1968 with Aziz Farmanfarmaian for the Asian Games (Fig. 4.5). The Elamite brick ziggurat form of Choga Zanbil, third century BC, that Ghirshman had documented and that I had personally inspected, provided me with both a historic Iranian precedent image and a brick technique that was used to cover the surface of the vast earthen mound of the stadium. The sense of the monumental that *Azadi* Stadium inspires is of a similar order. Of course, this was one of many considerations that went into the design of that project that allowed the past to be integrated in a new creation in the twentieth century.[23]

Here I would like to concentrate on the book The Sense of Unity. *How did you arrive at the idea of working on this book? What was the reason and urgency driving this work, and what existing gaps was it intended to fill?*

The University of Chicago had received a grant from Iran to build a Middle East Studies Center on their Campus. For the building inauguration, they wanted to publish a book about Iranian Architecture. I was recommended to be its author, as by 1969 I was already researching with my students at Tehran University the traditional cities and architecture of Iran. However, these investigations had all been of a quantitative nature—they told me of 'What'—photographs, measurements of buildings and historical readings of benefactors. I needed to penetrate deeper into the 'Why' and the 'Who'. This took another 2 years of study of Persian miniatures, carpets, music, poetry and finally of Sufism. It was after this search that the

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[22]Roman Ghirshman (1895–1979) was a French archaeologist specializing in Iranian archaeology. He carried out excavations in different historic sites of Iran, including *Teppe Sialk* and *Choga Zanbil,* published in the book *The Arts of Ancient Iran, Golden Press*, 1964.

[23]Aryamehr Olympic Complex (now Azadi Sport Complex) was designed in Aziz Farmanfarmaian's office to host 1975 Asian Games. Farmanfarmaian gives more details on the architectural concepts and construction challenges in an interview available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i1AEBUOal6o&t=1745s.
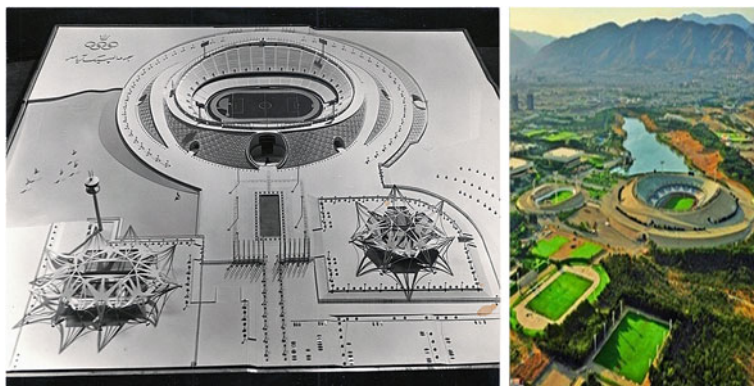
Fig. 4.5 Azadi Sports Stadium—original design model 1968 and current view of sports centre with man-made lake nourishing a green, recreational park to the west of Tehran (Nader Ardalan)

manuscript really took shape and the content began to live and resonate with me. By the time I delivered in 1971 the manuscript to William Polk in the F.L.Wright Robie House (at the very same instant that Hassan Fathy, totally unknown to me then, brought his *Architecture for the Poor*),[24] civil unrest and demonstrations against the Shah on the Chicago Campus put an end to the building idea, which was never built, but the book *Sense of Unity* was published in 1973.

It seems that this book has been more interesting for those traditionalists who wanted to revere and honour tradition. Is this as the result of a 'misreading' of the book by the traditionalists, or this was the goal of the book from the beginning?

The subjects and concepts in *The Sense of Unity* (SU) deal with what may be more correctly termed Perennial, which transcends time. Therefore, the frozen, backward-looking notion of Tradition that you imply is not at all what I had in mind.

You may be interested to know two facts about this book: first, SU is used, even today, in most of the schools of architecture in the Middle East, including both Sunni and Shia countries, including Saudi Arabia, where I was recently lecturing; second, many American and European architects use this book as a main reference for their designs in Islamic countries. I also believe that secularist rationalists have a misguided opinion of SU and it may be their 'misreading' of the intentions and content of SU that have tried to create a biased limitation from their empirical one-dimensionality.

One may argue that one of the reasons for this one-dimensional reading by this range of readers is that they have paid less attention to the concepts of Ta´wil (Hermeneutics) and Khalq-I Jadid *(New Creation). How can these concepts help us*

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[24]*Architecture for the Poor*, published in 1973, was written by the Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy (1900–1989). In this book, he explains his plan for building the village of New Gourna, using indigenous materials and construction technologies.

to discard one-dimensionality, and what can they promise to Iranian contemporary architecture and architects?

By the way, my experience has shown over the last 40 years that the 'range of readers' who do actively practice *Ta'wil* are the minority and the majority who do not practice *Ta'wil* are either mainly found in the more fundamentalist camp, who are straight-jacketed in orthodox thinking, where it is safe to either accept the Quran as written and practice no interpretation or they are rational Positivist agnostics or atheists who deny the existence of any value in seeking a spiritual interpretation. My own personal experience has been that I paid my dues and learned the scientific and technical aspects of my architectural profession; then studied the traditional architecture of Iran and Islam and orthodox religious teachings; then studied the more poetic, metaphysical interpretations of the great mystical thinkers of Islam, such as Ibn Arabi, Mowlana (Rumi), Suhrawardi; or the Far Eastern thinkers presented to me through writings and studies with Professor Toshiko Izutsu; or the more contemporary writings of Carl Jung on the unconscious; Joseph Campbell on world mythology; and Keith Critchlow[25] on geometry and many others; and then after having absorbed as much of all the preceding teachings as I could, I simply followed my 'Bliss' to innovate and self-realize my own New Creations. This is the continuing journey that I share, but do not hold up as a model for anyone else to follow. Whatever this path is, it is my trace as an open book.

In this book, one can obviously observe the philosophy, language and terminology of Seyyed Hossein Nasr as well as various references to his texts. Normally he is understood as a traditionalist in the field of philosophy. Are you satisfied if you similarly are understood as traditionalist in the field of architecture?

Apparently, you have not understood my design philosophy and are misrepresenting it. I do not consider myself a traditionalist in architecture.

Personally and as demonstrated by my works and writing, I consider myself an innovative, contemporary Iranian Architect that values timeless, perennial principles of thought and contemporary opportunities of the twenty-first century, following my four basic principles of design in architectural expression, contingent upon the limitations placed upon me by the constraints of the client and circumstances of the project.

What is the role of man's five senses in the process of perception? Is this only related to what you have referred to as tazhbih *as indicated before?*

If you wish that I initiate a new book on these questions, it will require a few more years to respond adequately in depth.

What was the traditional understanding of the body and how it was related to cosmology and symbolism? Is this understanding in contrast to the modern approach in which the human body is a separated subject capable of observing surrounding objects?

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[25]Keith Barry Critchlow (born 1933) is an architect, artist and writer, Professor of Islamic Art at the Royal College of Art, London, and Professor Emeritus at The Prince's School of Traditional Art in London. He is an expert in sacred geometry and architecture, and has published extensively on this subject, including *Islamic Patterns: An Analytical and Cosmological Approach* (1983).

There is a basic problem in our conversation that we need to clarify before progressing any further. Your questions have been all framed so there is a dichotomy created between the past and the present, between Tradition and Modernity. We do not have to fall into this 'mental trap' that perpetuates conflict and opposition. In my view of the 'eternal present', there are ascending levels of consciousness in both history and in our present life that can allow an integration of many stages of societies' worldviews. In the SU, we compared this ancient Iranian civilization 'to a great tree, with its roots entrenched firmly in the immutable soil of metaphysical truth and its trunk extending heavenwards'… 'With the advent of Islam and its historic development in Iran, a new cycle in this "tree" form was manifested that illuminated its total form and allowed the realization of the transcendent quality of previous societies'. Similarly, today in the twenty-first century, there are many new levels of realizations and consciousness that can be meaningfully integrated into the growth of this tree, while maintaining its unity.

Duality is the problem—the separation of man from nature; the sacred from the profane, when so much cutting-edge science and philosophy today informs us that the subject is not separated from the object—they are simultaneously and integrally intertwined—please refer to the philosophic thoughts of Ananda Coomaraswamy[26] or Huston Smith.[27]

Most of the references in the book are to the texts of major Sufis, mystics and thinkers, but without any reference to a single architect's thought, based on the argument that Asnaf *(guilds) were influenced by Sufis' thought. However, in the field of architecture there was a range of construction workers doing different jobs from a simple worker to carpenters, painters and masters who were not necessarily aware of this transcendental knowledge. Is there enough historical evidence to convince the scholastic sphere that the* mimars *and masters were aware of this knowledge and their practice intended to manifest the sense of unity? Does there remain any reliable text, treatise that could clarify this?*

Recent scholarship has allowed better understanding of the Safavid architectural heritage of Isfahan and confirmation of many of their Sufi based concepts documented in the Sense of Unity that were very evident to those familiar with the poetry and literature of the times. I sought to read the hidden, profound meanings in the traditional architecture of Iran, with a particular focus on Safavid Isfahan. It is now further documented that this path of investigation was valid.

New research studies have shown that one would need to start in Ardabil and the Khanagah and Shrine Complex of Shaikh Safi Al-Din (1252–1334), who was the Kurdish eponymous founder of the Shia Safaviya order of Sufism.[28] According to the *Sawat al-Safa* by Ebn-I Bazzaz, the Shrine was built in 1334. It was expanded and enhanced in the sixteenth century by successive Safavid rulers, culminating in the seventeenth century by Shah Abbas I. UNESCO in 2010 placed the shrine

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[26]Lipsey (1977).

[27]Smith (2003).

[28]Rizvi (2011) and Canby (2009).

complex in its prestigious World Heritage List,[29] along with the many previously registered seventeenth century monuments of Isfahan.

The Ardabil model, although of II Khanid and Timurid architectural language, in essence served programmatically and physically as the urban paradigm for the later and much grander Isfahan urban complex built by Shah Abbas I. They inspired certain architectural forms, geometric surface patterns, colour systems and calligraphic messages that conveyed key Safaviya Sufi philosophy and symbolism that is found in the later seventeenth century version in the capital city of Isfahan. According to verbal narrations, visible evidences and field studies, all decorative elements of the Ardabil ensemble, including inscriptions served both an aesthetic function and mystical notions and philosophy of *Safaviya Tariqat.*[30] Scholarship has documented that the *Tariqat* Credo was based upon a combination of selected features from the schools of thought of Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi and Jalal al-Din Rumi, all of whom featured pivotally in the Isfahan School of Islamic Philosophy under Shah Abbas I.

Of specific value to the study of this architecture is the historic fact that the chief advisors to Shah Abbas I in the cultural renaissance of Iran and the development of Isfahan were Shaikh-i Bahai Ameli (1547–1621) and Mir Damad (1543–1631). Both   were scholars, philosophers, architects,   mathematicians, astronomers and poets who are considered the main co-founders of Isfahan School of Islamic Philosophy. Shaikh Ameli also appears in the chain of both the Nurbakhshi and Nematollahi Sufi orders. In the work called *Resla fel-waḥda al-wojudiya,* an exposition of the Ibn Arabi concept of *Wahdat al-Wujud* (Unity of Existences), he states that the Sufis are the only true believers. A number of architectural and engineering designs are attributed to his direct influence, including the *Naqsh-e Jahan* Square, *Masjid-e Shaikh Lutfallah* and the *Chahar Bagh* of Isfahan, while the *Masjed-e Shah* is attributed to the Illuminist influence of Mir Damad and realized by the architect Ostad Ali Akbar Esfahani.

Of course, the tradition of the Master/Apprentice relationship in craft guilds for the transfer of both profane and profound knowledge of the craft was unwritten (*Sineh be Sineh*), but as documented above certain texts do exist. For other references, see Andre Paccard—*Traditional Islamic Craft in Moroccan Architecture*, and the research by Professor Gülru Necipoğlu at Harvard on the Topkapi Scrolls. Private books by contemporary Iranian mimars have been presented to me for my library, and personal conversations with Sufi masters of craft guilds have reinforced my understanding of the Hermeneutic and Metaphysical dimensions of the tradition-based creative process.

To what extend are the principles and claims of The Sense of Unity *still valid for you?*

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[29]See: whc.unesco.org/uploads/nominations/1345.pdf. (Nader Ardalan).

[30]Literally meaning path or way, *Tariqat* refers to mystical and spiritual teachings and practices of a school or order of Sufism and symbolizes the journey towards God.

They are eternally and perennially valid for those who have eyes to see. For the last 6 years a growing number of leading international architects, both professionals and academicians, have come together to deal with the transcendent in architecture as a fundament to meaningful architecture and have researched and documented this vital aspect of architecture. One such group, of which I am a member, is the International Forum of Architecture, Spirituality and Culture that today numbers more than 350 members who actively research, teach and publish on the spiritual dimension of architecture and design in peer-reviewed journals and in books by highly acclaimed scholarly publishers such as Routledge, Ashgate and others.[31] Leading architects, such as Pritzker Prize winner Peter Zumthur, Tadao Ando or Juhani Pallasmaa practice architecture in this manner.

You have expressed the idea that it is invalid to set the East and the West in contrast (Ardalan 2000), *but rather, it is necessary to link them to each other. Does this imply that there is no difference or contradiction between them? Isn't there really any contrast? How about this saying of yours concerning the difference between 'the truth in Harvard and the truth of Iranian culture'* (Ardalan 2006)?

You are putting my words and thoughts out of context. Consider the analogy of the image of a wheel—at the perimeter there is multiplicity—vast differences, while the spokes of the wheel begin to gather certain commonalities, which culminate at the hub, where there is common ground. Look for the transcendent common ground of all *Homo sapiens*. The transcendent unity of all spiritually based cultures has been a major theme of many great thinkers, including the American Transcendentalist movement of Ralph Waldo Emerson[32] in the nineteenth century to the history of *naturphilosophen* movements of Germany[33] and, of course, to many Sufi traditions and the Perennialism movement in the twentieth century.[34]

This is definitely not to imply that the rationalist reductive movements since the Industrial Revolution are compatible with spiritual traditions. The reductive movement in 'Modern Architecture' that commenced after WWI in Europe was very consciously stripped of any cultural or spiritual references. It was effectively defined in 1932 by historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock and the architect Philip Johnson, director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, when they coined the phrase 'International Style' for the MOMA Exhibition.[35]

You have talked about the 'unity of cultures expressed in the diverse architectural traditions of the world' (Ardalan 2002). *What are the common themes of this unity? Are they really rigorous enough to unite this pluralistic contemporary world? You have referred to the Persian carpet in which various and different forces come together in a central point and grant peace, arguing that in a similar way we do need a kind of unity in this complex world to avoid being overwhelmed*

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[31]See: www.acsforum.org. (Nader Ardalan).

[32]Emerson (2013).

[33]Foster (2011).

[34]Houman (2014).

[35]Hitchcock and Johnson (1997).

with the details (Ardalan 2000). *Can this metaphor provide us with a model for unity?*

Perhaps, so far it has helped me to plough through the waters of different cultural seas with integrity. It really depends upon the genuineness and level of consciousness of the search. By common themes, traditional forms, one should not consider their outward material image, but their essential ontological symbolism. The archetypal themes of garden, socle, gateway or sacred place can have different architectural expressions depending upon their geographic/cultural context, but their symbolic message remains the same.

In your opinion 'Tradition continues but changes and progresses' (Ardalan 2000). *But this continuity never happened in Iran… Nor in the West otherwise, the dyad of Tradition and Modernity would never have emerged. Is Modernity (and Modernism in architecture) really an extension of Tradition? Then how can an extension of a phenomenon deny itself? Do you believe in a break from Tradition in the contemporary architecture of Iran?*

This statement does not contradict my earlier comments. The continuity of the *Chahar-Taq,* as one form example: from pre-Islamic to post-Islamic Iran is a continuity of thousands of years, but with very different manifestations and materiality of expression. The difference between the traditional view and the so-called modern view is that the former is vertically (ontologically ascending), while the latter is flat (horizontally materially) conceived—please do not just limit yourself to the short span of the last half of twentieth century, where many Iranians, including architects, lost all sense of their transcendent identity and got lost in 'anything goes' materiality. Why limit this question to just architecture?

In your survey on the mosque, you have concluded that some major elements of mihrab, *minaret, gateway, courtyard, portico, place of ablution, plinth and dome constitute the 'natural Islamic language of visual forms for mosque design'* (Ardalan 1980a: 22). *Do you mean that any new design without some of these essential elements may transgress this natural language and thus is not a true mosque anymore? Shall all the designs have these elements in some way? Does a mosque without dome and minaret belong to a foreign language? Doesn't this approach restrict the creativity?*

'Natural Islamic language of visual forms for mosque design' is very clear that there are different bioclimatic/cultural zones of the Islamic World—each has a set of perennial forms relevant to that zone. The dome, therefore, may not be the prerequisite of all the bioclimatic/cultural zones. My analysis, which was in part carried out with Professor Renata Holod of the University of Penn, a former student of Professor Oleg Grabar, Islamic Scholar of Harvard, documents factual, formal patterns of forms recorded in over a 1000 year history. At the MIT Aga Khan Workshop, when we were setting up this programme in the early 1980s, I gave the AKA class the studio project to design a place of worship of your own. The students were from many different parts of the Muslim world—ranging from South East Asia to North Africa. Upon submission of their design projects, it was clearly evident that each student brought with him the accumulated memory of their particular heritage and true to my analysis, their designs reflected the prototypical

patterns documented in my study. I request, if you are going to refer to my writings, please do not misquote or partially quote these writings. The basis of my thinking deals with Archetypes, which allow flexibility and multiplicity of design interpretations, while maintaining a continuity of symbolic meaning.

Now let us focus on your architectural works. In the Iran Centre for Management Studies (ICMS) what was your attention to the locally available materials and craftsmen? What had this tendency to do with the traditional architecture of Iran?

There was a Brick Revolution in the Seljuk Period of Iran which generated one of the great architectural periods of world architecture, reaching its heights in such buildings as those of the Masjid Jame of Isfahan. From the clay beds of the alluvial fans of Iran, wondrous creations from clay pottery to great domes had been formed. In ICMS, I wanted to deal with this raw material as the primary language and grammar for its realization; also the material and the masonry trade was readily available and inexpensive; socioculturally, it represented the common man's material, which was a social statement that my client and friend, Habib Ladjevardi, and I wished to make for the new commercial businessmen who would inhabit this campus.

From the tectonics point of view, there exists a kind of harmony between the new and old construction technology, where the load-bearing brick is surrounded by concrete barrel vaults and concrete bond beams. What was the reason for using the old method of load-bearing brick, despite the accessibility of advanced technology at the time of construction? This may encourage us to give it a symbolic meaning—which you are very interested in—for example suggesting that technology and Modernity frame the Tradition.

My structural engineer Zareh Gregorian (also a former Harvard Alumnus) and I agreed that the optimum of Tradition and Modernity should generate our formal/functional expression. Tehran is in a highly seismic zone and this was a place of public assembly, which had to meet best practice for seismic design and safety. Therefore, the one-storey residential courtyards were principally brick load-bearing walls with barrel vaults of concrete. The barrel vault shape was not only chosen for its structural efficiency but also because it is a 'cool shape'-meaning that the sun hits one side of it while the other is in shade. Placing a brick veneer over the waterproof membrane provided further heat insulation while maintaining the brick aesthetic over the barrel vaults. In fact, the whole idea of the courtyard and angled geometry was motivated also by sustainability—the desire to create maximum shade and shadow to obtain a cool microclimate (Fig. 4.6). The central library, however, was two-storeys high and with large spans that lent itself to a concrete frame with beams and columns, allowing the brick to be only infill, while showing its non- load-bearing design by the patterned form.

Please explain the role of the existing topography in the spatial organization of the project. Did you listen to the voice of the land? What it offered to you? Was the final spatial configuration the result of the imposition of the project onto the topography, or the topography's imposition onto the project?

Fig. 4.6 Iran Center for
Management Studies (now
Imam Sadegh University)
Tehran, residential/study unit
around central garden court
(Nader Ardalan)

Several principles dictated the site plan: the walled garden concept on a hilltop; the optimum solar/air orientation of the garden would be longer in the east/west direction with the Alborz Mountain range to the north and Tehran to the south; the basic concept that the garden would be naturally irrigated by gravity with the highest place for the water reservoir, the garden at midpoint and the lower levels terraced to receive trees and agriculture; the courtyard paradigm for residences; brick as the language of expression. So we worked closely with the nature of the place to understand and realize its Genius Loci.

One may observe a hierarchy of light in this complex, from the main courtyard to the private rooms. You have written about the cosmological, spiritual, as well as physical significance of light in your texts. How did you try to manifest and convert these implications in this project?

Light was the maker of spaces at different scales: the Chahar Bagh walls contained the cosmic sky as its roof—sun by day, moon/stars by night; residential courts the same on a smaller scale; the residential rooms have natural light by the study desks filtered by a central magnolia tree and wooded shutters personally controlled for levels of light and privacy; a place of teaching centrally illuminated by skylights; a place of gathering/dining with central illumination over a pool of water; a reservoir of knowledge—the library with open yet shaded eyes to the garden and a central oculus of light over a spiralling stair.

This hierarchy of light, when it comes to the interior spaces, particularly the rooms, seems to be somehow disturbing and insufficient, as has been reported in the 'Technical Review Summary' of 1989 by Aztilla Yucel. What is more important, a conceptual approach or functional issues?

That was his personal, subjective observation—the rooms all had ample illumination—three windows—one by each desk, one between the beds and two clear story lights.

In this work, were you more interested in direct references to tradition (its formal as well as spiritual dimension) or indirect references to it? Which kind of reference is more observable?

This was my first building experiment after having written *Sense of Unity* and I was interested in the application of my theoretical studies to a real project that demanded functional space usage, which by statements by the faculty and students met both function and theory. Reference is made to the MIT AKA workshop text on ICMS by Professor B. Kassarjian.[36]

The interior design of the Madrasa is more a 'gathering place' than a 'listening place', where the seats follow an octagonal geometry which encourages discussion and exchange. Does this imply a new way of relationship between the teacher and the student, or a modern interpretation of the traditional relationship between Moallem and Talaba?

This followed the prescribed Harvard Business School Classroom Model and also happened to encourage the 'discussion model'.

In contrast to the ICMS, in the administrative building of Behshahr Industrial Group, formal references to the past and tradition are hidden, though the central courtyard pattern has been used in both of them. This has been intensified by the modern construction technology of the concrete prefabrication system. What was the idea behind this approach?

The owners of the Behshahr Company were originally from Kashan and had their Tehran office originally in the Bazaar in a Timcheh[37] type space. I just transferred the Timcheh into a Caravansarai courtyard space, but stepped as inspired by the Madrasah/Mosque of Agha Bozorg in Kashan.[38] The structure and materiality of the building came from the fact that I had recently introduced to Iran the precast concrete industrial building technology (Shock-Beton from Holland), which I had used in the two Saman Towers. This system allowed modularity, open spans and the scale of a modern office building, but one that evoked aspects of an Iranian sense of placemaking.

Is the idea of mass production—which is essentially a modern and technology-driven method and in Heideggerean terminology conveys the spirit of techne *within*

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[36]See: Kassarjian and Ardalan (1982).

[37]*Timcheh* is a part of a traditional Bazaar complex in Iran. It normally consists of a series of shops around an enclosed space, dedicated to a particular profession.

[38]This mosque was built in the late eighteenth century. What makes this building unique is that the central courtyard is located one level under the ground, which is normally called *Godal-Bagcheh* (Sunken-Garden).

itself and thus stands against that of traditional creation methodology—capable of covering cosmological, symbolic and transcendental aspects of archetypes and tradition?

Heidegger's essential meaning of *techne*, namely, technology, as I understand it, was not as mere process of making, but as a fundamental mode of revealing. It had something to do with engendering truth. Behshahr's exposed aggregate, custom-fitted precast panels of sunshade producing depth were also partially designed as load-bearing framework that brings forth an honest expression of a working skin of poetic value, in my opinion.

Also, I find you are too stuck with a rigid understanding of tradition—consider what Kahn said: 'Traditions are as Golden dust falling in the light of space—timeless. If you could put your hands out and grab some of the golden dust, you would have the powers of anticipation'. That is how I view traditions—something immutably timeless and profoundly valid as principles of thought, subject to interpretation and expression with contemporary means.

You have always emphasized the language of symbolic form and its validity. But in this building, the language of modern architecture and the international style plays a vital role, particularly when it is perceived from the outside. To what extent is this simultaneous presence of these two languages, with contradictory ontological implications, feasible?

The ontological spiral of water flowing from the central fountain designed by my great sculptor friend, Karl Schlemminger of Tehran/Munich, is made of Lucite and stainless steel- yet is both sublime and modern (Fig. 4.7). Similarly, the outer shell of the Behshahr building is a resultant of the expanding inner space of the central courtyard realized in precast concrete cantilevers. The traditional structure of brick or masonry architecture could not allow cantilevers, but modern concrete delights in such feats. Are we to be limited by not using new technology that can be used to realize timeless archetypes? Of course not; the New Creation (*Khalq-i Jadid*)—the ever refreshing new realizations and innovations are our mandate for being; however, so much more profound if it recapitulates a perennial comprehension of the larger essence or meaning of existence.

In the Tehran Centre for the Celebration of Music (TCCM) you have again used the idea of a garden, but with a different approach, so that the roof of the complex has been transformed into an 'urban garden'. Here you have ignored the substantial interiority of the garden, and even the geometry of the classic Persian garden has been less present, compared to the ICMS. Generally speaking, the garden has approached the modern concept of 'landscape', like the idea of roof gardens in Le Corbusier. Shall we consider this work as a re-interpretation of the archetype of paradise or a reproduction of the idea of the modern roof garden?

Many inspirations combined and motivated the design of TCCM: phenomenal considerations—the existing excavated site to a depth of several floors was one important reality. Another was the fact that a concert hall and many of its related parts are inward-looking, closed functional spaces by their very nature and desirous

Fig. 4.7 Behshahr Headquarters (now Ministry of Education), Tehran; Terraced central garden court with spiralling lucite and stainless steel fountain (Nader Ardalan)

of acoustical isolation, especially from the busy, adjacent Pahlavi Avenue[39]; The large onsite parking garage programmatic requirement could more practically be met with an underground garage, completely out of sight and uncompromising of the final form of the main concert hall volume; fourth, the earth maintains a constant temperature that benefitted the overall heat gain, energy efficiency of the building. Conceptual inspirations—the Madrasah/Mosque of Agha Bozorg in Kashan with its contained inner, sunken Madrasah courtyard was an important formal inspiration. Therefore, the classic Persian garden was still included by precedent; the Concert Hall acoustic consultants had advised of the resonance value of a high volumetric form for the main hall and because of the desire of both the principal conductor of the Tehran Philharmonic and the advice of Herbert von Karajan for a 'concert in the round' and Iran's own historic precedent of the *Ta'ziyeh* form, the optimum form of the main hall wanted to be a tapered, truncated conical geometric form of great height. The reference to the *yakh-chal*[40] precedent form was one of the natural inspirational forms (but not as a dome which would have had poor acoustics), as both the conical form of the concert hall and the *yakh-chal* grew from a horizontal plane.

To what extent does the concept of the central space refer to the form of the traditional yakh-chal (ice-house)? What is the reason for this historical reference? Functional harmony? Symbolic reference? Or something else?

My architectural firm, the Mandala Collaborative, had the great honour and pleasure of having a cast of world-class expert consultants who contributed to this

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[39]Now Valiasr Street.

[40]*Yakh* is ice, *chal* means pit. Yakh-chal is an ancient type of cooling space, consisting of a domed structure with an underground subterranean storage space.

major work that included Maestro Herbert von Karajan, his acoustician Heinrich Keilholtz, Maestro Farhad Mechkat of the Tehran Symphony Orchestra, Programme Advisor John Mazzola of the New York Philharmonic, the noted structural engineers Fazlur Khan and August Komendant, lighting consultant William Lam and landscape architect Peter Walker.

While the international cast allowed the design thinking to be aware of best world knowledge on the concept of a contemporary place of music, this thrust was complemented by my own team's search for the timeless principles of Persian architecture and, in particular, the indigenous traditions of theatre and music in Iran. Here the *Ta'ziyeh* passion plays and the *Takyeh*, as a paradigm of a historic place of gathering, played a vital role in our conceptions of relevant placemaking. It should be mentioned that in the 1970s such tradition-based thinking in rapidly modernizing Iran was rare and, in some unknown ways, anticipatory of the years after the Iranian revolution when currently the *Ta'ziyeh* plays a major role in many cities of Iran during *Muharram,* the Shiite month of mourning ceremonies related to the death of Imam Hossein.

Set within the context of a great 'Paradise Garden' design, the project included a 2,000 seat main hall featuring an innovative and acoustically perfected conical volume soaring 30 metres high to an oculus of natural light; an experimental recital/ rehearsal hall; support facilities; parking and the entire complex was linked through pedestrian pathways to other neighbouring cultural nodes, creating a significant urban centre of music, theatre and learning.

It needs to be observed that the preliminary design of TCCM was submitted to the Government of Iran in October 1978, with models and extensive numbers of architectural and engineering documents. This professionally contracted effort remained, however, unpaid and unbuilt until 1997, when without my knowledge or permission or acknowledgement, the documents were illegally usurped to build the Ejlass Conference Hall in Tehran[41] (Fig. 4.8).

The 'environmental adaptation,' as you have described as one of the three principles of your design approach besides 'functional purpose' and 'cultural relevance' (Ardalan 2004) has been manifested at a macro level in the project of Nuran (City of Illumination). Since only some initial sketches and models are available from this project, it seems that it has not been developed further. What was the main concept of this project, its goal, as well as its spatial configuration?

Although never implemented, the Master Plan and Concept Design of Nuran was planned in 1978 and recognized by MIT as one of the first low-carbon Solar Energy-based cities in the world. This city of 100,000 population located in the vicinity of Isfahan was so oriented that its central town axis was in direct alignment with the great Nagsh-e Jahan Maydan and the blue dome of Masjid-i-Imam.

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[41]This building was constructed in 1997 to host the 8th Summit of the Organization of Islamic Conferences in Tehran. Yahya Fiuzi, a former member of Mandala Collaborative, illegally used the original concept and structural drawings of TCCM for the Ejlass. This un-professional act was noted by Peter Davies, Editor of *Architectural Design* magazine, UK in the 1998 Dubai Conference and attested to by the TCCM structural engineer Zareh Gregorian. (Nader Ardalan).
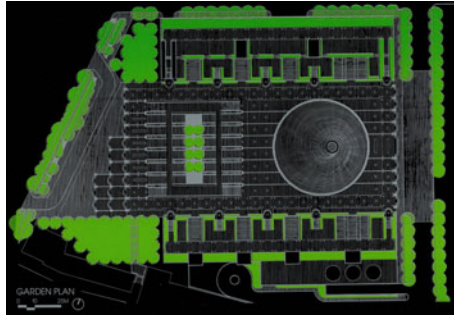
Fig. 4.8 Tehran Center for the Celebration of Music—garden landscape site plan (Nader Ardalan)
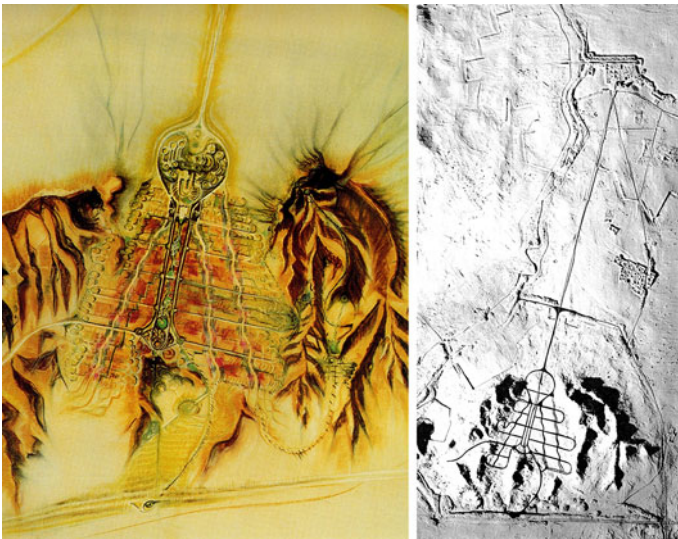
Fig. 4.9 Nuran Solar City, Isfahan: Master plan and context model showing its 'Spiritual Axis' aligned perfectly with blue dome of the Masjid-i Imam (Nader Ardalan)

This terrestial alignment recognized the *genius loci* of its placemaking and created the 'Spiritual Axis' of the town. This axis also brought forth the linear Public Park within which social facilities of the town, such as museums, libraries, were situated. Solar ponds, photovoltaic roof panels, locally sourced cyclopean concrete structures, compact, high-density, mixed-use design characterized this sustainable, pedestrian-oriented garden city (Fig. 4.9).

A number of international congresses organized in Iran were very influential. The list of invited figures shows that there was a particular intention behind these events. What was the main reason for organizing these international events in Iran and what was expected from them?

Faced with the opportunity of major new developments in Iran and a diverse range of architectural and planning philosophies to guide design thinking for both Iranian patrons and architects, the International Congress of Architects was convened in 1970 in historic Isfahan under the auspices of Empress Farah. Entitled '*The Interaction of Tradition and Technology*', the Congress drew such noted figures as Louis I. Kahn and Paul Rudolf from America, Kenzo Tange from Japan and Ludvico Guaroni from Italy in addition to numerous other world figures and leading scholars and architects from Iran. The publication of its proceedings and the impact on architectural thinking in Iran was significant, as it emphasized the need and benefit of designing with an architectural approach that is environmentally adaptive and culturally relevant, based upon the best lessons from Iranian traditions and world architectural thinking. One of the suggestions emerging out of this first congress was to hold annual national seminars to review architectural issues and problems and evaluate various recommendations of the congress and to implement them. These annual seminars attracted many Iranian architects, and promoted greater consciousness and dialogue between architects and the government.

Subsequently, in 1972, the first *World Conference on Adobe Architecture* was held in Yazd. Its recommendations called for appreciation of such unique mud cities as Bam and the traditional adobe towns that ring the deserts of Iran with the vital lessons of their adaptive urban patterns; the maintenance of isolated historic adobe structures such as the innumerable caravanserais and forts; and conservation education to both learn from such phenomena and to help preserve them for adaptive reuse.

In 1974, Iran convened its second international Congress of Architects, '*Toward a Quality of Life*'. Held at Persepolis under the chairmanship of architect Mohsen Foroughi, the conference brought together leading world architects and urbanists, such as Buckminster Fuller and Jose Luis Sert from the US; Charles Correa and Doshi from India; Kenzo Tange from Japan; Hassan Fathy from Egypt and many others to review Iran's progress in its professional response to the challenges posed by increasing oil revenues. As an outgrowth of this conference, some of the participants later prepared *The Habitat Bill of Rights* for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development and this book was presented by Iran to the UN Habitat Conference in Vancouver, Canada in 1976. Other participants in Iran's international conference met again in 1977 to jury the international competition for the National Library of Iran in Abbasabad, Tehran. This competition drew 618 design entries from 87 countries, the largest number of international and national entries of any world competition to that date.[42] The building programme was prepared by 100 of Iran's leading scholars and with UNESCO and the Competition held under auspices of UIA. The winners were Von Gerkan Marc & Partners from Germany; however, subsequent to the regime change, the National Library that has been built was designed by Seyyed Mohsen Mirhaydar.

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[42]See: Art and Architecture April–July 1978. (Nader Ardalan).

The First Congress of Female Architects, with the aim of exchanging ideas from around the world, was held in 1976 in Ramsar under the patronage of the Empress. Entitled *'The Crisis of Identity in Architecture',* this congress attracted 21 renowned female architects from various countries. They included: Alison Smithson[43] from the United Kingdom, Denise Scott Brown[44] from the United States, Gaetana Aulenti[45] from Italy and De La Tour[46] from France. Some of the Iranian architects included Nectar Papazian Andrev[47] (the first female architect in Iran), Leila Sardar Afkhami and Nasrin Faqih.[48]

Along with other prominent architects, you compiled the Habitat Bill of Rights in which the main emphasis was on the authentic and essential aspects of dwelling. Was this study based on an arrière-garde approach or avant-garde one? What was the main goal of this work and which international problem does it try to address? Was it able to stimulate architects and policymakers?

In 1974, The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development of Iran convened the Second International Congress of Architecture at Persepolis. At the conclusion of the Congress, the delegates passed the following Resolution, namely that: through research studies, a code of human habitat should be developed with such procedures and strategies necessary to the achievement of principles essential to the creation of a wholesome, balanced and equitable habitat. This code should be so prepared that it may form a working tool suitable for use by all the decision makers involved in the shaping of the human habitat in time and place.

An international team of architects and professors from some of the leading schools of architecture worked for over one year to prepare this cutting-edge document. It was entitled the 'Habitat Bill of Rights' and presented to the first Habitat Conference. The New York Times June 8, 1976 headline for the conference read: 'Architects Have a Blueprint for Habitat' and featured the Iran contribution that emphasized 'human scale and modest, vernacular architecture as opposed to the often abstract quality of much modern design, particularly as expressed in government-built housing'. Recently it has been translated and republished in Farsi

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[43]Alison Margaret Smithson (1928–1993), a graduate from University of Durham, established the APS office in 1950 in London where she practiced until the end of her life.

[44]Denise Scott Brown (born 1931) is an American architect, planner, writer and educator. Together with her husband, Robert Venturi, she runs the firm Venturi, Scott Brown and Associates in Philadelphia.

[45]Gaetana (Gae) Aulenti (1927–2012) was an Italian architect and interior designer, who graduated from Milan Polytechnic University.

[46]Solange Pauline Eugénie d'Herbez de la Tour (born 1924) is a French architect who studied architecture and urban planning in Bucharest. She is the founder of the *International Union of Women Architects.*

[47]She studied architecture at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Tehran, and then left for Paris to continue her studies. Back in Iran she established an architectural firm and practice.

[48]See: Art and Architecture Issue 35–36 1976. (Nader Ardalan).

by IAARA.[49] Also, this book was so successful that Doshi used it as his guide to write a similar Habitat Bill of Rights for India.

Iranian architecture of the 1960s and 1970s is sometimes called Iranian post-modern architecture. How exact is this expression? Did the architecture of that time participate in any dialogue and exchange with the postmodern architecture of the world?

The term postmodern, while possibly used in academia in the 1970s in Iran, was not a popular idea in the professions. Most architects and decision makers concentrated on the international style, while a few, I being one of them, began a kind of climatic/cultural investigation into a contemporary vernacular approach. From my return to Iran in 1964, I commenced research for a contextual architecture that would be adapted to its natural environment and relevant to its indigenous culture, which resulted in the simultaneous publication of the Sense of Unity and the building of the Iran Center for Management Studies in 1972. This was a decade before 'Critical Regionalism Theory' was published by Alexander Tzonis in 1981 or by Ken Frampton in 1983, both of whom I came to know in the 1980s.

'Critical Regionalism' theory of design strived to counter the placelessness and lack of meaning in Modern Architecture by using contextual forces to give a unique sense of place and meaning. It encouraged emphasis on topography, climate, light, tectonic form rather than scenography and the tactile sense rather than the visual. Alvar Aalto and Jorn Utzon of Finland; James Stirling in Europe; Kenzo Tange in Japan; Louis Kahn in India and Bangladesh; and Hasan Fathy in the Middle East showed how contributions can be made to architecture universally through solutions adapted to the specific conditions of their native setting. Critical regionalism was different from regionalism, which simply tried to achieve a one-to-one copy or correspondence with traditional vernacular architecture in a conscious way without creatively partaking of the opportunities of the contemporary world.

A very good example of critical cultural and bioclimatic regionalism was the Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art for which Kamran Diba had the commission and I collaborated with him on the original design, shown in the cork model that we had built in 1966 (Fig. 4.10). TMOCA remains today as one of the outstanding examples of what has come to be known as Iranian Critical Regionalism.

You have said that the architecture of the 1990s in Iran was devoid of any symbolic innovation and passion. It repeats the known forms of the past with an overemphasis on ornamentation, and without innovative integration of tradition and contemporary world technology (Ardalan 1995). *Is this evaluation also valid for the current architecture of Iran?*

The current architecture of Iran, from my limited interaction with it, is almost entirely motivated by both decision-makers and architects on a Modernism favouring the old International Style. While students seem infatuated with the 'Zaha Hadid World', few realized projects exist. The other path most noticeable is the 'Italianesque Classic' apartment towers of Tehran that have begun to pervade the

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[49]International Art & Architecture Research Association.
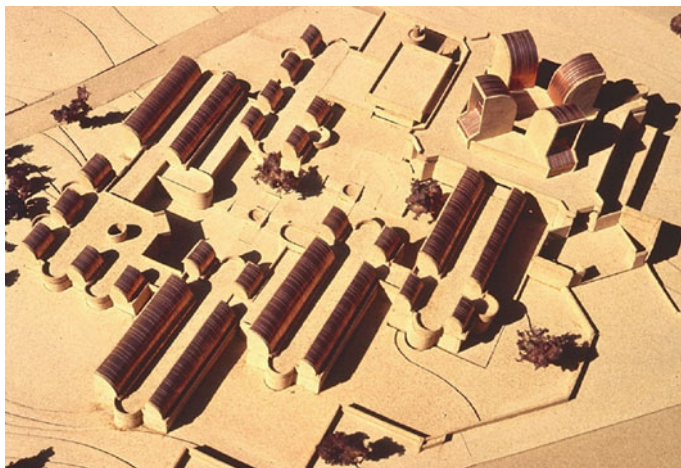
Fig. 4.10 Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art—original 1966 model photograph (Nader Ardalan)

provinces as well. A few serious pieces of architecture have been built or proposed by such architects as the late Mirmiran, or Bavand or Mehrazan Consultants.

In this study, the main target is the architecture of the pre-Revolution period. However, to review your later works I would like to refer to the article 'Building in the Persian Gulf' in which you have talked about two extreme poles of traditional and international images and have acknowledged an opportunity to explore the new integration—Khalq-i Jadid (Ardalan 2004). *How did you plan to achieve this goal in your later architectural works?*

Actually, in my Isfahan lecture at the International Conference of Architects in 1970, I introduced the concept of '*Khalq-i Jadid*' and examples of it from that time include TMOCA, ICMS, Behshahr Home Offices, the Azadi Sports Stadium and this theme has pervaded my work since that time, including my more recent designs in the Persian Gulf, about which I have written and published extensively. Two representative case studies in the Persian Gulf that bear mentioning are the Abu Dhabi Ecological Residential Park in the UAE and the Intelligent Tower in Qatar.

For the Abu Dhabi Ecological Residential Park, UAE (Fig. 4.11), our multi-disciplinary team that I directed was commissioned by Aldar Properties in 2008 to master plan and concept design a model Sustainable, low-carbon, 'Green' Community of 7500 population in Abu Dhabi on a 32 ha site, adjacent to the Eastern Mangroves of this desert island city. This project was based upon World Wildlife Fund and One Planet Living principles, including: Environmental Sustainability; Cultural Relevance; Financial Viability and a Visionary Architecture of Innovative Significance.

The first phase of studies has demonstrated through excellent passive design strategies that energy demand could be reduced by 60% compared to Business as Usual (BaU). The designs also provided renewable energy sources from solar, wind

Fig. 4.11 Abu Dhabi Ecological Residential Park—perspective and concept section showing solar canopies (Nader Ardalan)

and biomass for the remaining energy needs, while being environmentally friendly and socioculturally relevant. Other important components included an innovative transportation strategy that minimized car usage in the site and promoted pedestrian movement; the inclusion of hydroponic urban agriculture powered by solar energy provided a substantial amount of the vegetable and fruit requirements of the inhabitants on site; and the development of an ecotourism centre and educational program to maintain and preserve the natural mangroves of the site.

The new typology of a sustainable high-rise architecture presents a significant design challenge, as reflected in The Intelligent Tower—Doha, Qatar (Fig. 4.12). Our 2008 entry in a world design competition was awarded first place and the professional design contract. The 70-storey tower, located on the West Bay Corniche of Doha, will provide an environmentally adapted, socially friendly and sustainable 'Place for Business'. The tower minimizes energy demand by its high-performance envelope of three layers of glass with a sun-protecting movable shade; and spawns innovative energy production through wind and solar and energy efficient technologies while creating a dramatic, cultural symbol of an eternal *Sarv*, a Tree of Life.

Fig. 4.12 The Intelligent Tower, Doha, Qatar— building perspective and strategic sustainability concepts, including vertical wind turbines, solar panels and triple glazing (Nader Ardalan)
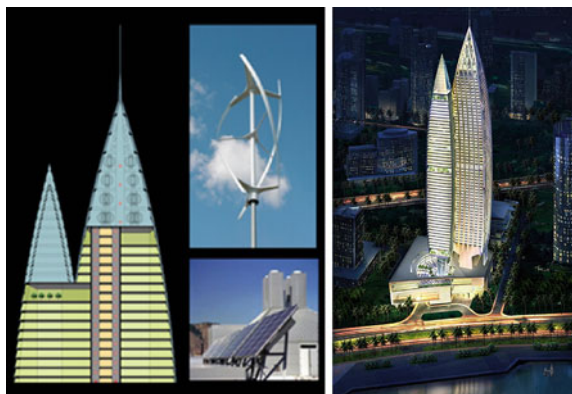
You are the author of the works designed in Mandala. Do you feel yourself the author of the works designed in KOE International as well?

The works directed by me personally are my design, but there were several KEO offices in different cities in the Persian Gulf region, thus other designers were corporately given the opportunity to pursue their own design tendencies.

I could mention several projects where I personally was able to control the total design. The Al Ain Diwan is one of them. Designed in 2000 and completed in 2006 for the Ruler's Representative in the Eastern Region of the UAE, the Diwan is set in a landscaped Paradise Garden and accommodates executive offices, the main Majlis, meeting rooms and spaces for the support staff. The unique setting out of the architectural plan is based upon the 'Super Circle', a geometric innovation that is the perfect mathematical marriage of the square and the circle. This symbolic achievement has been one of the enduring architecture quests throughout history (Fig. 4.13).

Inspired by Islamic metalwork, in particular, the fourteenth-century bronze Mamluke vases, the building has been realized in bronze anodized aluminium. The sunscreens of bronze-toned ceramic fritting and the shading provided by the buildings' overhanging roof provides the necessary environmental protection, while window hoppers allow a concealed natural ventilation system to open up the building interiors during the 4 months of temperate climate. The totality of these systems has created a sustainable building of cultural significance.

Later you have designed the IT College in the UAE, a high-tech building in which there is no attempt to refer to archetypes and metaphors, for example, to the traditional Madrasa (as in the case of ICMS). How should we interpret this contradiction?

The IT College is one of the best examples of my concept of '*Khalq-i Jadid*' (Fig. 4.14). The reason is that while it uses all the archetypal symbols of Timeless Design, it realized these ideas in very contemporary materials and technology, while still maintaining the principles of perennial design. Also, the very function of the Information Technology College while dealing with advanced digital education, it was still a place where young students needed to feel comfortable, to gather, seek knowledge, exchange ideas and not be intimidated. Symbolically and socially, the
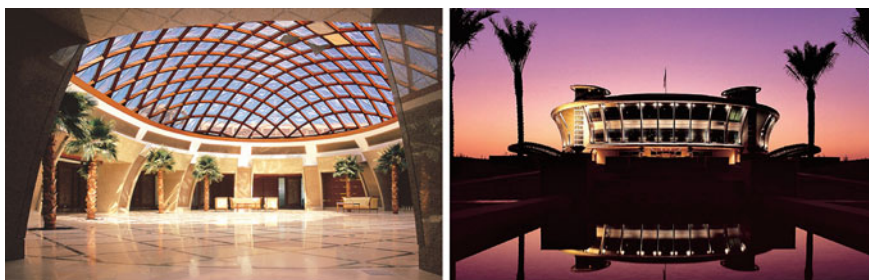
Fig. 4.13 The Ruler's Divan, Al Ain, UAE—night view of building façade and interior view of supercircle roof top atrium (Nader Ardalan and KEO International Consultants)

Fig. 4.14 Information Technology College, Al Ain, UAE—night view of building entrance and interior view of the learning street (Nader Ardalan and KEO International Consultants)

idea of the 'learning street' was realized to serve as the 'Soul' (*Nafs*) of the architecture—a sort of linear bazaar of ideas and uses, was conceived that served as a social gathering place with access to an exhibition gallery, dining room with outside covered dining garden, prayer hall, auditorium and a circulation lobby with a cascading stairway that connected all floors and allowed one to see and be seen by friends and soon-to-be friends. The Chancellor of the UAE University considers the IT College as the best architecture in his country.

In a recent paper (Ardalan 2009) *you refer again to the main concepts that appeared in your former writings, especially in* The Sense of Unity*, and talk about 'transcendental aesthetics' mixed with an environmental consciousness formulated as the concept of 'Tree of Life'. But as the application of this theory, you refer to a range of different projects such as the ICMS with a critical regionalist approach, the Desert Retreat with a sentimental postmodernist appearance, and the Abu Dhabi Ecological Park with a somehow high-tech taste. Does this mean that this theory is capable of covering all the different architectural styles and tastes? Or it is a 'general' theory with no specific framework? This is problematic particularly when one may conclude that this theory is the theory of everything. To put in other words, how can we understand these contradictory manifestations as 'New Creations' (*Khalq-i Jadid*)?*

The Tree of Life is a conceptual design framework that is in the progress of development and has the strong potential to form a matrix of design considerations that can qualitatively and quantitatively constitute a relevant and holistic structure to organize design thinking for specific bioclimatic/cultural regions in a global context. Further, it may challenge the role of the architect to reinvigorate modern buildings and the built environment with deeper sustainable meanings. It is important to acknowledge that cutting across all other issues facing the world is climate change. Its practical, economic and elegant mitigation—by designing environmentally and culturally Sustainable Built Environments inspired by a Transcendent Vision—is our greatest challenge (Fig. 4.15).
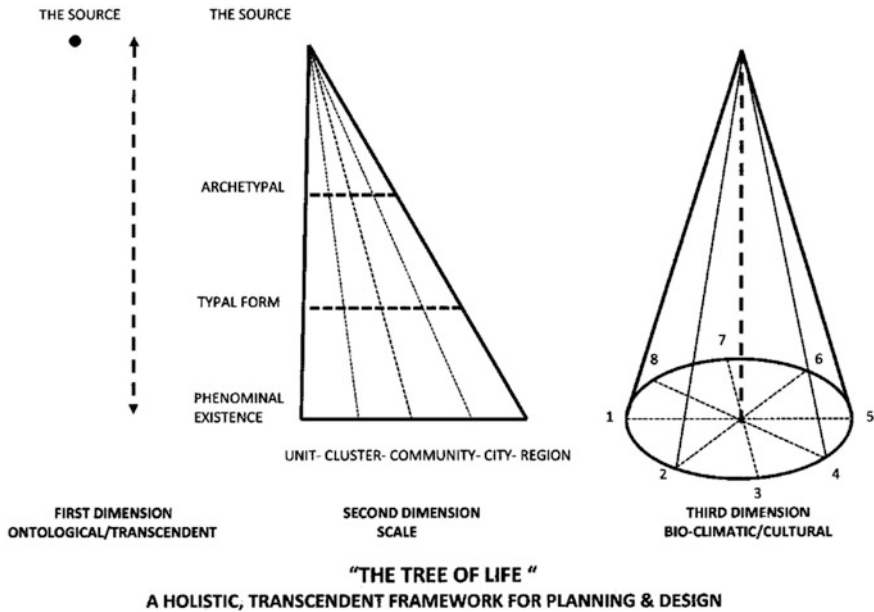
Fig. 4.15 'The Tree of Life' diagram—a holistic planning and design framework by Nader Ardalan, 2010. (Nader Ardalan)

You have designed in three different geographical realms: the U.S., Iran and the states on the Persian Gulf. What distinguishes the work of designing in these realms? As far as the issue of 'place' is concerned, what is different or similar in these locations?

I am pleased to inform you that on July 31, 2012, as one of two Senior Editors of the largest research project at Harvard University Graduate School of Design, my team submitted an 865-page manuscript entitled: 'Persian Gulf Sustainable Urbanism' to the research sponsor—The Qatar Foundation—for ultimate publication. This is the 'Phase 1—Past' of a three-phase research programme that will next document the present and ultimately will make strategic recommendations about the future of the eight countries surrounding the Persian Gulf with regard to their Sustainable Development. The research is structured around three main topics: Environment/Public Health; Social/Cultural/Economic; and Urban Form/Architecture and with four scales of investigation from region, city and neighbourhood to unit. One of the aims of this research has been to document, analyze and define some of the very questions raised by you, and more.

Although the above research is the most extensive that I have helped carry out, throughout the past 50 years, I have dedicated much time and energy to study the same general theme, with much the same methodology, about the different geographic realms in which I have designed, which include different regions of the U.S.A., Iran, Persian Gulf, India, South East Asia and Europe.

4.3   Poetry of Geometry in Hossein Amanat

You studied architecture in Iran. What was the dominant educational trend during that time concerning traditional concepts (past architecture) and Modernism (modern architecture and urban planning)?

Our school 'The School of Fine Arts of Tehran University' was based on the Beaux-Arts education system and curriculum. There was a classical architecture component in the first year, predominantly Greek and Roman classic orders, and very briefly, one project about ancient Egypt and one about traditional Iranian Architecture.

Our professors were Beaux-Arts graduates. The works of my first professor, Mr. Heydar Ghiai, are the best examples of the Modernism School of Thought of those days. He had designed Radio City Cinema, the Hilton Hotel, and most importantly, the Senate Building, with Architect, Mohsen Foroughi. These structures followed the Western architectural trends of the time, the prominent style followed by most architects—for example, Mr. Aziz Farmanfarmaian had designed the most notable buildings of that period, which were all in a contemporary international style.

Inspiration derived from old Iranian architecture was not common. To most of the architects, like many other intellectuals of the time, all the valid ideas were those coming from the West, and Iran had little to offer for the modern era and contemporary architecture.

The urban issues were mostly concerned with accommodating the dominance of cars and creating boulevards, in some cases destroying the beautiful texture of ancient cities like Kashan and Yazd. Buildings were mostly designed without regard for their urban setting, in the manner of a sculpture which happened to be situated on the side of a street.

You have stated that the idea of reproducing the essence of Iranian architecture in a modern way goes back to Taherzadeh Behzad[50] and later to Seyhoun (Amanat 2007). *Could you please elaborate this issue and explain it in more detail?*

In the years I was in school, the influence and prominence of the West was significant in all areas of industry, science, art, culture and architecture. In the area of architecture, while we were less than a century from the creation of some intricate and beautiful pieces of Iranian Architecture, all that was designed in practice came from the West. The current mode in our school, perhaps reflecting the society we lived in, was that we should imitate Western designs.

In this interview, I was referring to examples of the great architecture of Iran of the past, built as recently as the end of the nineteenth century, and the fact they were mostly forgotten in modern times, and all attention was given to the West. Some architects, like Taherzadeh Behzad and Marcov, felt the importance of making reference to ancient roots. But they did not, or could not, go any further than

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[50]Karim Taherzadeh Behzad (1888–1963) was an Iranian engineer and architect. Trained in Istanbul and Berlin, he designed a number of buildings including the Mausoleum of Ferdowsi in Tus.

including some morphologic elements in their buildings, like an out-of-scale dome on the entrance to a hospital in Mashhad by Taherzadeh, or arches over the windows in Alborz high school by Marcov, which in reality were only cosmetic references. Seyhoun was the first to refer to past Iranian monuments in a minimalist, modern language—in Avicenna's Mausoleum and afterward in the Khayyam Monument. As to the essence of the ancient Iranian Architecture—it goes far deeper than reference to forms. It is what you learn from the old buildings, and then ideas are applied, without copying the forms and shapes. It is to learn how the volumes of the building composed a music, and to see if you can create your own music with similar principles. It is what you absorb from the old buildings and towns of Iran, or the Persianate communities around it. In terms of issues like urban setting and the interaction of a building with the city texture, the sequence of space, open and closed, semi-covered and covered, small volumes versus larger ones, sequence of proportion, light, height and size—altogether understanding the undertones of a great symphony of space and light that unfolds one after the other when you walk in the alleys of an old town like Isfahan and go to the bazaar, then on to a Caravanserai, then back in the Bazaar, and suddenly facing an explosion of space in Meydan-e Shah of Isfahan—experiences such as this.

You asked about my teachers. My first professor was Mr. Heydar Ghiai and then Mr. Sehyoun—both followed modernist ideas with no reference to the idea of essences I mentioned. Mr. Seyhoun had a great love and respect for old Iran and took all students on trips to see the great legacy. However, applying the lessons of the past was not a current discourse.

A prominent master of yours is Houshang Seyhoun. What brought his unique educational method to the educational system of that time as well as to the students? What was important for him concerning Iranian indigenous architecture? And to what extent could his architectural thought influence contemporary architecture in Iran?

Seyhoun followed the Beaux-Arts School's method of education like other professors such as Mr H. Ghiai and others. However, he had a love for Iranian traditional architecture and sketching from them. He used to take students to all parts of Iran to see the old buildings and do sketches from them.

There was not any discourse at the time to direct the students to use the lessons learned from the old buildings. The beauty and fascination of the old was there; how to apply the lessons in the creation of the new is different.

As I said, Seyhoun's educational method was a Beaux-Arts style like our other professors, Mr Ghiai and others, that is—after the programme, or the brief of the project was announced, the professors used to visit the 'Atelier' or the studio once or twice a week. They sat beside one of the drawing desks on one of the stools used by the students, and students gathered around. Each student used to show sketches showing his ideas and the professor commented on it. These sessions were called 'correction'. Seyhoun sometimes used to visit the Atelier without any notice and to check the works, sometimes he would take over someone's work and put some touches to it, mostly on its rendering. Apart from this common educational method, Seyhoun emphasized visiting old buildings and sketching them. However,

sketching was not given a mark and was completely on a voluntary basis. Seyhoun's students, and those of other Ateliers, took part and some produced beautiful sketches. This, of course, would have an impact on the students and their future work as architects.

What was the dominant trend in architecture and urbanism at the time of your study and professional practice? How was the construction of that time, and what was your reaction to, and critique, of it?

At the time, the trend in architecture was to follow examples from the West. In the area of urbanism, the trend was to accommodate the automobile, create boulevards and roundabouts.

There was limited zoning by laws to restrict the use, the buildable area, envelope, or height. The street wall and street life and so on were usually ignored, with a few exceptions. My reaction was to create an urban environment which gave prominence to pedestrians, placemaking instead of only road making.

In our Daryakenar project (with Mr. M. Iranpour as partner), we created an example of what we thought was right, a complex with small plazas in each cluster, connected with a linear pedestrian park, which extended from the complex to the Caspian Shore. This linear park was for pedestrians with no intersection for cars. Vehicle access to the villas was provided through a series of cul-de-sacs, thus reducing speed and creating a secure environment for residents and children.

Do you think that there was any constructive interaction between the contemporary architecture of Iran and the contemporary architecture of the world? Did it follow world trends or did it critique them as well?

The current trend was to follow the West. I do not recall much critique at that point of the Western styles. We thought the West had the leading edge. The best work which followed Western design principles was presented by Mr. Farmanfarmaian's office. In urban design the West followed some erroneous principles of urban sprawl—examples such as *Ville Radieuse* of Le Corbusier and F.L. Wright's automobile dominated designs. It was, therefore, a period of experimentation.

What is your approach to the past architecture of Iran? Is it a source of inspiration, a reservoir of forms and shapes, or a container of spirituality? This issue is more important if we are to look at the past while designing contemporary buildings.

Iran's historical architecture is a source of inspiration for me in all areas: form, variety, sincerity of structure, unity with the social life, sustainability and integration into the urban texture.

We see the importance of geometry in solving problems while creating beauty. We note the use of materials, ecology, sustainability, play of light, colour and materials. Most importantly, we observe the creation of varied human-scale volumes and spaces in sequences, creating a music of space and volume, colour and light.

All the above, through connection to the human senses and intelligence, affect the human soul and thus becomes a spiritual architecture.
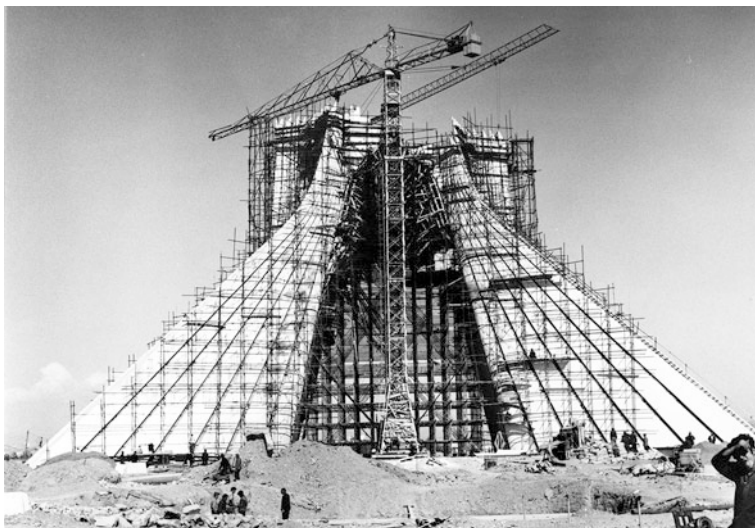
Fig. 4.16 Azadi Tower under construction (Hossein Amanat)

In the Azadi tower, you had a particular concern about the local technology, in both the materials used and the construction method (Fig. 4.16). *Please let us know more about this local technology and the way you employed it in this building? What is the significance of this approach?*

For a National Monument, like Shahyad (Azadi), one had to consider the use of local building technology and materials. The materials used in the Azadi Tower are prominently reinforced concrete (grey and white local materials), stone (the Jowsheghan White Marble from quarries located between Kashan and Isfahan near Tehran), and Traditional Persian ceramic *Moarragh*[51] tiles.

We researched the construction techniques and decided to build the Tower in the manner of a traditional brick wall, that is, to put one brick over the other and ascend. Here we had carved marble stone blocks instead of bricks, blocks which were sometimes about 4.5 m by 1.66 m by 25 cm, creating a formwork for the reinforced concrete wall against it.

The labour and materials were all local, representing the human and material resources of the time. All were done as a natural and logical design decision to be local, to represent the time when this monument was built, and where it originated. Nowadays we do all this to be sustainable and satisfy LEED.

The way the forms of the building are designed, their curves and twists, also requires the leading edge technology of the time—computers, surveying

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[51]*Moarragh* is a kind of Iranian tiling style in which different tiny pieces come together to build a pattern and cover a larger surface.

Fig. 4.17 Azadi Tower, geographic patterns (Author)

knowledge, and the ability to understand and execute. Shahyad represents its time and what Iran was and could do at the time, what a monument is to do.

One may describe the Azadi tower as a 'poetry of geometry', since here the solidity of geometry has been lightened by means of visual beauty, and geometry provides a subtle framework which does not hinder architectural expression and its vocabulary. What is the role of geometry in this work specifically? And in all your works in general?

Geometry was one of the main components or generators of Persian traditional architecture. Look at the domes and the intricate geometry of old buildings. What has been done in Shahyad Tower follows the same principles, but 'breathes' a new life into it, a life which could not be created in the old times because such knowledge and technology were not within reach (Fig. 4.17).

I had seen what had been done in Iranian traditional architecture, and had also learned about 'conic' curves, their formulas and equations in high school in Iran. I was comfortable with interpreting what I had drawn, and what looked aesthetically appropriate, into conic curves and mathematical formulas with the help of the structural engineer. It is impossible to explain the source of creating a poem. I refer to my memories of the history of Iran—to the ancient sites and buildings, and to all I had learned in High School and at the School of Architecture; also what I recalled from frequent visits to old buildings, museums and sketching whatever I found interesting. The dominance of geometry appears not only in Shahyad but also in the Heritage Centre or Miras-e Farhangi, with its layout and arches, vaults and the

Central Dome. This dominance has become simpler in the School of Business Management of Tehran University and the Pasargadae Museum.

In this work, two kinds of juxtaposition can be observed: 'temporal juxtaposition' which includes historical references to different architectural periods, and 'local juxtaposition' which embraces place-oriented references to various Iranian architectural climates of the past. What is the reason, necessity and method of these juxtapositions?

I think the juxtaposition is temporal or historic and local, and of course the architectural styles of two major periods of Iranian history, pre and post-Islamic. However, the use of geometry is a lesson learned from old buildings, applied in a new and unprecedented way.

While the Tower reveals and expresses itself, access is via *an underground entrance and is hidden. This dialectic of revealing and concealing grants the work a sense of mysteriousness which can be perceived while descending into the underground space or ascending to the upper level of the Tower. What is the significance of this concealing, underground architecture, and the interior space of the tower? Why has the appearance of the Azadi Tower been more discussed than its interior space, which has a lot to say?*

The external shape of the building was most important and somehow sacred—I felt strongly that it was not to be pierced by an entrance, making it similar to a house or a functional building. The outer appearance of the building was critical. Entry should be discrete—one should go through the sequence of spaces common in Iranian architecture but unprecedented for monuments. In Shahyad, you descend to a lower level with an in-scale courtyard or '*Hayat*'; then after a covered area, you enter the tunnel of time, through a huge one piece granite door, and finally to its foundation-level museum, completely hidden from the outside.

Inside Shahyad is a world of different spaces, shapes and light all with reference to principles of Iranian architecture, all in a contemporary style with fair-faced concrete—it has a music all of its own.

The Azadi Tower is more for 'seeing' than 'sensing'; it invites us to visual pleasure and rarely stimulates the other senses. What is behind this vision-oriented approach?

I think it is seeing and sensing. I think as human beings we have a sense of hearing, touching space, which is not only through our vision, but through our body and all our other senses. The building was designed with all these in mind. You experience it when you are under the main vault and around the building (Fig. 4.18).

The light in the interior is a minimal light which is controlled restrictively. This intensifies the mysteriousness of the interior. What was important for you, concerning the interior light? Is it a functional light or a symbolic one?

The light was one layer of the notes of a symphony to create the music. It was to allow appreciation of the inner spaces, while creating mystery and variety in space, to present and enhance the forms and spaces—also, to create a connection with the outside from inside. Through the diamond openings in the main vault, you can see
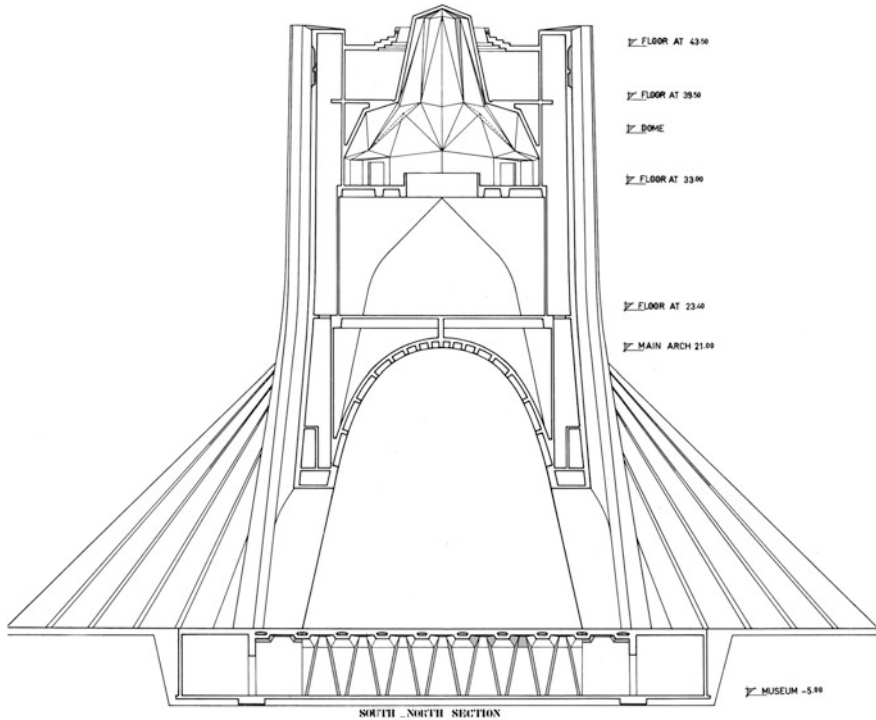
Fig. 4.18 Azadi Tower, section (Hossein Amanat)

the plaza and the main road outside, and when looking up you see the sky through the skylights of the top dome—to define where the visitor is.

You have complained that the contemporary architecture of the world is 'characterless' and a sense of 'placelessness and irrelevance to the location' is dominant (Amanat 2007). *Do you believe that this is the dominant tendency in contemporary world architecture? What do you propose for this condition of 'placelessness'? What are the criteria for belonging to a 'place' and being 'place-specific'?*

'To belong to a place' is when we consider factors such as the context, the climate, the history and culture of people. You build for the context and more—for example, the use of local materials, skills and construction methods—and, most importantly, to sincerely address the needs and behaviour of the users. The communal memory of some people is another factor which connects the architecture to the community when referenced in the design.

The unique character is the reflection of that unique community and environment.

You have stressed that what you have seen and perceived in the alleys of Yazd and Kashan is still alive within you (Amanat 2007). *How was your 'perception' of them, in that they are still alive within you after such a long time and are recalled unconsciously again and again? What tools do you use for perceiving space?*

It is the analysis of what makes a perspective human, exciting and interesting, and experiencing overwhelming architecture in the mosques, houses and narrow alleys of old Cities like Yazd, Kashan, even Florence, Seville or old Beijing.

It is mostly the visual effects recorded, in addition to the layout and time periods you experience, and many other factors like light, colour, material and so on. Open spaces, semi-open ones, enclosed spaces—their dimensions, heights and light, materials, water surfaces, plants and so on—all become a language that you learn and remember for life. Like your mother tongue, when you wish to express a concept when you design, it flows unconsciously.

You have repeatedly referred to the 'truth', 'essence', and 'depth' of Iranian architecture. What is this 'truth' and 'essence' of which you talk? Where and how is it achievable and how can it be recreated?

The depth and essence of Persian Architecture can be realized by studying the examples we have inherited. It is the way the buildings interact with nature, their context, their users and all that we understand by studying them.

One may say that this 'essence' points to archetypes. For example, in Azadi Tower, the prototype of Chahar-Taghi has been employed in a modern combination, where four huge pillar-like bases interweave and build a dome which is not visible from the outside. To what extent, where, and how are these archetypes present in your works?

The essence refers to many aspects of Persian architecture to which I have referred before, for example, the geometry, proportion, scale, sequence of space, contrast of the scale of spaces—also their constant relation to human scale, the richness and variety of form, their sincerity and unity of architecture, geometry, structure and material. In Shahyad, the inspiration from some of the above has manifested—the forms, the geometry, its interior spaces, and the unity of structure, architecture and material.

In an article published in Western Living *(1995), you have suggested that Western classical architecture is like poetry full of symbol and mystery, and a good teacher, it tells you of its hidden meanings and you go deeper and deeper* (McPhedran 1995). *Does traditional Iranian architecture have such a structure? What is its multilayeredness?*

In the 1970s I struggled with the design of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, where a classic-style building, the International Baha'i Archives, existed on the site. I was reluctant to follow the same style of architecture for this new building. However, the Greek Classic language seemed to be the most harmonious with the Archive Building and the gardens around it. In the School of Architecture, since the school was Beaux-Arts inspired, in the first year we had studied and designed buildings in different classic orders, so I knew the principles of classic

design, and applied the same principles in the project, mostly as spelled out by Vingola.[52]

It was in the course of execution of the marble work and construction of this building that certain secrets of this great architectural style were revealed to me, such as how structure and the distribution of forces in a building can be interpreted into details and ideas of extreme beauty—for example, a column which can be a straight cylinder becomes a work of art with entasis and flutes, and a capital becomes a basket of acanthus leaves in the Corinthian order—and the beautiful scrolls in capitals of Ionic order. This aspect becomes more and more fascinating when you deal with the full-scale marble capitals and entablatures in their intricate details, especially when you observe the love and care the marble carvers give to their work. The love of the carvers is reflected in their beautiful creations.

In Persian architecture there is a similar system, but in brick instead of stone; there the skill of the architect/mason has manifested again in the beauty of pro-portion, the application of intricate geometry in different areas and, more impor-tantly, the varied shapes and volumes creating arches, vaults, domes and a hierarchy of volumes and spaces, the use of light and many other layers.

In the Persian Heritage Centre the idea of the Bazaar has been reinterpreted from two perspectives of 'structure' and 'behaviour', that is, not only the physical structure of a Persian Bazaar including the arrangement of the shops, extension of the thoroughfares (Rasteh) and the coverings; but also spatial behaviour in a typical Bazaar, including the production processes for goods and their exposition, has been recreated in a new way. Please tell us more about these two aspects in this project.

At the time when I was appointed to write the programme and design this Handicraft (now Heritage) Centre, a few masters of different traditional handicrafts of Iran were working in some derelict rooms in an old building of the Ministry of Culture. They were the last gleams of light of the handicrafts tradition remaining from ancient times. This was a type of craft which used to be done in bazaars. It was natural to create the same Bazar environment and use, or apply the craft of brick working in the arches, vaults, domes and so on. The objective was to recreate the life of the Bazaar for these crafts—and to whatever possible degree, have the same urban setting, integrated into the city texture.

Can we call this work an 'urban realm' or a 'city in miniature'? This complex distinguishes itself from the everydayness of the city by means of dipping into the earth and creating new relations with the surroundings and thus creating an 'in-teriority' which is both embracing and calming.

Yes, there is an urban realm in the design concept. This was the principle I followed—that is, to come down to the entry court from the busy thoroughfare, and continue to experience spaces, courtyards and covered spaces one after the other,

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[52]Giacomo Barozzi da Vingola (1507–1573) was an Italian Mannerist architect. His book the 'Five Orders of Architecture' explains the orders of classical architecture.

leading from one to the other, through the building, reminiscent of bazaars. You enter from one main road and can exit to another, as it was in Bazar.

In the Faculty of Business Management, Tehran University, the prototype of the Iranian Madrassa (school) is observable. However, historical references such as arched coverings and ornaments are mainly absent. What is the reason for this shift of approach, comparing it to the Persian Heritage Centre and even the Azadi Tower?

To me, what makes Persian architecture is not only the arches and domes but something else. It is the courtyards, the colonnades, the portals, the sequence of spaces that create the beauty of Persian architecture. While I brought arches and vaults into the Heritage Centre due to the nature of the programme, in this School of Management, I did not see the necessity of introducing a lot of morphological references, but the Persian Spirit is embodied there in a new way. The courtyard is at the heart of the complex, as in all traditional theological schools in Iran. Portals are manifested on four sides of the court by creating tall and deep portals by stepping-in the brick surfaces above, indicating the entrances to each part. Here it is not a question of traditional forms but of spaces and volumes.

You have called your work the 'architecture of inside'. Although, as I mentioned, this quality is observable in some of your works such as the Azadi Tower, its apogee is the Pasargadae Museum. Which characteristics of the 'architecture of inside' or 'underground architecture' attract you, and how you have employed them in this museum?

It is the sense of scale, human scale, and the varied experiences you have when you walk. When I design, I see myself constantly moving in the space, experiencing the space and the music that I have mentioned before. Persian architecture, while it is extremely rich in what it offers externally, offers more from within, perhaps because it is thought-out and built that way, and the interior was always more important.

I unconsciously follow the same principle in my work. It happens that a major part of some buildings are, or had to be underground, and are designed in the same way. Perhaps this is why I said 'I am an architect of inside'. In the Pasargadae Museum, because of its proximity to the tomb of Cyrus the Great, the museum is underground to have minimum impact on the view of the tomb (of Cyrus the Great) which is an important monument.

The Iranian Embassy in China is based on the geometry and principles of Iranian architecture, but the historical references are here more obvious and explicit. Since this work has been built in a different context and country, what is the purpose of these historical associations?

The Embassy is the representative of a country, especially its culture. It should impress visitors and guests with the cultural treasures of our country. Architecture is one of the most tangible manifestations of this culture. The building had to give the message that we have roots in tradition, but we strive to take part in the modern world without losing our heritage.

That is why the layout of the different buildings of the complex, the Reception Pavilion, the Chancery, the Ambassador's residence, school and greenhouse, are

around courtyards, each with a different proportion, each creating an enclosure, again an 'urban realm'—all inspired by the principles of Persian traditional architecture. The Ivan in the reception building is the main iconic feature and faces a Persian Garden with fountains and paths leading to it. The Ivan leads to a small vestibule *Hashti* and then to the main lobby covered with a dome created by a pattern of ribs of the same family of styles. There is an octagonal space under this lobby in the basement, which is planned as a traditional room with a fountain in the middle, there is a traditional *Howz-khaneh*[53] and many other interesting spaces. The general layout of the plan is inspired by Hasht Behesht Palace in Isfahan.[54]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of works were designed and built in Iran which had implicit or explicit historical references, so that some call the architecture of this period 'Iranian Postmodernism', What do you think about this notion?

The postmodern movement in the West has varied values, some positive and some superficial. I cannot comment about the other buildings in Iran in the above period.

In my projects, what I had in mind, was the context and tradition of architecture in Iran, the part of the past that was applicable and logical. It was not to copy facades and make stage sets from the architecture, as happened in some postmodern projects in the West. It was a new style, a style of its own.

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[53]Literally meaning 'pool-house', this is a room in traditional Iranian houses and buildings, mainly located on the lower floors, with a pool at the centre.

[54]Literally means 'eight paradises'. Built in 1662 (Safavid period) this mansion is located in Isfahan.

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Chapter 5
The Post-revolutionary 'In-Between'

In this chapter, I make some observations about the post-revolutionary architecture and urbanism in Iran[1] from two perspectives. First, I present an overview of the main trends in the field of architecture and urban planning to show how the challenge of 'Tradition' and 'Modernity' has been a determining factor in the production of space, and how this oscillates between two poles: the official call for 'Islamic architecture and urbanism', and the intensive application of styles that do not fit this description by professionals and academics. Second, I show how the process of modernization in Tehran transformed the premodern place to an open spatial matrix, and then I highlight the urgency of the return to place in an increasingly globalized world, for which Critical Regionalism provides helpful pointers.

5.1 Post-revolutionary Iran and the Dichotomy of Tradition and Modernity

As noted briefly in Chap. 1, from the outset, when the idea of Westernization and reformist attitudes were introduced in Iran, inevitably bringing into question the doctrines and orthodoxy of tradition and its related institutions, there emerged simultaneously a reactionary anti-modern, anti-Western approach. This approach rejected or radically criticized the importance and application of any modern concept in any field, from politics to economics. The argument was that these ideas come from the land of the *Kofr* (unbeliever) and hence are not compatible with the divine principles of Islam. On the other hand, Islam was introduced as a comprehensive, perfect religion, rich enough to cover all aspects of life regardless of place and time, and thus to solve problems of any kind, benefiting from the eternal,

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[1]This study is not exhaustive; I refer to only a limited number of cases to back up my central argument that the question of 'Tradition' and 'Modernity' has been a key challenge in the post-revolutionary architecture and urbanism in Iran.

never-ending source of the Quran and tradition. The dilemma of Westernization and modernization, as interpreted by traditionalists, was later formulated by Jalal Al-e Ahmad in 1961 as 'Occidentosis' or 'Westoxification' (*Gharbzadegi*), what he describes as a horrible epidemic disease which, like cholera, contaminates and destroys society (Ale Ahmad 2009). This attitude was critical of the technical achievements of modernization including technology, industrialization and urbanization; the city and urbanity were interpreted as negative concepts by contrast with a romanticized primitive village life. In this sense, an 'anti-urban' discourse grew up that promoted admiration of village life and produced a nostalgic feeling among those living in dehumanized, brutal cities, contrasting these with the purity, originality and tranquillity of the village.

This line of thought was crystallized in the Islamic Revolution, an essentially anti-Western, if not anti-modern movement, a reaction to the Shah's extensive ambitions for modernization and secularization. The Islamic Revolution was the first theocratic state in the modern world to institutionalize the doctrines of 'Pure Muhammadan Islam' under the governance of the Islamic clergies. The aim of the Islamic Revolution was to found an Islamic Republic based on authentic Islamic doctrine, in which all aspects of society are directly derived from religious instructions and traditions. It brought to the fore a clerical constitution favouring Sharia law. However, despite the fact that this idea has been always reflected in the official rhetoric of the governing authority, what has been practiced and realized on the ground has been quite different in appearance and language. Although the Islamic Republic has now been in existence for about four decades, an overview of the period shows that there has been no consensus between the political, cultural and social strands about precisely what 'Islamic' means. This theoretical dissent can be traced in the policies and governing methods of the different administrations; the political liberty of the immediate post-revolution era contrasted with later political constraints; the socialist economic trends of the early period and the Iran–Iraq war countering post-war capitalist trends. This lack of consensus was partly a result of attempts to combine two parallel systems of Modernism and Traditionalism, for example, modern parliamentarianism and the traditional clergy.

To make manifest and incarnate revolutionary slogans in the city, post-revolutionary Iran questioned the symbols of Modernism, denigrated everything from the Shah's period of rule, and promoted 'Islamic architecture' (Khan 2000: xxxvii). Similarly, the first 10 years of the post-revolutionary period saw the adoption of an anti-modernist approach towards urban affairs (Andalib 2009: 26). However, in spite of the official call for Islamic Architecture and Urbanism, this was not the same as what happened on the ground. On the one hand, there is no consensus what 'Islamic Architecture and Urbanism' is and how an 'Islamic Architecture and City' should look. This dissensus comes from both politicians and academics; except for some vague statements and opinions, there is nothing tangible and remarkable to be found on this topic in any form of theory, instruction or guidelines. Politicians only express nostalgic feelings concerning a lost past and the ambiguous wish for a utopian future. Academics, on the other hand, fail to produce an articulated theory and drift within the world of words, rambling along within a

'rhetoric of idealism'. The result is a drastic schism between the 'call' to traditionalism at the level of discourse and an 'anarchy of manifestation' in practice, or between 'revolutionary rhetoric' from above and 'fractured practice' on the ground. However, this schism has taken different forms respectively in the fields of urban planning (city) and architecture. The modernist attitude, despite official aspirations and efforts, was the dominant paradigm in the city, so that in practice, the 'modernist attitude' replaced the 'revolutionary rhetoric' expressed in the theory (Madanipour 2003). However, in the field of architecture, Modernism was only part of the story; every single architectural trend was practiced by one or other group of architects, making the city into a collage of different tastes, styles and beliefs, ranging from Traditionalism to Hyper-Modernism.

As far as post-revolutionary urban planning is concerned, new urban developments took place in a space between the official 'call' for an Islamic urbanism and the real 'practice' of modern urbanism, where clear modernist ambitions prevailed over vague, idealistic aspirations, through modern highways, skyscrapers and mass housing—thus creating the open matrix of a fragmented cityscape. Right after the Islamic Revolution, prior acts and plans, among them the 1968 Master Plan for Tehran, were disregarded and considered tainted by the outlook of the earlier regime. However, no new planning paradigm was introduced as an alternative, and the same logic of urban development was practiced in the service of accommodating the urban poor, the so-called *Mostazafin* (the downtrodden). For example, the revolutionary government promised to provide each family with a house by 1981, an ambitious plan which reflected its revolutionary idealism. To achieve this, a massive programme of construction activity was set in motion, supported by state subsidies. In the first 2 years, about 32 million m^2 of land were allocated at a low price (Madanipour 1998). This 'anti-urban' tendency had its roots in the anti-modern literature of the 1960s and 1970s where, as mentioned, village life was admired and the city was understood as the demonstration site for capitalism and the destructive forces of modernization.

The outset of the Iran–Iraq war forced the established government to shift all energies towards supporting the war effort and mobilizing most of the national resources towards organizing machinery of war, at the expense of an appropriate urban development agenda and strategy. This neglect left space for every kind of illegal land development, meaning that informal settlements were extensively built on the urban margins, and small adjacent villages and towns turned into expanding urban settlements, like Islamshahr, Qods and Salehabad (Shirazi 2013). The logic behind this informal urban growth was land speculation following upon the absence of any urban planning strategy or regulation. Massive displacements as the result of war forced the government to find a place for refugees in any possible way, such as accommodating them in the vacant homes or turning great numbers of public buildings to residential use (Karim 2014).

After the end of the Iran–Iraq war (1988), a number of development programmes were launched and Tehran Municipality began to modernize the city. In general, the city no longer suggested that negative 'image' from the early years of the Islamic Revolution, but rather, due to the massive support cities exerted during the war,

came to be appreciated as a place deserving substantial attention and functioning as the showcase of a progressive country. To this end, new highways were constructed and high-rise building boomed. The model, again, was a modernist development pattern, partly imbued with postmodern style or ornamentation. A good example of this kind of building is the Navvab Project, a gigantic Haussmannian slice cut through the old part of the city to connect the north of Tehran to the Imam Khomeini Airport in the south, a direct insertion of the placeless high-rise pattern into the existing low-rise urban texture, but imbued with a postmodern architectural taste (Fig. 5.1). Studies confirm that this top-down intervention has generated a sense of placelessness for the inhabitants (91.8%), with a dissatisfaction rate of 74.2% (Shakoei and Tabrizi 2003). A more recent example of this kind is the Milad Tower, designed by Mohammad Hafezi, a 435 m high telecommunication tower completed in 2007, which tries to reproduce Islamic-Iranian motifs presenting itself as a symbol of the modern progressive Islamic Republic (Fig. 5.2). Occupying a 12,000 m^2 site, this tower is the world's sixth highest. Though nowadays the original function of telecom towers has come to an end, its iconic function is still in place. Ironically, like many other urban development projects which had their origin in the pre-revolutionary era, this project was also a part of the Shahestan Pahlavi project, which was discussed in Chap. 1.[2]

To provide financial resources for its massive urban development projects, the Municipality of Tehran planned the city through a paradoxical method: it retained the guidelines and codes of the original Master Plan in terms of density, but sold off the excess densities to provide financial support for constructing urban facilities such as highways, as foreseen in the Master Plan. This quasi-fulfillment of the Master Plan only contributed to aggravating urban problems. However, the centralized administration system of the pre-revolutionary period remained in place after the Islamic Revolution.

Later in 1992, the government realized the urgency of revising the old Master Plan. This revised version kept the structure of the original Master Plan in terms of street networks and city boundaries, but changed the population limits to 7.65 million. Finally, at the beginning of the third millennium, the preparation of a new Master Plan was put onto the agenda. To make this happen, the central administration of the 'Managing and Planning Institute for the Preparation of Tehran's Urban Development Plans' was established as the coordinating unit between different governmental organizations and consulting offices. Linked to this, a new approach was developed through which the Master Plan of Tehran was prepared in parallel to 'detailed plans' for its districts, and each district (22 in Tehran) had its own consulting office. The new Master Plan predicted a population of 8.7 million for 2026, and proposed a 'polycentric' pattern within the city area, to some extent influenced by polycentric urban development strategies practiced worldwide (Shirazi 2014) (Fig. 5.3). In this Master Plan, the existing urban

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[2]The Tower foreseen in Shahestan Pahlavi was located within the project site in the Abbas-Abad hills, but the Milad Tower was erected on the hills in northern Ghisha.

Fig. 5.1 Navvab Project, aerial view (Sina Alayi)

boundary was fixed and every urban district was supposed to have its own urban facilities (Boomsazan 2006). In the introduction to the Master Plan report, seven visions have been defined as the principle goals to be achieved, the first one aiming at making Tehran a 'city with Iranian-Islamic identity and authenticity (a city which is well prepared for the prosperity and sublimity of humankind and pure life)' (Boomsazan 2006: 1). The next of the visions address the physical and material dimensions of the city, including green infrastructure, security and safety, live-ability, public welfare and economic prosperity. Through the entire report, the material aspect of the visions is addressed on the basis of a technical analysis of the current situation and practical suggestions for future improvements. What is neglected is the first vision: granting an Iranian-Islamic identity to Tehran. Again, the wish to be Islamic is limited to a general statement, crystallized as a 'vision'; a utopian ideal, for which there is no strategy, plan or regulation. In fact, no clear guidelines, suggestions or recommendations are provided to achieve the first vision at the urban scale.

Although a number of organizations and academic institutions have been commissioned to set criteria for Islamic urban planning and design and to develop regulations for the realization of an Islamic city, no significant advances have been introduced, and there is no promise of any remarkable changes taking place in the future. At the same time, some cities have established new initiatives seeking to

Fig. 5.2   Milad Tower (Author)

contribute to the official call for an Islamic city, like the Permanent Secretariat of the Islamic City in Isfahan, which tries to formulate the principles of an Islamic City. Organizing international and national conferences and symposiums on the
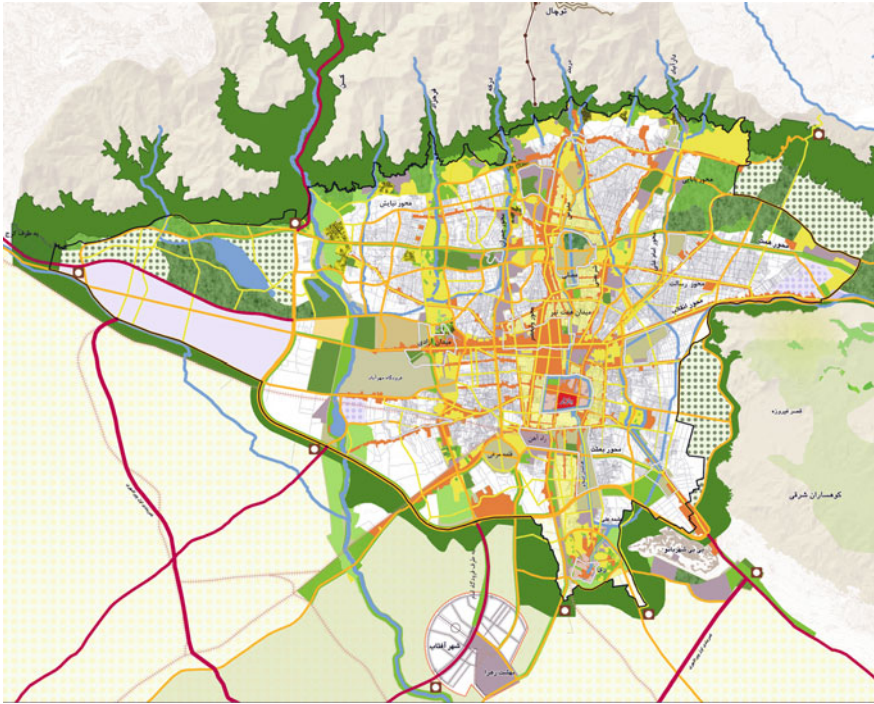
Fig. 5.3 Master Plan of Tehran, 2006 (Tehran Municipality)

Islamic City is nowadays very popular and frequent: for example, the First World Assembly of Islamic Cities in 2013, Qazvin, the aim of which was to produce an Act for Islamic Cities, that would include principles for defining and identifying Islamic urbanity.

   To summarize, the immediate post-revolutionary approach to urban planning and development was a blind reaction to the pre-revolutionary urban development schemes which were modernist in nature, character and appearance; there was no systematic approach or strategy behind it. After the war, while the urgency of systematic urban management was recognized, a technocratic bureaucracy came to power that followed the language of modernist development. Thus, the modernist approach to urban planning became dominant in all post-revolutionary endeavours, as well as in the provision of the new master Plan for Tehran in 2006. Even in this document, the utopian vision of a traditional Islamic city was largely absent and not well integrated into its goals and objectives as well as its planning strategies, at a time when a conservative government was in power and the city of Tehran was introduced as the 'Omm-ol-Goray-e Jahane Islam' (Mother-Town of the Islamic World). The call for Islamic Urbanism raised and advocated by the revolutionary

government remained as official rhetoric; on the ground, the language of modern urban development was the ruling discourse embodied in the construction of highways, high-rise buildings, traffic networks and modern urban amenities. The only places where a slight Islamic taste could be introduced into the cityscape were state-led mega urban projects, like the Navvab Highway and the Milad Tower, as described earlier. By and large, in the course of the next few years Tehran would expand and develop in the indeterminate gap created between the two extremes: the official 'vision' and call for the Islamic city advocated by government agents, and the 'reality' of the reproduction of modernist rhetoric on the ground by the city administration; nor does any productive reconciliation and negotiation look to take place in the future.

In the field of architecture, unlike urban planning in which the modernist approach triumphed over the initial traditionalist wishes of the revolutionary government, various styles and trends coexisted in the context of a postmodern atmosphere. The pluralism that dominated in academic and professional spheres was partly the result of globalization and easy access to the products of the architectural movements and trends across the world, transmitted through the media, as well as through the obsession among young scholars and students to participate in the leading global discourses and progressive tendencies of the time. Consequently, architecture not only continued to oscillate between two extreme poles of Universalization and Traditionalism, but also provided a playground for the scenographic spectacles of new brands of Postmodernism, superficial regionalism, vulgar sentimentalism, deconstructivism, folding, hypersurface, high-tech, green architecture and so on, as taught in numerous architectural schools all over the country. What follows is a selective overview and reading of Iran's post-revolutionary architecture to demonstrate the abovementioned diversity. This reading, of course, is neither chronological, in-depth nor comprehensive, but rather, a collage-like overview that sets out to map how different architectural styles and trends have been, and still are, practiced on the ground.

The traditionalist approach is evident mainly in devotional religious buildings such as mosques and shrines. For example, the Sharif University Mosque by Mehdi Hojjat provides a direct reference to traditional forms and historical patterns. Tehran's Grand Musalla is another interesting example (Fig. 5.4). Located in the Abbas-abad hills the project was planned to serve as the symbol for revolutionary government. Designed by the architect Parviz Moayyed Ahd, the complex was intentionally located on the same site where the Shahestan Pahlavi mega-project was supposed to be constructed: the symbol of the revolutionary regime pitted against the symbol of the Shah's nation. Despite Imam Khomeini's recommendation to build a simple Musalla reminiscent of the early Islamic praying places, the complex consists of a series of religious and cultural buildings with domes, minarets, porticos, portals and so on. Besides the obvious traditional style applied, a symbolic language also tries to anchor the complex to Shiite beliefs, such as the

number of minarets, domes, entrances and courtyards.[3] Under construction since 1988 and still incomplete, hence criticized due to its high costs, slow progress, and inefficient management, the complex is used for both religious and cultural activities, such as the annual International Book Exhibition.

The traditionalist approach is very obvious in the case of the shrine of Imam Khomeini designed by Mohammad Tehrani (Fig. 5.5). Constructed after Imam Khomeini's death (1989), this complex presents a direct association with traditional religious tombs such as that of Imam Reza in Mashhad and Hazrat Masoume in Qom; four minarets and a golden dome make the tomb visible from a distance. As Rizvi (2003: 210) puts it, the tomb 'is both a civic monument and a popular pilgrimage site, both a symbol of the state and a religious edifice imbued with a highly charged mystical ethos emanating from the Shi'i belief in the Imamate'. Although modern construction methods have been used, a layer of reference to traditional and Islamic motifs, reliefs and calligraphy makes the building very much resemble the typical Shiite shrine architecture familiar to Iranians.[4]

The most recent example of traditionalist architecture is the Milad Mosque, a 5400 m^2 edifice within the Milad Tower complex, whose construction began in March 2014 (Fig. 5.6). Like Milad Tower, this building also makes intentional Islamic-Iranian allusions, but in a more direct way, and introduces a representational effect. Designed by Mehdi Hojjat, the project is very much influenced by the traditional layout and spatial configuration of typical Iranian mosques and intentionally tries to deploy their forms and motifs. The main dome is reminiscent of the dome of Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque in Isfahan. The central courtyard is surrounded by porticos, and the construction material is basically white concrete. By and large, this mosque is very conservative and does not offer any innovations in terms of form and appearance, but may function as a traditional addition to the Milad complex and makes a fitting contribution to the 'official architectural rhetoric'.

Influenced by the eclectic nature of international postmodern architecture, a pastiche reproduction of traditional patterns and forms appeared in the post-revolutionary era. These works of architecture—partly promoted by government agents who advocated making formal reference to Islamic culture—used some references to the architecture of the past, in terms of architectural forms, ornaments and motifs. Examples along these lines include Armita (Bokharest) Tower by Behruz Ahmadi (Fig. 5.7) and Bokharest Office Building by Hossein Naseri. Since

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[3]The complex has 14 minarets (the same as the number of holy personages considered as 'innocents' in the Shiite belief system), 12 *Sahns* or courtyards (the number of Shiite Imams), and 5 entrances (the number of *Ahle-Beyt* or the Prophet's family). Additionally, the main Ivan is 72 m high (the number of martyrs in the battle of Karbala) and the dome of the Jami mosque is 63 m high (the number years of the Prophet Mohammad's lifetime). For more details regarding the project see: http://www.musalla.ir/.

[4]Rizvi (2003: 222) categorizes this building as postmodern architecture. However, considering postmodern architecture as formulated by international scholars and theorists and taking into account the postmodern architectural works in post-revolutionary Iran, it is hard to consider Imam Khomeini's tomb as being postmodern in any conventional meaning.
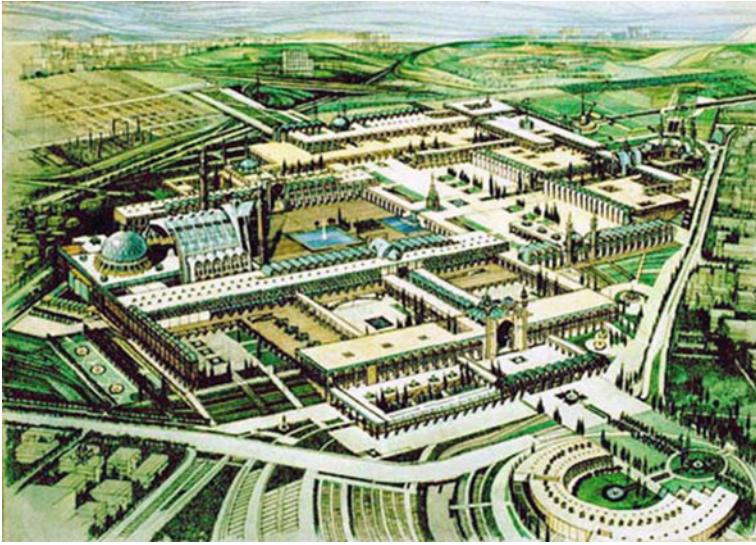
Fig. 5.4 Grand Musalla of Tehran, view to the complex (Tehran Musalla)

Fig. 5.5 Imam Khomeini shrine, general view (Sina Alayi)

the historical and Islamic signs and motifs of postmodernist architecture were enough to convince the governmental bodies who were in favour of the so-called Islamic-Iranian architecture, state-led projects became a suitable occasion for the

Fig. 5.6 Milad Mosque, general view (Tehran Milad Tower)

manifestation of a kind of Postmodernism. Farhangsaraye Khavaran (Khavaran Cultural Centre) is a project of this kind built around 1994 in a poor urban area in southern Tehran. This building presents a set of direct references to Islamic-Iranian architecture, imbued with a postmodern flavour, such as the geometric patterns of the openings and pavements. A postmodern taste is also observable in the two state-led projects designed by Hossein Sheikh-Zeineddin: the Headquarters for the Representatives of the Parliament and the Hafeziyyeh Guesthouse. While the former presents a formal resemblance to the nearby Shamsol Emareh edifice (a Naserid building within the Golestan Palace Complex in an eclectic style), the latter avoids direct references.

The entries for the competition for a new Headquarters for Iran's Oil Industry (2002) demonstrates a distinguished interest in high-tech architecture. Trying to illustrate the high-tech character of the oil industry, these projects redeploy the vocabulary of advanced technology to present the progressive status of Iran in this field. For example, the project proposed by Kalantari and Sheikh-Zeineddin combines the futurist compositions of modernist architecture with the advanced technology of the time.

A formalistic translation of deconstructivist and folding ideas became very attractive in the academic sphere of the 1990s, imbued with an avant-garde attention to contemporary philosophical concepts and supported by the growing number of translations from leading figures such as Derrida, Deleuze, and Eisenman. Deconstruction, from the beginning, has been criticized by traditionalists as nihilistic and anti-rational, and recently they mobilized their links to cancel an event

Fig. 5.7 View to Bokharest Tower (Sina Alayi)

in which Peter Eisenman[5] was invited to present his architectural works and thought.[6] Despite this fact, deconstruction and folding architecture became very

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[5]Peter Eisenman (born 1932) is an American architect and architectural theorist. He has extensively written on the theory of architecture and is considered to be one of the theorists of deconstructivist architecture influenced by the deconstruction philosophy of Jacques Derrida. Eisenman has also designed and built worldwide.

[6]An international conference entitled "From Autonomy to Automation" was planned to be held in Iran, in February 2014. Despite making initial arrangements the individuals in charge could not obtain final approval from the police authorities, under the consideration that this event might have negative consequences for the country. Of course, this was mainly due to negative reactions by the conservative parties and people who claimed that Eisenman is a Zionist, referring to the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe (also known as the Holocaust Memorial) that he designed in Berlin. This reaction was formulated by Abdolhamid Nogrehkar, a conservative architect and

popular during the 1990s in academia and the professional sphere. Mohammadreza Jodat's entry for the complex of Farhangestan (Academy) is a conservative example of this kind, in which the principles of deconstructive composition are dominant. Bahram Shirdel, a leading architect who studied and practiced in the West, introduced a new language of architecture coloured with essentially deconstructionist and folding ideas to the academic sphere of the 1990s (Fig. 5.8).

The works of Farhad Ahmadi present a strong sense of place. For this architect, geometry is a tool through which the formal and the conceptual are combined in an innovative way, to generate a sense of particularity rooted in the culture and context of a place. A prominent example is the Cultural Complex in Dezful (1987–1993), which incorporates a 'bridge between mystic thought and modern achievements', a poetic combination of the new and the old (Labbaf 1998: 52) (Fig. 5.9). This line of thought is followed in his later works, such as the International Cultural Centre (1988–2005) in Isfahan.[7] In a similar way, Saremi's Jolfa Residential Complex (1987–89) in Isfahan has a particular character, in which a familiar sense of space is 'felt' rather than advertised or proclaimed. This hidden sense provokes memories and associations, instead of pushing us into the world of formal references and reproductions.

But the leading figure of a place-specific architecture is Seyyed Hadi Mirmiran (1945–2006). This architect had a very deep understanding of the traditional architecture of Iran and was able to translate it into the modern architecture of the epoch through an intelligent process in which an authentic linkage between tradition and Modernism is generated. For instance, he characterized traditional architecture as the manifestation of three major principles: of 'transparency', 'humility' and 'festivity' (Mirmiran 1995); and thus presented a more semantic understanding of tradition. For him, architectural prototypes acquire a sublime character over time and are transformed into eternal and timeless elements (Mirmiran 2000). On the other hand, metaphors and myths have a universal aspect which elevates them beyond a given territory. Thus, imbuing architectural prototypes with myths and metaphors gives the work of architecture a qualitative character (Mirmiran 1995). In his architecture, one can observe a shift from more formalist reference to traditional archetypes, to a conceptual interpretation imbued with metaphors and poetic associations. While his entry for the competition on the Farhangestan Complex (1994) (Fig. 5.10) as well as his design for the Rafsanjan Sports Complex (1994–

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educator, who published an article in Vatan-e Emrooz daily (30 April 2014), written in a very revolutionary rhetorical style, claiming that Eisenman is a nihilist and anarchist architect and that his works are supported by Western Freemasonry and Zionists. In the end he asked the responsible authorities to prevent the entrance of what he referred to as the soldiers of the enemies, who are aiming for cultural and artistic invasion. To what extent this writing has convinced the authorities not to issue a final approval is unclear. However, this demonstrates the never-ending tensions between traditionalist and avant-gardist forces in architectural discourse and the influence of the former on the official authorities.

[7]Ahmadi's most recent works demonstrate less direct references and associations, and try to be metaphorical, as in the case of the Iran Embassy in Seoul (2000–2003). He is also interested in adapting environmentally sensitive approaches to his work.
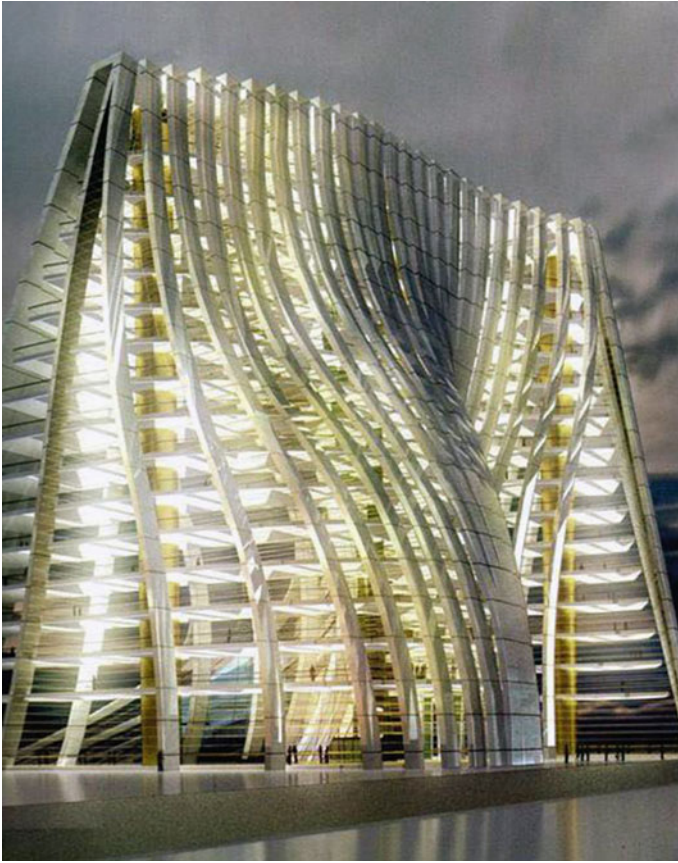
Fig. 5.8 Iran Export Development Bank, Bahram Shirdel (Shirdel Architects)

2001) shows a formal interpretation—the latter reminiscent of a traditional 'Jakhchal' (Ice Reservoir) and the former of the courtyard morphology—his projects for the National Library Building (1995) (Fig. 5.11) and the National Water Museum (1995) were inspired by Iranian poetry and mythology and hence present an indirect application of cultural heritage.

As noted earlier, it is not within the scope of this review to cover all existing efforts in post-revolutionary architectural and urban planning discourse, but rather it intends to map the existing strata which represent a range of styles such as Traditionalism, Postmodernism, Deconstructivism, High-Tech and Particularism. While, as argued earlier, in the field of urban planning the modernist rhetoric can be observed to triumph over others, in the field of architecture there exists a 'rhetoric of anarchy', so that, despite the official interest in traditionalist architecture, all trends are actively present. In other words, the challenge between Tradition and Modernity is still an

Fig. 5.9 Dezful Cultural Complex, view to the courtyard (Author)
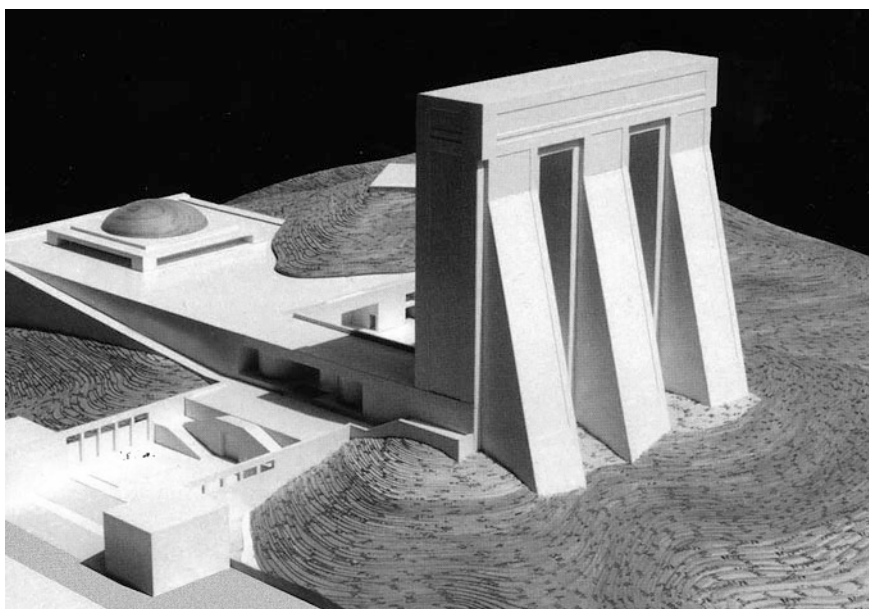
Fig. 5.10 Farhangestan complex, model (Naqshe Jahan Pars Consulting Engineers)
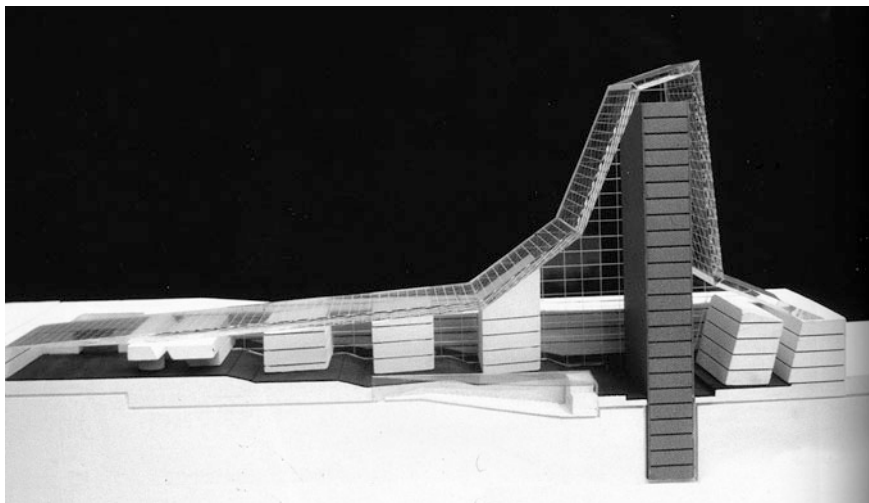
Fig. 5.11 National Library Building, model (Naqshe Jahan Pars Consulting Engineers)

ongoing one, and the effort to occupy a space-in-between still appears as a relevant strategy.

5.2 The Need for 'Place' in the Hostility of 'Space'

Tehran, like many other cities, experienced a severe process of modernization and urban development during the twentieth century, as the result of which the 'place' of the premodern city transformed into the 'space' of the modern city. The outcome was the emergence of localities of placelessness, turning the city into an agglomeration of no-wheres dotted over an open spatial matrix of urbanscape. To understand this, I will discuss the construction of placelessness in the modern city, followed by an analysis to show how this process took place in the case of Tehran. Next, I will argue that the need for 'place' has itself been registered as a vital demand of high importance in an era of globalization, so that the very central concern of Critical Regionalism, namely 'place', is still valid and relevant.

Modern architecture and urbanism have been extensively condemned for creating a homogeneous, monotonous and characterless urbanscape, lacking any profound sense of place. A monotone pattern of building and construction has been reproduced all over the world, without considering the special character or 'genius loci' of place. This uniform urban development neglects diversity and highlights similarity and likeness.

Norberg-Schulz (1980) believes in a twofold urban problem in most of the cities after the Second World War. Spatially, new settlements lacked any kind of density

and enclosure, and all the buildings were laid freely in a park-like landscape. Streets and squares lost their traditional meaning and character, and the figure-ground relationship was damaged. Moreover, the urban tissue lacked any coherence, the town had no imageability, and an omnipresent sense of monotony prevailed. There was an absence of stimuli, surprise and discovery in the urban fabric. All these occurrences indicate a 'loss of place', Norberg-Schulz claims:

> Most modern buildings exist in a 'nowhere', they are not related to a landscape and not to a coherent, urban whole, but live their abstract life in a kind of mathematical-technological space which hardly distinguishes between up and down (Norberg-Schulz 1980: p. 190).

Relph argues that the result of this inauthentic attitude towards place is 'placelessness', 'a weakening of the identity of places to the point where they not only look alike but feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities for experience'. (Relph 1976: 90) 'A placeless world', Edward Casey remarks, 'is as unthinkable as a bodiless self' (Casey 1993: 226). In this placeless world, new roads are not linked to the landscape, but divide it harshly and spread 'placelessness' into the environment. The network of the roads cuts the cityscape or landscape, and lays the groundwork for mass travel and movement. Consequently, social contact is reduced and uniformity becomes endemic.

The main field for the emergence of 'placelessness' is what Relph refers to as 'subtopia', a mindless and purposeless mixing up of all man-made objects. Subtopia points to a uniform, characterless development consisting of monotone, similar buildings and constructions in which the logic of consumerism, commercialism and standardization play the central role. 'The essence of the modern suburb is physical, social and spatial separation. The suburb is spatially separated from the city and, more particularly, each household unit is spatially separated from the others' (King 2005: 99). On the characterlessness of modern suburbs Lewis Mumford writes that they are based on 'a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses lined up at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people of the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television programmes, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods, from the same freezer' (Mumford 1961: 486).

The modern method of urban planning is essentially responsible for these resulting conditions, imposing a kind of 'hyperplanning', a mode of thorough and all-embracing planning which controls and determines everything. 'Hyperplanning involves control over the largest patterns and the smallest details of development; it is based on meticulous research, model-building and analysis; it is the enemy of chance and serendipity' (Relph 1981: 96–97). As the result of this hyperplanning, everything is decided and controlled by experts and professionals, and the people have little possibility of changing the landscape.

In the case of Tehran, the dominant modernist approach to the city-making in both the Pahlavi and post-revolutionary eras, which was imbued with a postmodern flavour in the urban projects of the last two decades, unavoidably reproduced the shortcomings and disadvantages of modernist urban planning, the most significant of them being the interposition of 'placelessness' all over the city. In order to map
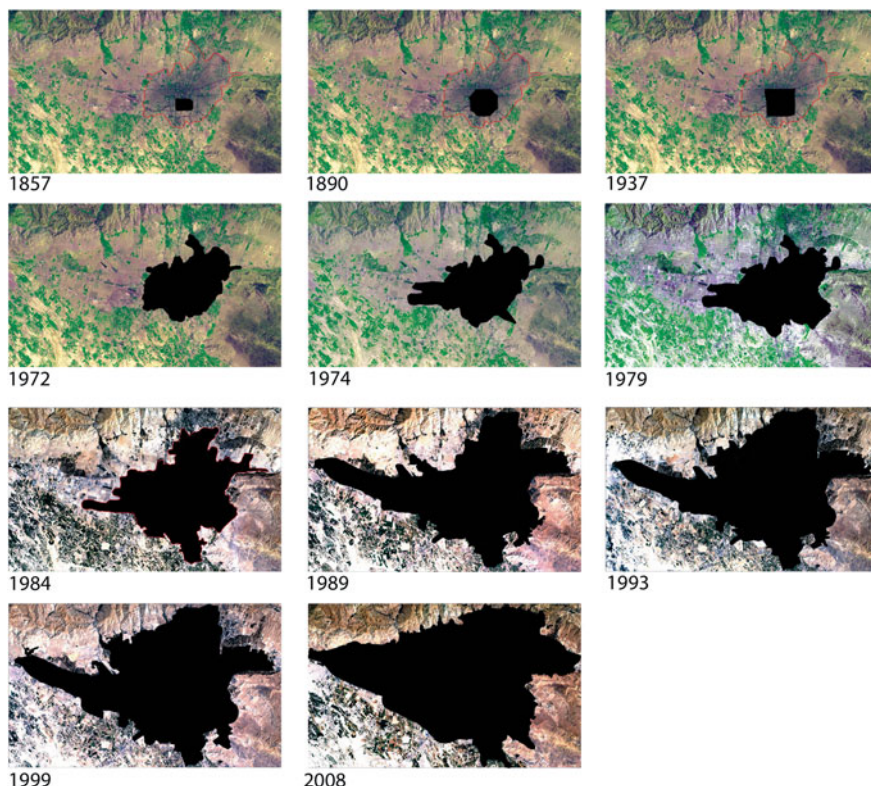
Fig. 5.12 Urban growth of Tehran from the mid-nineteenth century (Author)

and understand the process of production of placelessness in Tehran, it could be informative to explore the urban growth and urban pattern. Figure 5.12 depicts the urban growth of Tehran from the mid-nineteenth century up to now. As can be seen, the pace of growth has been enormous, which denotes a rapid urbanization and suburbanization taking place over the last 150 years. Figure 5.13, which shows the evolution of the built-up areas, depicts a shift in the urban pattern, from the dense texture of the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth century to the sprawl pattern of the mid- and late twentieth century. This shift indicates the loss and fragmentation of place in its traditional sense and its replacement by an open spatial matrix, in the form of new developments. In other words, it shows how a typical enclosed traditional city has evolved into a megacity subtopia, whereby the enclosed place of the city has been transformed into the current fragmented, placeless megalopolis.

Figure 5.14 studies this process in detail, depicting urban profiles from districts of Tehran that were developed at different periods and with different urban patterns. Figure 5.14a shows the traditional core of the city, with its culs-de-sac and inner courtyard typology. This original and typical pattern, still observable at the neighbourhood scale in survivals from the gridiron street networks imposed, has
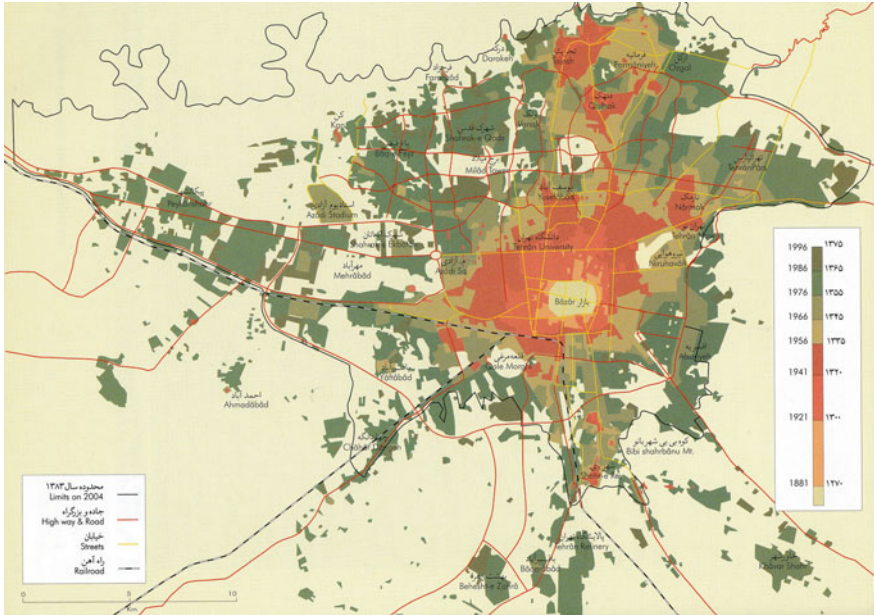
Fig. 5.13 The evolution of the built-up areas in Tehran (Tehran Municipality)

been drastically transfigured in later incarnations. Figure 5.14b shows the Karun district organized in a clear gridiron street network, within which every block is divided into small plots and residential units occupied by low-income families. Here, the courtyard typology has been replaced by a new urban pattern, where each plot is built up on the northern side, leaving a courtyard in the south. Figure 5.14c depicts the Gisha quarter developed during the 1960s, where street networks are more dominant, and all the residential units are organized within a clear-cut gridiron geometry.

In Fig. 5.14d a completely different urban pattern can be observed, a free geometry of streets with large plots of detached residential units, using an extroverted building typology which contrasts with the introverted traditional typology. Called the Sharak-e Gods (Gharb), this quarter was designed and developed by American firms and originally intended to accommodate the international professionals and experts who came to live in Tehran after 1960. The next figure exhibits a centrifugal geometry, resembling a small town or settlement. This quarter, called Dezashib, was originally one of the surrounding villages of Tehran, and in common with many other such satellite villages, has now been absorbed into the city due to the extensive suburbanization of recent decades. Figure 5.14f is a section of Narmak quarter, designed and developed in the 1950s with a distinctive geometry and configuration whereby the entire quarter has been divided into a number of sub-neighbourhoods each of which has a central public space. The last figure, which in contrast to the other figures lacks any regularity and clear order, is a part of
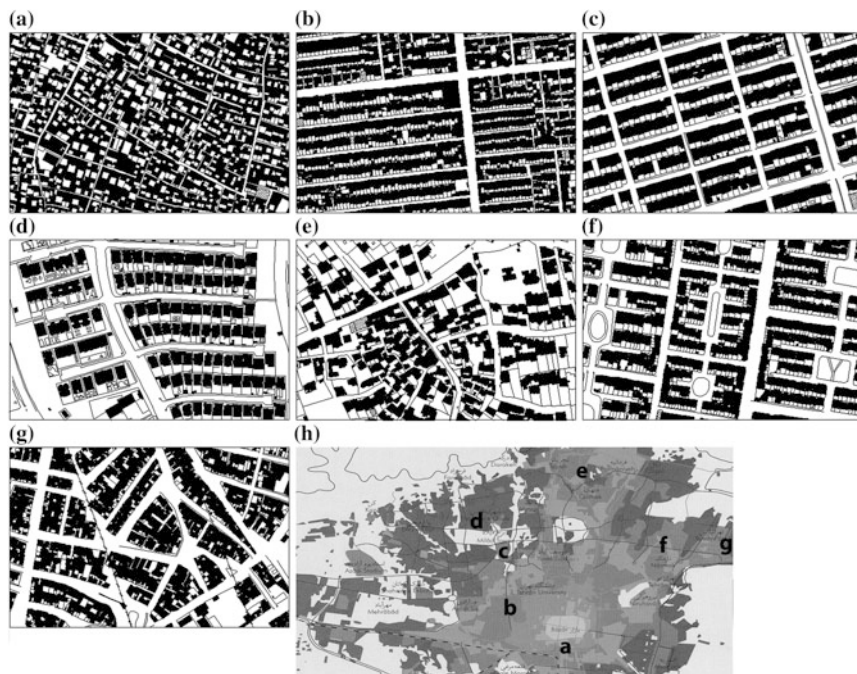
Fig. 5.14 Urban pattern and layout of Tehran in selected districts (Author)

the informal settlement of Khak-Sefid in eastern Tehran, built up in the late 1970s and extensively developed in post-revolutionary times by low-income migrants, with small residential units not following any regular or clear urban pattern. All these figures, which refer to the existing urban pattern typologies in Tehran, show how the original pattern of the city has been replaced by a mosaic of multiple diverse urban textures that lack any order and common language, resulting in an urban text inscribed in different languages and scripts. Both Figs. 5.13 and 5.14 narrate a two-faceted process of placelessness: on the one hand, a transformation from the traditional pedestrian-oriented street network with culs-de-sac, to the gridiron open matrix designed to ease the circulation of vehicles; and on the other hand, a transfiguration of the dense introverted building typology into multi-storey or high-rise apartments.

Thus, the process of urban placelessness starting from the 1930s onwards reached its zenith due to an uncontrolled urban development process which wanted to manifest revolutionary credentials, furthering the interests of disadvantaged citizens. The result is an open matrix of urbanscape which reproduces a sense of placelessness and detachment (Fig. 5.15). Recent endeavours, such as the new Master Plan of Tehran (2006), does not seem to be effective in either controlling or improving the ongoing process of placelessness and the open urban matrix

Fig. 5.15 Aerial view of Tehran, open matrix of urbanscape (Author)

generated. This is due to the immense size of the affected urban areas on the one hand, and the lack of an efficient urban administrative system on the other.

How can we bring the process of placelessness and the expansion of open spatial matrix, aggravated by the omnipresent flux of globalization (Abrahamson 2004), to a halt? Norberg-Schulz (1980) finds the remedy in establishing a 'theory of place' by which a comprehensive conception of the relationship between man and his environment is created. Relph (1976) suggests that this matter does not imply the preservation of old places, nor a return to the traditional way of place-making; the only thing we may do is to provide conditions that may allow rootedness and provoke a sense of place. A secure departure point is thus to acknowledge the existence of 'placelessness' in our society, understand its disadvantages, and plan and design in a way which instils a sense of place and rootedness. As Giddings et al. (2005) remark, in contrast to the neo-liberals and advocates of globalization, the place does matter and is deeply related to a sense of place for citizens. 'Sense of place and community is the soul of the cities and the principles of renaissance of cities celebrate that experience. Cities need their unique sense of being a distinct place, yet many cities have had this undermined by urbanization and urban sprawl' (Choe et al. 2007: 26).

Thus, to halt the overwhelming flux and strong power of globalization and acceleration of placelessness, it is critical to encourage a sense of local identity. Since world cities are oriented more towards global marketplaces than local ones, they are infused with placelessness, and in this context, a crucial challenge for city authorities everywhere is the need to find ways to protect themselves against the

overwhelming power of globalization. In this regard, they must find a healthy balance between preserving a sense of local identity, home and community. According to Relph, 'Place will be central to future planning strategies: There has been a deep epistemological shift away from the rationalistic assumptions of Modernism—assumptions that promoted universal, placeless solutions to environmental and social problems—to an acknowledgement of the significance of diversity' (Relph 2009: 28). This diversity could be appreciated through creating a strong sense of place, rather than advocating global placelessness.

Relph (2009) argues that the social and environmental problems of globalization are locally diverse, and to tackle this problem, a practical sense of place is necessary which reflects the extensibility of postmodern life and grasps the global aspects of the challenges it confronts. 'What is needed is a "pragmatic sense of place" that integrates an appreciation of place identity with an understanding of extensibility. A central aim would be to seek appropriate local actions to deal with emerging, larger-scale social and environmental challenges' (ibid.: 30). Through this strategy, global effects will be tackled locally and adapted to the particularity of the place.

The importance of 'place' in the globalizing world, thus, has not decreased but, rather, has increased and become highlighted. And as a theory of place, the recommendations of Critical Regionalism as portrayed in Chap. 2 are informative and enlightening, suggesting that the contribution of Critical Regionalism could be significant and promising.

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Chapter 6
A New 'Space-in-Between'?

The concluding chapter suggests that taking into account the current conditions in Iran in terms of ongoing architectural and urban practices and the reproduction of urban 'placelessness,' the creation of a new 'space-in-between' is an absolutely critical and vital task. I argue that the central arguments for the concept of Critical Regionalism presented in Chap. 2 and the lessons learnt from the leading architects who created a 'space-in-between' as the manifestation of the theory of Critical Regionalism (Chaps. 3 and 4) can contribute to our understanding of 'Modernity' and 'Tradition' in Iran as laid out in Chap. 1, and pave the way for innovative *Khalq-I Jadids* which reflect and meet needs and requirements of the ever-globalizing urban landscape.

6.1 Towards a New 'Space-in-Between': Challenges and Promises

As I have briefly argued, post-revolutionary architecture and urban planning in Iran oscillate between the two extremes of Traditionalism and Modernism. In the field of urban planning, despite the ignorance of modernist development logic as a result of the reactionary attitude of young revolutionaries, the 'rhetoric of Modernism', coloured with a postmodern flavour, later became the dominant trend. Any official call for 'Islamic Urbanism' remained a call on paper; no significant achievements along these lines are observable, either in the academic sphere or in practice. In the field of architecture, however, the story is even more colourful, controversial and diverse. In fact, all possible trends between the two extremes of modern high-tech and conservative Traditionalism are in operation, generating an architectural landscape where an 'anarchy of rhetoric' prevails. Traditionalist architecture was allowed sufficient space to manifest itself, thanks to state-led mega projects, such as the Grand Musalla of Tehran and Imam Khomeini's tomb, or due to the tradition of

constructing new mosques followed by non-governmental bodies and religious endowments. Nonetheless, the official aspiration for the creation of so-called 'Islamic Architecture' remained at the level of a governmental vision; on the ground, Traditionalism was only a minor segment of the real picture. The growth of architectural schools during the 1980s and 1990s on the one hand, and the accessibility and availability of the productions of the international styles through magazines—and particularly the Internet—on the other, culminated in a state of diversity in the educational system which could hardly be regulated in line with the wishes of officials. Consequently, internationally recognized trends, such as Postmodernism, Deconstructivism, Folding, green architecture, and so on, were all taught and imitated in the schools, and later practiced by qualified architects in the city. Furthermore, some architects even followed the personal tastes of clients who asked for buildings with Roman columns or a Greek façade, and thus created a *bazari* (vulgar) architecture with very eclectic styles.

In this diverse context, something has been always a particular concern for educators and leading practitioners: how to follow international achievements but at the same time, pay attention to roots and traditions? This concern has even been reflected in the avant-gardists' discourse, where they stress the attempt to establish a kind of negotiation with history and tradition, in different affirmative or negative manners. In other words, the very awareness of tradition and creating a dialogue with its essence, elements and forms have always been a significant challenge and struggle. However, despite this awareness, there is no evidence that a systematic mediatory approach exists in post-revolutionary architecture and urbanism; some movements initiated by leading architects such as Hadi Mirmiran could not be cultivated as a systematic body of thought towards a theoretical approach (Shirazi 2007).

I also demonstrated that Tehran experienced a process instilling widespread placelessness as the result of an intense period of urban development and modernism, starting from the 1930s onwards. The 'place' of the pre-modern city was replaced by the 'space' of the modern city, either in the new developments around the city centre, or through the blind insertion of modern traffic networks or urban patterns into already-existing areas that contrasted with the urban structure of the pre-modern city. This process of advancing placelessness and the creation of an open spatial matrix not only did not desist after the Islamic Revolution, but was, on the contrary, aggravated and accelerated due to the lack of any clear and sustaining urban development strategy. Tehran is now an open spatial matrix, lacking any urban logic.

By and large, Tehran's post-revolutionary era narrates a twofold story: the never-ending challenge of Tradition and Modernity in both architecture and urban planning, and the ongoing process of placelessness and the production of an open urban landscape. This fact, thus, brings us to adopt a twofold strategy: the creation of an 'in-between' approach which invites extremes of Modernism and tradition into a status of productive negotiation and constructive dialogue; and the creation of 'place', in its Heideggerian and Arendtian meaning, in order to overcome the hegemony of 'space'. And it is exactly this urgency that makes Critical Regionalism

as a theory of place and a theory of 'in-between' so promising, and also shows the illuminating and informative nature of Iranian architects' achievements in creating a 'space-in-between' during the 1970s.

As discussed in Chap. 2, Critical Regionalism is a 'theory of in-between' and 'theory of place' by nature and by intention. On the one hand, it favours a return to 'place' in its ontological sense and stands against the overwhelming trend for modern space. On the other hand, following Ricoeur's (2007) idea its main concern is the reconciliation of the two contrasting approaches of Tradition and Modernity, thus creating a state of affairs which can be modern and traditional at one and the same time; enjoying the achievements of technology but establishing a rooted world culture. This theory is still valid in the globalized world due to the importance it gives to the subject of 're-interpretation'.

Critical Regionalism, in fact, does not proceed through proposing practical axioms or a solid 'theory of practice', but rather provides some pointers towards achieving a more site-specific understanding of architecture and urban planning. Through advocating a soft process of re-interpretation, any direct and scenographic reference is avoided. As Frampton points out, 'The fundamental strategy of Critical Regionalism is to mediate the impact of universal civilization with elements derived indirectly from the peculiarities of a particular place' (Frampton 2002: 82). In this sense, as Woolsey (1991) spells out, 'Critical Regionalism is a dynamic balance between timeless universal architectural principles and the modifiers of people, places, and events. It is the ideals of Modernism modified by a postmodern concern for history and place. It is a process through which an infinite number of architectural solutions might be produced' (ibid.: 322).

Thus, Critical Regionalism as an architecture of re-interpretation goes beyond a set of solid construction codes and physical regulations derived from the existing local materials, domestic crafts and vernacular forms, and creates ever changing, but place-specific architectural works. It is a regionalism of liberation, rather than a regionalism of restriction, to use Harris's terminology (2007: 58). Critical Regionalism is an exclusive approach, as well as an inclusive one, in the sense that it absorbs the emerging thought of the times, but re-interprets it to harmonize it with the specific character of the region.

In this sense, one may argue that Critical Regionalism is a 'weak theory'; it avoids determinacy and precision, but instead cultivates indeterminacy. It moves between two extremes or binary positions and thus lacks a clear framework and solid axioms. In this way, it distances itself from the 'precision' of modern architecture and the 'homogenizing' aspect of international style, and their fruitless attempts to prescribe a universal landscape for all regions. Instead of proposing clear slogans and axioms in the manner of Le Corbusier's 'five points' or Robert Venturi's 'duck and decorated shed', as Eggener advocates (2007), Critical Regionalism provides some 'thematic concerns' which should be re-interpreted by the architect according to the particularity of the given region and place.

Besides, the binary oppositions of Critical Regionalism, as Frampton (1996) reminds us, represent a 'dialectical condition' through which a constructive interaction between two poles may be created. This 'site of confrontation' has its roots

in the existing 'condition' of the given region where two extremes are in a continuous challenge and tension. Therefore, to emphasize this interaction is already to recognize a current 'state of the mind' and to provide a scene of interaction from which a new situation may be born. Critical Regionalism is also opposed to ideology and Nationalism. As Frampton remarks, 'Regionalism only occasionally makes itself evident as a particular ideology for, by definition, it changes from place to place' (1982: 5). Critical Regionalism resists any ideological authority and totalitarianism from two points of view: first, it is rooted in 'place' and the 'character' of place changes from one locale to the other; second, it is the outcome of the individual re-interpretation of the designer based on the culture and character of the given site, through a subjective process that is free from any ideological burden. Although ideologies bind themselves to place, they pick up and selectively highlight those particular aspects of a place which meet their narrow-minded objectives, which are mainly formal aspects; and generalize these as the essential and eternal character of the nation. This selective approach neglects the very dynamic dimension of culture and its openness to other cultures, which is in contrast to the critical regionalist understanding of 'world culture'. From another point of view, ideological architecture prescribes direct associations and references to the past and to historic symbols and motifs, in order to evoke a populist, nostalgic emotion. Critical Regionalism disagrees with any direct imitation of antecedent forms, and rejects the reduction of the work of architecture to pastiche and superficial reproduction.

But a final critical question needs to be addressed: what can be learnt from the significant architecture of the 1970s created by the architects in question, and what might be their contribution to the establishment of a new 'space-in-between'? The experience of the 1970s provides us with some very promising pointers, as follows.

It teaches us that creation of a mediatory approach, which I called 'space-in-between', is not necessarily a theoretical aspiration or a play upon words, but an achievable practice. This experience also suggests that a parallel effort is needed in both theory making and practice; while the essential principles of the movement should be theorized and articulated, they also need to be practiced and embodied in architectural works which are tangible and visible. This, of course, demands a sense of resistance; so dominant trends and official prescriptions should be challenged and questioned. What the architectural works of 1970s teach us is that, if they were capable of producing place-specific, internationally recognized and significant pieces of architecture in the conditions pertaining in the 1970s, and hence could create a 'space-in-between' rooted in the essential characteristics of that society, then a new critical regionalist architecture should also be generated in contemporary Iran in order to create a new 'space-in-between', that is more adaptable and responsive to the characteristics and conditions of the globalized world. The achievements of the 1970s guide us to move towards this new 'space-in-between'.

To summarize, the central arguments of Critical Regionalism are valid in the case of Iran: despite the omnipresent process of globalization, the significant achievements of three architects, Kamran Diba, Nader Ardalan and Hossein

Amanat can provide us with some pointers for generating, establishing and maturing a new version of 'space-in-between', corresponding with the very nature of the Iranian society and culture in a globalized world. Of course, providing pointers does not imply that their architectural works should be replicated in any way, but rather suggests that innovative designs, *Khalq-I Jadids*, should be created which set-into-work the place of today and create 'urban oases' within the ever-globalizing urban landscape.

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