Synthesis of the Forms of Submission

In the first part of this study we considered the structure of each form of submission independently. In this section, we will explore the coexistence of properties with different forms of submission in the traditional Muslim built environment, and then compare this coexistence with the contemporary environment to form a theoretical framework for the second half of the book.

In any built environment, the five forms of submission are entangled in such a complicated way that it is difficult to separate and delineate them. As the composition of the built environment is complex in terms of physical elements so is the coexistence of the forms of submission, since each physical element can be in any form. For example, a resident who owns an apartment in a condominium may own, jointly with his downstairs neighbour, the floor that separates their dwellings. The floor is in the unified form in which the party is the two neighbours together. At the same time, the party walls of the building can be owned by all the owners of the condominium. The external walls of his apartment are in the permissive form in which he is only a member of the owning and controlling party. He may use a parking lot that is controlled by the condominium residents and owned by the owner of the adjacent property — dispersed form. His furniture is in the unified form, though he may have a piece of furniture that he has leased which he controls — possessive. Furthermore, his condominium may be located in a compound owned and controlled by his institution — possessive. The streets of the town he lives in are in the dispersed form. The complexity of the coexistence of the forms of submission invites a careful inquiry.

We have seen that intervention by an outside party was the main reason for a shift of property from one form of submission to another, and that the most affected and effectual claim is control. Because of this intervention, the coexistence of the forms of submission in the traditional built environment differs from the contemporary ones.

From the users’ point of view, the coexistence of the forms of submission with respect to control can be classified into two extremes.
The first is one in which users have full control over their properties with no external influence, and each user owns and controls his property. Each property is self-made and self-governed. The whole environment is a series of adjacent unified forms of submission. I will call this coexistence **autonomous synthesis**. The second extreme is one in which users have no control whatsoever and do not own the properties. Paternalism is the policy of the controlling and owning parties and users have little or no responsibility. The environment is composed of properties in the permissive or dispersed forms. I will call this **heteronomous synthesis**. In this synthesis the percentage of the controlling and owning parties regarding users is much lower than the autonomous synthesis.

Most built environments are a mixture of both syntheses, yet it is possible to recognise the prevalence of one over the other. In an autonomous synthesis some owners may lease their dwellings, and this will not affect the state of the environment as much as if it were owned and controlled by one party, as in a housing project. In the first case the percentage of owners and controllers is still high in the environment, while in the second — the housing project — it is low.

The way elements are composed in the built environment invites a relationship of intervention between the parties of the different properties which in turn influence the coexistence of the forms of submission. In Diagram 3.1, because the dwellings are often surrounded by streets (H), the party that controls the street may impose regulations on the dwellings’ owners. But if the dead-end street (G) is unified, that is, owned and controlled by the users of that space (a, b, c, d, e and f), and those users as one party cannot impose regulations on the houses’ owners, and if the street (H) is controlled by a party that does not or cannot impose regulations on the dwellers, or it is composed of Gs, then this means that the dwellings are merely inside or surrounded by streets and the potential intervention necessitated by the relative positions of properties is eliminated. In short, as long as the parties of such shared spaces as streets are composed of the surrounding parties and do not impose regulations on others’ property, the synthesis is autonomous. On the other hand, some properties may be unified but subject to regulation of the shared property’s party. Then the synthesis is heteronomous.

Property in the autonomous synthesis, whether unified or not, is not subject to rules. Parties have complete freedom within their property. Hence, the only burdens on the properties’ parties are interfaces with adjacent properties. Any dispute between two parties (a & b, as in Diagram 3.1) is their own responsibility. Therefore, extensive dialogue and consequent agreements to settle disputes between parties should be expected in the autonomous synthesis. This is especially true if there are no mediators, rules or principles to settle disputes, as otherwise the built environment would be chaotic. In the heteronomous synthesis, however, any dispute between two
properties (c & d, as in Diagram 3.2) is the responsibility of the external dominant party (H). Agreements are not needed. The controlling party creates its own organised environment.

Finally, the two syntheses exemplify two distinct attitudes and ideologies. The autonomous synthesis is a laissez-faire attitude. Its ideology is that each party knows and can accomplish what is best for itself. Non-intervention is the applied doctrine. Heteronomous synthesis, on the other hand, reveals a paternalistic attitude in which the governing body distrusts the capabilities of parties. Thus intervention is seen to be necessary.

At the outset, intervention is most likely in shared spaces such as streets, since responsibility is dispersed among the many members of the controlling party. The more individuals in the party, the less responsibility the individual has. This fact affects the condition of the property. In the same way, the more individuals in a party, the more likely it is that an agency, such as a municipality, will be established to represent the users, creating a party that is remote from the property. This will also affect the state of the property.

SIZE AND REMOTENESS OF PARTIES

In Chapter 2 we used the phrase “change of identity” of parties. The change of identity is caused by a) the change of the size of the party and/or b) its remoteness. When the municipality claims ownership of dead-end streets, the residents are no longer the owners; the owner is an outsider, remote from the property. The same can be said of control. Public housing, built and controlled by the state and occupied by the needy, is characterised by remoteness of control. As will be seen, remoteness of the controlling or owning party will impoverish the property. Remoteness rarely applies to users, since using implies proximity.

We will use the term “size of a party” to refer to the number of individuals composing a party. The number of participants in a party may increase or decrease. A house owned by a household may be bequeathed and owned jointly by the successors who live in it. An apartment building owned and controlled by an individual can be bought by a corporation, or vice versa. Thus we will use the terms “large” or “small” party to refer to the size of the party.

There is often a proportional relationship between the size and the remoteness of the owning and controlling party. The larger the party the more likely that it will be remote. Naturally, large parties cannot inhabit small properties. Owners of one small house cannot all live in the house. Logically, this proportional relationship does not apply to the using party. If the user’s number increases it does not mean that they are remote. To use is to occupy the property.

Another interesting proportional relationship exists between the size of property and the size and remoteness of parties. Ordinarily, a
larger property implies a larger or more remote controlling or owning party. An example is the state, a large and remote party which owns large estates. Obviously, exceptions to this proportional relationship do exist. An individual may own a mansion, or conversely many individuals may jointly own and control a small shop.

**NIGH PARTY**

Some internal decisions by a resident — such as connecting two rooms — do not affect parties of adjacent properties, and a neighbour’s challenge of such a decision would clearly be intervention. However, if the decision to create a window from which the creator may overlook his neighbour’s house is opposed by the affected neighbour, this is not an intervention, since the window affects both parties. That is to say, some decisions by the residing party within its property directly or indirectly affect other parties. In the case of direct affect, the affected party can be adjacent, as in the case of digging a well near the property’s boundary. Or it may be farther away, as in the case changing the function of a building from a dwelling to a tannery, whose odour can affect the neighbours of another block.

We need a term to refer to these affected parties. The term should also include parties who, though not affected, still have the right to object because they are partners. For example, the neighbours of a dead-end street or the owners of a condominium have the right to object to an individual’s action although they may not be affected by it. A sufficient term is **nigh party.** The nigh party is never remote. It refers to a residing party in cases of dwellings, or partners of shared property in cases of a condominium, or a resident in the neighbourhood in cases such as transforming a property to a tannery. The term nigh party suggests all or any of the participants, residing or affected parties, depending on the nature of the action and the nature of the property.

**PARTY’S INITIATIVE**

A party’s initiative and consequently the property’s condition is related to its nighness. Nigh parties are most likely to initiate actions. Remote parties may not be cognizant of the property’s needs and may not respond, or may act inappropriately. A house owner who resides in his property is more attentive to his property than an absentee landlord. A landlord pays more attention to his property than does a housing agency.

The nigh party also means the largest residing party, that is, the party composed of the largest number of property users, and the one most likely to take initiative. For example, a corridor in an apartment building can be controlled by one person. This one-person party may not respond the same way a party composed of all residents would. It is possible that such a person is acting as represen-
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tative; in such cases all the residents are, in fact, controlling if they have the power to influence that person's decisions. If the residents do not have the power to influence this person, then he may act according to his own interest, which may not match the residents' interests. Thus a small party is not necessarily good. Similarly, a large party is one which is not residing in or using the property. Thus it is remote and may fail to take initiative, since responsibility is dispersed among the members. Hence, it is not good either. A large-remote party is ominous for the property, and conversely, a large-nigh party is commendable.

An investigation of the synthesis of the forms of submission explores the relationships between parties of different properties. Since we understand the structure of each form of submission, the analysis of the relationship between the parties controlling different properties is possible. This analysis gives us a comprehensive under-

3.1 The corner of a house was hit by a car because the street is narrow at that spot. The owner constructed metal pipes to protect his property. The next door neighbour did the same. The nigh party initiated action.

3.2 Old Dhaka. Boats owned by those who transport people. Both the owner and the people are very poor, yet the cleanliness and good condition of the boats are striking compared to the surrounding environment, where responsibility, especially for the river, is dispersed.
standing of the parties’ actions, which affects the state of property. The investigation is circular, giving us a comprehensive picture of the differences between traditional and contemporary environments.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FORMS OF SUBMISSION**

A form of submission does not inform us about the physical nature of property — whether it is large or small, built or open. It does not indicate its function — whether residential, commercial or institutional. It does not tell us if it is public or private. Furthermore, any object may fall into any form of submission. What, then, is the significance of the forms of submission for the understanding of the physical environment?
The model can significantly improve the quality of research on the built environment and the conclusions that are drawn from it. Research on architecture and the built environment in the Muslim world, with the exception of technical studies, investigates the influence or interrelationship between one or more factors and their relationship with the built environment. These factors appear in the titles as such key words as economic, technological, climatic, social and so on. Since the complexity of the built environment often makes it impossible for a comprehensive investigation, researchers select some factors, skilfully isolate them from the totality, and then investigate the impact of those factors on other factors in the environment. Some possible topics are “What is the impact of economy or climate on the built environment?”; “Does the social environment affect the physical environment or vice versa?”; “How does industrialisation relate to the economy and the physical form of the built environment?”. Notably, most studies do not consider the question of responsibility to be basic, but rather as one among many factors that can be investigated separately.

In any research dealing with the physical built environment, case studies are inevitable. Researchers implicitly or explicitly derive conclusions from these case studies, or use them to test their hypotheses. The problem lies in these case studies, because all case studies involve human behaviour, actions and motives as well as physical elements such as buildings, streets, furniture and infrastructure.

Any human can be a user, controller or owner of property, or a member of a party that uses, controls, or owns property. Thus, there are instances where human activities or relationships between individuals are influenced by their position as a party or a member of a party, and the chance of misinterpreting these sources do exist. At the same time, any physical element in a case study exists in some form of submission which reveals a specific state of well-being. When that physical element is observed without reference to its form of submission, it will be misinterpreted. For example, in a squatter settlement or public housing, the residents may not improve their environment as they do not own or control it. This lack of improvement by residents will affect the condition of the environment. The housing authority considers the state of the property to be disastrous, and researchers are asked to find out why. Economists see poverty as the main cause, sociologists attribute the problem to a social misunderstanding by the designers, the municipality is worried about its physical appearance, and the World Bank is concerned with the lack of infrastructure. Attempts to improve the situation are external, and the question of responsibility is rarely raised. **But because the real problem is not identified, the situation cannot be changed.** For example, if infrastructure is introduced, it will be used by the residents, owned by the state, and controlled by a housing agency or other third party. The infrastructure is in the dispersed
form of submission and is most likely in a dissipated condition. Results will not be satisfactory. Once again, researchers wonder what went wrong.

Another example is the investigation of social interaction between neighbours. Neighbours in condominiums who own, control and use their circulation zones (the unified form of submission) behave differently from those living in leased apartments (permissive form of submission) or occupying public housing (dispersed form). The difference in behaviour is the result of their relative position as parties towards property in the various forms of submission. Since researchers do not take these differences and their causes into account, mistaken conclusions are inevitable.

A commonly misunderstood factor is poverty. Architects and policy-makers often regard the environment of the poor as appallingly inadequate. Those environments that are controlled and owned by users, that is, those in the unified form of submission, are the best that can be achieved by the users given their state of poverty. The issue in such cases is not architecture; it is poverty. On the other hand, a housing project built by the state, controlled by an agency and used by a certain group of people — army officers, for example — may be considered by some experts to be acceptable if not successful. The state of the property is dispersed, but the property itself is maintained by a constant flow of money. The unstable state of the property is camouflaged by wealth, while in the first case — poverty — the unified state of property was camouflaged by lack of wealth. Observers of the two cases will probably conclude, quite wrongly, that the housing project in the dispersed form is in a much more stable state than is the unified property of the poor. Economic privilege has fooled them. We cannot and should not compare two environments in different forms of submission. If we must compare them, we must also bear in mind the difference in the forms of submission.

In cases where researchers focus on the economy, properties may be compared to analyse the impact of the economy on, say, preservation. Comparison of elements from different forms of submission will mislead observers. They may compare a well-to-do neighbourhood with a poor one. The well-to-do families may own and control their properties, which is the unified form. The poor may not own or control their properties, which is the dispersed form. The impact of the economy on preservation is ascertained, but in a very exaggerated way, because a wealthy unified property was compared with a poor dispersed one.

Unless the forms of submission are well defined, these factors cannot be identified. Misidentification and consequent misinterpretation of the built environment have caused continuous failures and sorrow, especially in the Muslim world and in so-called developing countries.
Within each form of submission factors are unisolatable. In this model we cannot compare one property with another; we can only compare a property with itself in a different form of submission. The size of the owning, controlling or using party greatly influences the state of the property. A room used by ten people will probably deprecate more than one used by one person, since responsibility for its use is distributed between ten individuals. On the other hand, the room used by one person who does not own or control it (situation A2 in Diagram 3.3) will be in a different state if it is used and controlled by one person who also owns it (situation A1). The same applies to a party of ten persons. Which room will be in a better state, the one used by one person and controlled or owned by outsiders (situation A2) or the one owned, controlled and used by ten persons (situation B1)? Our model cannot answer the question for many reasons. The financial capability, educational level, awareness of the involved parties and other conditions can differ between situations A2 and B1. The forms of submission inform us only about the state of a property within specific parameters. Even if the two properties A2 and B1 are quite similar, there will always be differences in factors such as the location of the property or the users’ behaviour.

This point has to be understood. As shown in the diagram, we can only compare properties vertically, not horizontally. To compare properties using this model, all circumstances — climate, economy, building materials, users’ educational level, size of the party, etc., must be the same, which is practically impossible. This is the strength of the model. It means that a property can only be compared to itself. The model accepts all circumstances and tells what will happen to the property if the form of submission is changed. For example, it will inform us that a house in situation A2 will be improved if we unify the responsibility as in situation A1. This is why the model has a predictive value.