

I On the Islamic House

N. Islam, rapporteur

This does not purport to be a thorough or even a definitive analysis of the Islamic house; it is only a slightly elaborated roster, in no particular order, of some major areas of concern. First on our list of housing criteria is the maintenance of privacy, which differs in degree based upon the actual needs of different socioeconomic groups. This emphasis on family privacy should not conflict with the equally important concept of neighbourliness. Another point is that dwellings must be adaptable to changing social conditions; increment is encouraged as individual economic states improve. Low-income housing should not be considered permanent—an initially rude dwelling can either adapt itself to change or be altogether altered.

Questions of security and safety, as well as economy and austerity, ought to be considered in an evaluation of housing. Energy should be conserved and climate adjusted for or adapted to, and attention given to both internal and external housing spaces. Emphasis in construction should be placed upon the appropriate use of available local materials.

A house should encourage the practice of faith, not inhibit it. Those building codes or legislative acts which are inimical to the faith are undesirable. Housing design and construction should reflect the user's perception of his local, social and cultural identity. Houses within a community should reflect a sense of equality, and all should be aesthetically satisfying. These are some important design criteria for the Islamic house; the key to successful and appropriate construction would lie in the flexibility of the design and the attitude of the user.

II On the Islamic Community

H. Majid, rapporteur

Control within an Islamic community derives from two sources: first, the people's role in defining local constraints, and second, the role of the public authorities. The community itself must recognize its limitations before it can become involved with any public authority.

Perhaps we would do well to define "community." Within the context of housing, it includes three elements. A community is formed by a group of identifiable individuals; it shares common territory and materials; and it has a coherent social structure. The teachings and practices of Islam should be reflected in the physical fabric of the community.

The community is responsible for its own social structure, and it has full freedom of relationship with outside bodies, including government authorities. It recognizes the balance of interest between itself and a network of other communities and authorities. We have attempted a one-sentence summation, as follows: an Islamic community is a collective expression, in some physical form, of a recognizable group of predominantly Muslim individuals who share a common territory and a coherent social structure.

III On the Nature of Professional Involvement in Housing

S. Cantacuzino, rapporteur

Three discrete avenues of involvement effectively define the role of the professional in housing. There are professionals employed by a public or private agency, those employed by the local users, and those whose accountability to both users and sponsors is voluntary; the first two alternatives are the more common. In addition, there are three basic actions necessary for housing. First is the selection and acquisition of land, second is the gathering of people who will use this land, and third is the provision of design and maintenance of buildings which constitute development of the land. These three actions in turn involve three kinds of people: those with responsibility for the rules of the game, those responsible for finances, and those charged with implementing the physical forms of the development.

A number of factors and persons leave their mark on each of the three action categories. In the first, selection of land, we see not only planners but also political forces, finances and the general populace. The formation of community plots which accord with Islamic practice would come under this category. The second category, the formation of groups of people, involves users, associations of users, sponsoring or mediating agencies that bring people together (like the local *mullah*), politicians, and specialists like sociologists and anthropologists. Finally, a very long list of people involved in the building process influences the third action category, the provision and maintenance of buildings: architects, financiers, builders, craftsmen, merchants and users are just a few.

Our group went beyond its brief and tried to isolate criteria for each of the three categories. For the selection of land we have only one criterion: whether the action taken

increases the citizens' choices of where they can live within a viable operative density. For the formation of groups of people we can cite several criteria: it should be a mutually self-supporting group, one with maximum eligibility in which a number of persons exercise choice in its formation. The group should also evince a tendency to equalization.

Under the third category, land development via the provision and maintenance of buildings, we would list six criteria. First is the equity of use of improvements and investments; second, accessibility and adaptability; third, the way the edifice is built and degree to which it is maintained. The last three criteria are best put in the form of questions. Can this construction contribute to income generation? How responsive is it to the way of life of its users? And finally, does the building have a variety of compatible alternative uses? These are but some of the points raised in our discussion of the nature and hierarchy of professional involvement in housing.



Jakarta environs, Indonesia: a typical traditional community

Photo: Aga Khan Awards