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Five seminars have been held prior to the first Award in October 1980. Their objectives were to establish contact with professionals, institutions and governments; to survey the contemporary built environment in the Islamic world; and to create a heightened awareness of its problems and solutions. Through these dialogues, there also emerged a conceptual base upon which the present Award and all future Awards could grow. The *Proceedings* of each seminar have been published; this fifth volume completes the first cycle of the ongoing survey of contemporary architectural transformations within the Islamic world.

Previous seminars considered the inherent qualities of Islamic architecture, their role in contemporary design and their importance in creating images of identity. They looked at specific ideas and examples related to the conservation and reuse of individual buildings and areas; at the processes, problems and solutions of low-income mass housing; and now at large-scale, architect-designed environments for public use as reflections of societal aspirations.

Construction of large-scale complexes abounds in countries which are undergoing rapid economic and demographic change. This is even more true of countries which have recently gained or regained their independence. Architecture not only houses new or expanding activities, but also serves as the image of a political and social entity. Buildings which most often serve this dual utilitarian and symbolic role are those for public use: universities, sports centres, housing schemes, museums, commercial centres and airports.

The seminar held in Amman, Jordan dealt with a variety of such complexes and explored several of the background issues which shape them. Three general categories of public places were considered: places of an educational nature; places for recreational and tourist use; and commercial and institutional places. The presentation of these public buildings, in general medium to large-scale projects, helped to highlight possible design solutions and to

illustrate their acceptability to decision makers.

Historically, the majority of Muslim settlements reflected a holistic integration of functions within the urban form. Contemporary towns and cities, however, have tended to develop specialized complexes. While several types were identified for the purposes of the seminar, such typologies should be seen only as a method of investigation and not as a preference. It is important that the location and role of that most characteristic public place, the mosque, be maintained within each type.

The discussions of building examples tackled two basic problems in our societies: Islam and change. The renewed understanding of Islam and its relationship to contemporary political and economic realities will give rise to the Muslim architecture of the future. Underlying all discussions of public buildings was the larger question of the future shape of Muslim societies. It is the response of these societies to political, economic and social change, and their renewed understanding of Islam as a dynamic faith and a way of life, that will give rise to their future architecture. The present buildings or projects or complexes can be seen as signposts to be used as models only if suitable.

It is interesting to note that many of the complexes discussed were hybrids which have developed on a base of regional architectural language. Such is the case with those created for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, and so too were the examples from North Africa and Pakistan. Perhaps the new architecture for Muslims will of necessity be one of regional eco-cultural zones, not one based on a nationalistic interpretation of commonplace architectural idioms. Such a concept is only theoretical direction; only time will reveal the reality.

Few of the issues discussed in Amman were unique to the Muslim world. Their wide applicability raised the question of whether specific regional solutions would be of value elsewhere. The deliberations of this seminar as well as of the previous seminars have shown that there is an

increasing awareness and focus on the built environment of the Islamic world by its inhabitants and by outsiders. Undoubtedly, part of this awareness is due to its increasing economic and political role. But the East-West and North-South dialogues also represent a new phase in intellectual exchange. This exchange, both in theory and in practice, can perhaps bring about the articulation of a new architectural theory and vocabulary. This could provide continuity for Muslims dispersed all over the world, and provide important links between the wide variety of responses to climatic, sociological, technological and political change.

Common grounds are being discovered and contradictions are becoming apparent. Our quest, which renews this sharing and these searches, continues the momentum of tradition and of the recent past into the dawning fifteenth century of Islam. We can look forward to the development of some relevant and important directions toward a new and appropriate architecture.

Seminar Place and Structure

His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan attended the housing seminar in Jakarta, and invited the Award to hold a seminar in Jordan. When the subject of public places was selected by the Steering Committee, it was felt that Amman would provide a suitable setting for the fifth seminar. It is a city which is rapidly expanding, and one in which many new buildings for public use are being planned and built. Amman is also geographically central to the Muslim world, and provided the Award with the opportunity to hold a seminar in the Arab heartland of Islam.

The seminar was structured around six formal sessions, commencing with a formal opening ceremony which included speeches by His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan and His Highness the Aga Khan. The stage for discussions was set by Dean Porter and Mr. Ardalan. Case studies of different types of public places were then presented, and three smaller workshops

followed with reports to the seminar. In the final session, participants summarized their concerns and ideas both for the Award and for directions toward an architecture for Muslims.

Between some of the formal sessions, the local architectural profession hosted the participants on a site visit to some recent buildings for public use in Amman. This gave the participants, many of whom were unfamiliar with Jordan, a chance to experience the new emerging architecture firsthand. The participants also continued discussions at informal meetings and presentations, which often extended into the early hours of the morning. Particularly noteworthy were a series of individual slide presentations. All this substantially increased the value and excitement of the meetings.

As is our custom, the sequence of discussions has been altered and edited for these *Proceedings* so that they may be more useful to the reader.

A Note of Thanks

We acknowledge with heartfelt thanks the role played by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and his office in facilitating the success of the seminar. We would also like to record our appreciation to the Royal Scientific Society of Jordan and to the Minister and Department of Tourism and the Department of Antiquities for their support. We add a special note of appreciation to engineer Raif Nijem of Yarmouk

University for all his support, assistance, advice and site visit arrangements, in his capacity as local convenor of the seminar.

I wish to commend Linda Safran, General Editor of this series on Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World, for her diligence and painstaking care spent in making the fifth *Proceedings* readable, useful and interesting. I also thank Portia Steele for her thoroughness and cheer in preparing difficult transcriptions and final typings. The seminars and *Proceedings* would not have been possible without the fine back-up of every member of the Philadelphia and Geneva office teams.



Amman, Jordan: construction of the new Parliament Building. Architect Rasem Badran Completed 1980

Photo: S. Abuhamdeh/MP Centre