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Paper Abstract:

The City and the University, or "the Whole and the Part": Ecochard, Doxiadis, and University Planning in Pakistan, 1953-68

Soon after the achievement of independence (1947), the new nation-state of Pakistan embarked on ambitious programs of urban reconstruction and modern architectural design. Fuelled by Cold War technical assistance programs, these initiatives often recruited international architects and planners, recasting them as practitioners of Third World "development." This paper revisits the archives of two such renowned urbanists, Michel Ecochard and Constantin Doxiadis, who were involved in various city planning and architectural schemes in Pakistan between 1953-73. In particular, it examines their work on two major university campus schemes: Ecochard's designs for the University of Karachi (1959) and Doxiadis' new campus for the University of Punjab (1968). Reading these projects in conversation with each other, as well as against the wider corpus of their planning work in the decolonizing world, this paper traces the emergence of overlapping ideas about population, mobility, and evolutionary urbanism in the Third World.

In their roles as "development experts," Ecochard and Doxiadis engaged not only with problems of rapid urbanization —such as congestion, crowding, and "uncontrollable growth" — but also the meaning and methods of "modernization" as an ideological tenet of postcolonial planning. Their archives reveal multilayered debates about how to stage the process of modernization through "evolutionary" urban planning, particularly by remaking the dynamic between population density and demographic transformation. This relationship, as I argue, was central to how Ecochard and Doxiadis, in different ways, approached the problem of a modern university for Pakistan. Rather than view it as an architectural endeavor centered around the concept of an enclosed campus, the university acted as a uniquely generative site for reimagining the relationship between urban growth, demographic mobility, and evolutionary principles of human "development" writ large.

Panel Abstract:

South Asian Urbanism: From Colonial Cities to Post-Colonial Modernisms

This panel brings together a diverse group of scholars to discuss the nature of spatial practice, urban negotiation, and evolutionary urbanism in colonial and post-colonial South Asia. Geographically the session spans a territory that covers parts of both India and Pakistan and their entangled urban pasts in between. The session explores the questions of "modernization," migration, urban amalgamation, and everyday negotiation to shed light on the complex urban biographies of Southern Asia. The four papers look at interactions and negotiations between planners, builders, architects, residents, and migrants as they carved out spaces for themselves in their cities. Historiographically, the panel focuses on sites that have often been left out from the canons of urban history in South Asia. By bringing together voices from the spatial margins of the discourse—spanning colonial and post-colonial temporalities in a single analytic field—the panel proposes to tread new directions in the study of South Asia's urban past.

Primarily, the panel foregrounds the question of dialectics in shaping the nature of urban form and experience. Meher Ali and Michael Dodson scrutinize the question of international modernism in spatial and social planning in post-partition India and Pakistan. Ali's focus on building university spaces in Pakistan and Dodson's emphasis on the building of "new towns" in Delhi demonstrate the emergence of overlapping ideas about migration, population, mobility, and evolutionary urbanism in the Third World. In a similar vein, the dialectical nature of interaction between the inhabitants of the city and those who govern it plays a pivotal role in the works of Brock DeMark and Ujaan Ghosh. Both DeMark and Ghosh demonstrate how the marginalized residents of colonial Kanpur and Puri innovatively carved out a space for themselves in the face of increasing exclusion brought about by powerful pressure groups.