

## **AIPS Travel Grant Final Report**

Project Title: The City and the University, or “the Whole and the Part”: Ecochard, Doxiadis, and University Planning in Pakistan, 1953-68; from *Development, Decolonization and the University in South Asia 1905-71* (PhD Dissertation).

Name: Meher Ali

Conference: Annual Conference on South Asia

Location: Madison, WI

Dates: Oct 30-November 3, 2024

### 1. Significance to Pakistan Studies

This paper is derived from my PhD dissertation, titled “Development, Decolonization and the University in South Asia, 1905-71.” This project charts the transformation of the university at the nexus of colonial, national, and transnational planning regimes in Pakistan, spanning the region’s “long decolonization” from 1905-71. It analyzes how the university was reshaped by the epistemological, pedagogical, and ideological dilemmas posed by decolonization and massification, reading those transformations as a multi-sited encounter between the project of postcolonial sovereignty and a global technocratic dialogue about the “uses of the university” in the developing world. Building on historiographies of nationalism, education, and Cold War development, I trace the emergence of an authoritarian social vision at the heart of the university-idea, excavating its constitutive relationship with discourses of (post)colonial “crisis.” In doing so, my project locates Pakistan as a critical historical site for unraveling the entangled genealogies of the globalized “neoliberal university.”

My project intervenes in the field of Pakistan Studies through its methodological approach, spatial lens, and historiographical arguments. First and foremost, it places Pakistan within wider historiographies of Cold War development and planning in the Global South. It does this, moreover, through a temporal and spatial framing which eschews evaluative accounts of unified “nationalisms” in favor of divergent processes of “nation-making” — as revealed in the plurality of discourses around the university and the imagination of multiple educational futures. In revisiting the formative period following independence, it also argues against a teleological understanding of the “failures” of Pakistani nationalism by investigating a more complex shared history between the East and West wings (1947-71). I utilize sources in both Urdu and Bangla such as oral histories, student paraphernalia, literature, and memoirs to explore, for instance, the evolution of local spatial imaginaries around the university in places like Dhaka and Karachi. In doing so, my project moves methodologically beyond official archives to highlight how “top-down” developmental agendas were met by local political vocabularies, collective imaginaries, and spatial histories that often remain absent from the documentary record.

### 2. Key Outcomes and Deliverables

Outcome 1: PhD Dissertation (Dept of History, Princeton University) titled: “Development, Decolonization, and the University in South Asia 1905-71.”

The primary outcome of my research will be my PhD dissertation, which I plan to defend next year. Upon the successful completion of my PhD, this dissertation will form the basis for a publishable book.

Outcome 2: Academic journal article for *Planning Perspectives*.

I am currently in the process of turning the chapter of my dissertation which I presented at the ACSA into a publishable journal article. The article will examine the planning of Karachi University (1959) through the lens of Third World architectural modernism and the practice of global “developmental urbanism.” I plan to submit this article for publication in *Planning Perspectives*, the journal of the International Planning History Society.

Outcome 3: Digital History Project on “Campus Histories of South Asia,” in collaboration with institutions in Pakistan (and Bangladesh).

Over the course of extensive fieldwork for this project in Pakistan and Bangladesh, I collected interviews, memorabilia and visual material relating to the public memory of campus spaces. I have spoken with potential collaborators at Karachi University, Punjab University, and Dhaka University about developing an open-access virtual archive of popular “Campus Histories of South Asia.” I hope to have the funding and partnerships in place to launch this project in late 2025.

Deliverable 1: Paper presentation at ACSA Madison, titled: “The City and the University, or “the Whole and the Part”: Ecochard, Doxiadis, and University Planning in Pakistan, 1953-68”

This paper, derived from the second chapter of my dissertation, was presented as part of a panel at the ACSA conference titled South Asian Urbanism: From Colonial Cities to Post-Colonial Modernisms. The presentation was an opportunity for me to engage with other urban historians and scholars in my field and receive valuable feedback on my ongoing work.

Deliverable 2: Invited Lecture, History of Universities Seminar (upcoming, February 2025)

I will be presenting this research in an upcoming talk hosted by the History of Universities Seminar. This is a global research network on the historical geographies of the university. These talks are well-attended virtually, and will provide an opportunity to engage with scholars from diverse fields around shared research themes.

Deliverable 3: Public writing on campus histories, for publication in online magazine.

I am planning to write 1-2 articles for a public audience on the topic of historical student movements and campus histories in Pakistan and Bangladesh. I will be submitting these pieces for publication in outlets such as *Places Magazine* and the “Made by History” section of *TIME Magazine*.