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<td>Robert Ivy: As Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims, you lead a religious community that is an important branch of Islam and that resides on four continents. You have personally expressed an affinity for Islamic architecture. <strong>How have Muslim traditions and Islamic teaching affected your appreciation for architecture?</strong> Which great works of architecture have had special meaning for you?</td>
<td>Robert Ivy: As Imam of the Ismaili Muslims, you lead a far-flung religious community that is an important branch of Islam. You have personally expressed an affinity for Islamic architecture. We fully appreciate your belief in the traditions and teachings of Islam. But, in light of the events of September 11, we must ask how you view the actions of Islamic radicals toward Western culture and its peoples?</td>
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<td>His Highness the Aga Khan: The faith of Islam has been central to my family for hundreds of years.</td>
<td>His Highness, the Aga Khan: I should start by saying that I have been exposed to several cultural traditions.</td>
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<td>And, as you probably know, I have a degree in Islamic history from Harvard University.</td>
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<td>As I said recently in an interview with Connaissance des Arts [interview conducted by Philip Jodidio, Connaissance des Arts, January 2002], I think there is a massive gulf in the understanding and knowledge between Muslims and non-Muslims—I mean particularly the West and the Islamic world. What we are talking about in reality is a strong minority of people committed to their own particular interpretation of Islam, who seek to impose it on others. I do not believe that the totality of the Islamic world recognizes the Taliban interpretation of the faith as being representative of its own view. There is no unanimity in Islam with regard to this interpretation. Generally you will see as much diversity in the Islam as you do in the Christian world today. But the West does not really understand the pluralism of the Islamic world.</td>
<td>As I also noted in the recent interview that one of the forces of change for all civilizations unfortunately has been war. Conflict situations are driven by...</td>
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The value system of Islam, in terms of the interrelationship between what we call din and dunia, or 'faith' and 'world', is very particular in Islam. In a sense, they relate to each other in an ongoing way. This is how the value system of Islam carries into everyday life, into the way you exist in society, and clearly into the things that you do in society in a material way.

RI: In what ways do these values permeate the larger world?

HH: This affects not only your family life, it affects your role in society, it affects the way you run your economic affairs, it affects the way you develop your home, and what happens in and around your home. So, there is a continuation of the Islamic value system into the physical environment, which is intrinsically and spiritual reflected in much of the greatest Islamic architecture. I think that this is reflected in much of the great Islamic architecture.

Some years ago, a professor talked to me about a major doctoral thesis at Harvard, in which a student had demonstrated how the Taj Mahal was a reflection of the conceptualization of heaven on earth—and the relationships between spiritual eternity and the foundational nature of life on this earth.

In that sense, the Islamic context is very, very important. I think you can find the premise in many other situations; it is not specific to the Taj Mahal. So, in that sense, I think, the Islamic context is very, very important. I think you can find the premise in many other situations. It's not specific to the Taj Mahal.

RI: Architects and other planners are fascinated by the relationship of physical environments to well being, to health. How does this value system that you describe play out in the physical environment?

HH: There are many, many interpretations of Islam within the wider Islamic community, but I think one on which there is greatest consensus, is the fact that we are trustees of God's creation, and we are instructed to seek to leave the world a better place.
than it was when we came into it. Therefore, the question is: What is a 'better place', in physical terms? And that 'better place', in physical terms, clearly means trying to bring values into environments, buildings and contexts, which make the quality of life better for future generations than it is today.

I think that is the interrelationship that exists between a Muslim and the precepts on which he or she works, in terms of intervening in the physical environment.

RI: Can't changes and interventions work in reverse?
They obviously interrelate.

HH: Yes, and I think that it is important in the way we look at the environments we are working in, to understand what changes would be damaging and what changes would be positive. That is where the role of society plays such an extraordinary role and is such a driving force, because the nature of society is to change. So what you are seeking to do, is to introduce a system of adjustment and improvement to a process. It never stops - it is not something that begins and ends.

RI: The need for global understanding and mutual tolerance has never been more keenly felt.
And to those purposes, the Aga Khan Award for Architecture comes into play. You've now been conducting the Award since 1977, through eight triennial cycles. In what ways do you think the programme has evolved over time? From your perspective as founder, has it affected the physical environment? Has it raised expectations? How have the issues addressed changed or remained constant? What have been its accomplishments?

HH: When the work programme started, everyone connected with it was very worried about, first of all, what I would call a sense of humility in the face of issues that were 'sensed', but that had never been intellectualised or rationalised. Therefore, we were right at the bottom of the learning curve. We started with an enormous process of inquiry. All of us, from whatever background we were coming from, faced these massive questions about the issues that we had to try to address.

The second one, was the fear of being seen as proposing a distinctive school of thought, because there was a very determined commitment not to be seen as an "architectural school". So these were two starting points.
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<td>Looking backwards: What has really happened?</td>
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<td>think that the Award has become a sophisticated observer of physical change in civil society. You can deduct from that definition all the other things that stem from it.</td>
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<td>RI: That seems to be a succinct goal for a complex process. What decisions led to further development of the programme?</td>
<td>HH: As the award program has continued, we have learned we needed to have an impact on values - ethical and aesthetic value judgments - and we needed to affect cultural value judgments. Therefore we had to influence opinion leaders.</td>
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<td>The second thing we had to do was to accept reality. That reality was, that the industrialized world was dominating the processes of change in the Third World, in particular in the Islamic world. And, that domination resulted in an educational process; or educational processes, in the Islamic world, and in the Third World generally, which were First World driven. Therefore, we had to accept that an educational role was necessary. We committed that the primary educational role was not going to be that of the Award, because the Award did not want to become a school, but the need for education was real. That became the basis for the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.</td>
<td>We also had to accept the reality that the industrialized world was dominating the processes of change in the Third World, in particular in the Islamic world. And, that domination resulted in educational processes that were shaped by the First World. So we felt we had to assume more of an educational role. The award program was not intended to be primarily educational, and we didn't want the award program to become a school. This is why we established the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at Harvard University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.</td>
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<td>RI: Yet you have described the Award's role as a catalyst. How did you elaborate that idea?</td>
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<td>HH: The third aspect was that, while the Steering Committees and the Master Juries never said it and never wrote it, they always were concerned to address the question of why we did not intervene directly in situations of change.</td>
<td>HH: The need for addressing issues such as historic cities in the Islamic world was constantly being put back on the table in one form or another. Yet anything connected with my development interests is automatically disqualified in the award process. I ended up by wondering if there could be a bridge between what I was doing in development and the cultural context of, for example, the historic city. This</td>
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That is why the Trust for Culture then went into active work; that was where it all came together with the other agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network.

RI: How do you see the Aga Khan Trust for Culture and the Aga Khan Architectural Awards interplaying with the need for rural populations to find work and the problems that they face when they get to the city? I'm sure that affects the communities that you deal with.

HH: It's difficult to summarize such a complex question in a short answer, but one of the driving questions is how people perceive opportunity. They will perceive opportunity through the inherited perception of previous generations in the family, or they will perceive opportunity through communication, or they will perceive the downside, which is risk. If the notion of risk is very high in certain environments, people will try to remove themselves from those environments.

In looking at the rural issues, I think one needs to start with what the risks are. It is interesting to see how rural communities look at risk, in terms of health, in terms of physical security, in terms of corruption, in terms of conflict. They have a certain number of what I would call 'downside' risks that they are looking at, that affect their attitudes to the rural environment, because they assume that those risks don't exist in the urban environment. But, because they are not in the urban environment, they don't know what are the risks within the urban environment.

RI: You are describing a kind of naiveté, but a kind that can be changed.

HH: Then comes the issue of opportunity. I think the issue of opportunity is whether the rural environments of the developing world and the Islamic world can change sufficiently positively, so that the sense of opportunity will be enhanced and people will say, 'future generations of my family do have as good or even a better opportunity by staying in the rural environment than by moving to the urban environment.' That is a difficult equation, it really is. But, I think that where led to the Trust for Culture to create the Historic City Support Program. It is a remarkable bridge between cultural support, and, at the same time, development support for communities that very often are marginalized and underprivileged.
Secondly, it can help to cause the changes in rural and physical environments to be appropriate to the rural environment. As an example, a large part of the Islamic world is located in a seismic belt that goes through much of the Islamic world. You can look back in time and see that thousands of people have been killed by earthquakes at different times in our history. Yet, seismic construction in rural environments is unheard of. People who build for themselves do not know about seismically sound construction. Most of the construction in rural environments is self-built; it is not architect-built. The question is, how do you get that knowledge into the rural environment? How do you teach people how to build in a safe manner?

Clean water, sewer systems, open spaces, sports areas these are all part of everyday life, but that need structure in the rural areas. By recognizing small medical centers, handicraft centers, the Award is saying to the rural population of the Islamic world; you don’t have to go through architects and big, mega-projects to improve the quality of the physical environment. You can do magnificent projects that will serve you well.

RI: So, your engagement evolved out of this process that really began as an observation, and then you actually began to take an active role. Are the issues fairly consistent that you described in the emerging world that you’re engaged with through this period of time, or are they changing?

HH: No, they are changing, because civil society is changing. If you go back to the 1950s onwards, what do you see in the Islamic world? You see colonialism; you see poverty; you see the Cold War; and you see, essentially, government-driven processes of change. You see centralised economic planning. You see the need to create a sense of nation in a number of countries that were not yet independent.

If you look at that picture today, you no longer have the issue of government-driven change. The processes of change, more and more, are part of the structure of civil society. You have independent decision-making by independent governments. The issue of nationhood has, in a sense, been driven backwards. Nationhood is no longer on the front
You have economic change, which is a process now led by market forces rather than dogmatic attitudes towards economic change. You have areas of extreme wealth in the Islamic world. You have countries that are coming out of a colonial or, let's say, dogmatic format. The Cold War is finished. The colonial countries have withdrawn.

And you have, perhaps to me one of the most important, an awareness that in most of our part of the world, it is the rural community that dominates. The notion of the numbers of people in rural communities, in the Islamic world, and the difficulties of addressing the issues of development in rural communities, constitute a massive force.

RI: Unlike other award programmes in which highly touted architects dominate the short-lists, the Aga Khan Award programme regularly confers honour on lesser-known individuals and communities. What effects have these decisions produced?

HH: That's one of the things which the award has tried to respond to—it has looked at how society causes change, not how architects cause change, and it has tried to help societies to improve the processes of change.

In the Award, you'll see more and more small rural projects, which are considered highly important to be put together by village organisations or non-governmental organisations working in rural environments because that is an important aspect. In the past, in the industrialised world, we have been driven by the notion of the urban environment, and the role of the architect functioning in the urban environment. I think, at least as far as the Islamic world is concerned, the Award has brought a massive change to that notion.

I think the second area that we have hopefully had an effect on, is the notion of pluralism. You cannot deal with a world like the Islamic world by rejecting the notion of pluralism. Historically, it is part of that
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<td>I certainly would not want to say that the Award has covered all categories—it hasn’t. And there remain areas where the Award has not been able to premiate projects that it considers really important. I think that for categories that it felt were very important—buildings which are part of modern civil society—we have not yet succeeded in focusing them to look at the contextual. A typical case would be the industrial estate, for example, which is a remarkable phenomenon of economic change. In the industrialised world, you have addressed it more and more successfully; but in the Islamic world, not all of it, but in much of it, the whole process of the liberalised economy is the one that is driving that notion of change, rather than the contextualisation of that change. I hope that will happen. We’re beginning to see these questions being addressed, but we’re not there yet.</td>
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<td>HH: As a student of history, you learn about the cultural processes of history. But after my grandfather died, I was looking at the physical environment in the developing world, and I had to ask myself what we were doing correctly, or incorrectly, in school construction, hospital construction, housing estates, industrial estates and commercial buildings. My sense was that while there</td>
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This had a cultural downside to it; it had a cost downside to it. And, particularly in the poorer countries, it tended to drive society towards things like a consumer environment, towards harnessing the top people in every profession because, obviously, the top hospital people wanted the top hospitals at the time. And, it introduced a value system that I felt had a number of risks to it.

But it also had another aspect, which was quite strange.

In the industrialised world, the notion of physical change in urban environments is constant and a part of contextual thinking - buildings are torn down, they are rebuilt, sites get thrown together. In the developing world, land is much, much more constrained than you would expect, in terms of being able to change buildings with changing requirements. That caused me to ask, if I built something now, and the life of the building is going to be 25 years or more because we can’t afford to change things every five years, what is the flexibility we need in land management, because programmes change. That flexibility was never designed into many of the projects in this part of the world - that notion that you have to be able to mould and remodel, and mould again, was simply not part of traditional thinking. Yet if you look at the way, for example, that health care delivery has changed in hospitals between the 1950s and today, fifty years later, there is no commonality.

The same thing has happened in education. The process of educating people has changed so radically. I think the need for a good physical environment for the young is something that has grown also. In fact, children have got to get exercise, and exercise is part of good health, and health is part of longevity.

These sorts of issues kept coming back. That’s when I started asking myself, am I alone looking at these questions or are other people looking at them? That is where the Aga Khan Award for Architecture started.

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There was a fairly good understanding of programmatic requirements, the contextualisation of those programmatic requirements in our part of the world just wasn’t happening.

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110 = 87

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115 HH: I think that the best example of the problem we
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» What was the education that the faculties had
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» were no longer being driven by architectural schools, 
» which were not asking the questions themselves. 
» People started asking questions. Why do it this way 
» instead of that way?

126 127 RI: If the right questions are raised, the right answers 
» will emerge, you hope. 
128

129 HH: It was amazing because it went through the whole 
» of the Islamic world. The questions could address 
» themselves to Sub-Saharan Africa, to the Arab 
» world, to Central Asia; they could address 
» themselves to Western China. But there was a 
» sense of, 'where is our culture? Not culture in the 
» sense of a capital "C"—it was a culture owned by the 
» people. Where is our culture? What is its place?'

130 131 RI: Is that where authentic architecture comes from? 
» By asking a culture to define itself? 
132

133 HH: I think so. When you generate questions, one of 
» the phenomena in doing so is that people come 
» back to you and say, 'give us the answers!' That is 
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» inspiration?' And the sources of inspiration, the 
» sources of knowledge, come back to education. 
» Education had to be part of our overall process, not 
» part of the Award for Architecture, but part of the 
» overall process. 

136

137 RI: And how has the education component played out 
» at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at 
» Harvard and MIT? 
138

139 HH: The question was how to design an educational 
» resource that would have the maximum possible 
» impact and, at the same time, have a legitimacy 
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» Islamic world. I was a Harvard graduate, therefore I 
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I asked MIT whether they would be willing to put the entire program together with Harvard addressing what I would call, in generic terms, a cultural component, and MIT addressing the professional component. They would be building a system whereby we would be able to educate people who are already practitioners, or people who wanted to become practitioners. The whole program went into place and the two universities had worked in a very solid way. I think that the graduates from these programs are now having an impact, whether they are museum curators or conservationists or whether they are practicing architects, or whether they are researchers. These individuals are having an impact wherever they are.

At the time the Islamic world was not saying we only want Muslim students in this programme. There was considerable support that the programme should be open to all people from all backgrounds that had a reason to want to work in Islamic societies, whether they were Muslim or not. I think the split at this time is at least 50-50 of people from the Islamic world and people from outside the Islamic world.

Right from the first days of the Award, it was exciting that there was intellectual acceptance by non-Muslims of the cultural questions that were being asked. And, I have to tell you, I am enormously grateful to the men and women who worked with me from outside the Islamic societies, who said we will bring our knowledge and our judgment and our competencies to sustain these, to develop answers to the questions you’ve been asking, because we consider that they’re very important. I remember the people from Harvard and MIT saying: This is a format that can be asked of other cultures of our world. You have started within the Islamic world, but it could very well apply to the Hispanic world, it could apply to other parts of the world. There was no sense of ‘normalizing’ the programme towards the Islamic world. The questions and the concepts were far outside the Islamic world.

RI: Since these awards are intended for Islamic societies, have they identified places and projects that are responsive to specific social, cultural, intellectual, spiritual, or geographic issues? What is authentic or real for building in a specific place?
HH: The award program gives a new sense of value to traditional cultures and forms of expression that show modern materials don’t have to be used to achieve desired results.

RI: You include hotels among the premiated buildings.

HH: We have premiated a number of projects in tourism, and there’s a downside and an upside. In principle, tourism can be managed if the right questions are asked. Beyond a point, tourists can create a problem. But a lot of ministers of tourism, and a lot of people running hotels or historic areas, don’t look at that, nor do they plan for it. You need to define what sort of tourism you want. Cultural tourism is the most interesting to us because we want to underscore the value of pluralism. Having people visit sites or complexes that they would not normally see or learn about can be very positive for societies that tend to be rigid in their attitudes. We have to recognize the need for tourism, but we also have to recognize that it needs to be managed.

Absolute freedom in the tourism field will end up with serious consequences.

RI: And now you’ve established a new Web site [ArchNet.org], which makes the full range of information so much more accessible to a larger group of people. How do you see it functioning?

HH: I didn’t want the Harvard-MIT program to be an ivory tower, located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It had to articulate its worth towards the Islamic world. First, I had a public action called Mimar.

HH: It was good, but the question was ‘what is the best way to articulate this information, outside MIT, to the Islamic world?’ And of course, the Internet just broke down those barriers; it became an extraordinary opportunity. Because it is so qualified in these areas of communication, MIT was the right resource to use for this activity. And MIT has gone out of its way to make it work. I’m hopeful that when ArchNet.org is officially launched, it will become a global resource to people working for change in the physical environment in Islamic societies.

The fact that it is a global resource will mean that there is communication from these societies to one place, but also from this one place to these societies. It has a dual function.
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<td>“RI: The Islamic connection literally gives it a context. It grounds it in some real dialogue.”</td>
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<td>“HH: People from outside the Islamic world also said that they felt there was a lot to be learned from Islamic cultures - and I use the plural - in addressing problems of cultural continuity and also new problems. The fact is that rural environments can be Islamic or non-Islamic - they are still rural environments. There is also the problem of mega-cities, and so on. This was not something that was so specific that the lessons learnt couldn’t be used in other environments.”</td>
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<td>“161 Ri: You are presenting the Chairman’s Award this year, which is not an annual event. In fact, you’ve given it very few. What is the significance of the Award and this year’s winner, Geoffrey Bawa?”</td>
<td>“138 Ri: You presented the Chairman’s Award this year, which is not an annual event; to Geoffrey Bawa, the Sri Lankan architect. What is the significance of that?”</td>
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<td>159</td>
<td>“HH: It is an Award that, after this year, will only have been given three times. The premise is that the Chairman’s Award stems from the consensus thinking of the Steering Committee. It does not have an independent jury. So, it’s the people who run the Award, who watch the Award’s work, and who over one or several cycles say to themselves, ‘this individual has had a massive, life-long impact on what’s happening.’”</td>
<td>“140 HH: It is an award that, after this year, will only have been given three times. This award stems from the consensus of the steering committee and does not have an independent jury. The people who run the award, who watch how the awards work, and who note over one or several cycles that a certain individual has had a massive, lifelong impact, make the selection.”</td>
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<td>“164 It is not related to one building; it is related to a life-long contribution. And it is given by people who are intrinsic to the Award process. Generally, it will bring forward names of individuals who have not often been identified in the industrialised world as dominant figures in the processes of change; dominant figures in the right way.”</td>
<td>“166 Ri: This raises a question; I personally discovered Geoffrey Bawa through Mimar. The earlier magazine put a name and a face to the Award programme. In terms of public recognition, winners in the rural cultures, however, are more difficult to identify with. Names and faces are part of contemporary media reality. Unknown projects present a dilemma, because in the present star-soaked environment, we tend to focus on people rather than on ideas. Can you comment on that?”</td>
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<td>“169 HH: You’re correct, but constituencies react differently to the Award. Village constituencies tend to look at other village constituencies. Their horizon is that which is happening in other areas of the rural world, and the process of change is not through an architect, but through people, through NGOs, or”</td>
<td>“168 HH: You are correct, but constituencies react differently to the prizes. Many village constituencies tend to look at other villages. The process of change is not through an architect. It is through people or through government programs.”</td>
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Creating 'thought leaders' in villages is very, very important. It indicates to village organisations, isolated peoples, that there are certain directions that they can follow in terms of enhancing their own local cultures, setting standards in terms of the basic quality that is required for the purpose of the project, whether it is a place for children, a school or a medical centre. So, we are not addressing ourselves to the 'high profile' architectural profession; we are addressing the majority population of the Islamic world. That's the target.

But please go back to the notion of civil society; after all, the Award has got to try to address as many aspects of civil society as possible. One of the things the Award has tried to do is to get away from the notion of architects as the only constituency that causes change.

RI: The world is extremely dynamic and evolving at the moment, presenting numerous challenges. We talked about cities. What about some of the other challenges like environmental degradation or the converse, sustainability? How can the Award address questions of this type that are broad, societal questions?

HH: I think there are two issues: one is the rural context and the other is the urban context. The environmental issues in the rural context are related to issues such as land ownership, live agricultural production, and rights of grazing, rights of water usage, etc. The challenge is assisting people to understand that the physical process of change can enhance or degrade the inherited issues that they have to deal with. Another question involves land planning in rural environments. I might overstate this, but I will say it the way I think it is - it is literally unheard of. Land planning in rural environments simply is not part of village thinking, nor is it generally part of education in architectural schools.

If we found, at some stage, a village which had a
180  The urban environment is a very, very different one.  
» The urban environment is one where more work is 
» being done. There has been massive demographic 
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» one of the characteristics of Islamic architecture that 
» the great buildings always had spaces around them. 
» They were internalized spaces or at least they were 
» part of the periphery. That aspect of our building has 
» in many ways disappeared.  

182  RI: How are you addressing the urban question?  

183  HH: One of the things that the Aga Khan Trust for 
» Culture is now working on in Cairo, in Zanzibar, and 
» in the northern areas of Pakistan, is to try to 
» encourage people to recognise the value of open 
» space. And one of the past Awards was for a 
» reforestation programme for a university in Turkey, a 
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» hool of Design is part of the AKPIA programme; the 
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187  RI: Tourism can be both a boon and a problem, 
» because it can introduce stress to culture or to 
» infrastructure. Hasn't it been an important factor in 
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190  HH: We have premiated a number of projects in 
» tourism, and there's the downside and there's the 
» upside. I think on the downside, in principle tourism
» can be managed if the questions are asked. There is » probably a level of throughput (of tourists) above » which, in a given site or a given building, there will » be a problem; a lot of ministers of tourism, a lot of » people running hotels or historic areas don’t look at » that. Because they don’t look at it, they don’t plan for » it. My belief is you can plan for it, but you have to » identify the problem (first).

The other aspect to this question is defining what sort » of tourism you want. We are particularly interested in » cultural tourism, because we are interested in » underwriting the value of pluralism, and therefore » having people visit sites or complexes which they » would not normally see, and which they can learn » about. We think that cultural tourism is a very » positive factor, particularly in societies that would » tend to be rather rigid in their attitudes. The fact that » they will meet with people from other cultures, who » speak other languages, is very important. We have » to recognize the need for tourism, but we have to » recognize that it needs to be managed. Absolute » freedom in the tourism field will end up with serious » consequences.

The reverse question is how do you address that? And » I think it can be addressed. There are a » number of different methods of doing so. It is also a » way of repositioning people’s attitude to their own » culture, because very often people who live in a » cultural environment are no longer aware of it. When » you enhance that environment and you say to » people, you actually have an extraordinary asset — » protect it, make it work for you, invest in it — that » cultural asset, which in many generations has been » thought of as an economic and social and physical » liability, suddenly gets turned around and is actually » seen as something of real value. Then people learn » about it, they protect it, and they invest in it.

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RI: Can you describe your own experiences as a » developer, working with architects and planners?

RI: With regard to bringing about change, can you » describe your own experiences as a developer, » working with architects and planners?

HH: I learned very young that the resources that we ha » ve to cause change to take place are hardly ever » going to be sufficient to meet all the demands. Now, » that is not true of the entire Islamic world; there are » some parts, which are very, very wealthy, and they » don’t need those resources. The parts of the world I » am working in are generally resource poor. If you » are resource poor, then you must look at making » value from financial investments, you must look at » making investments where you get a solid outcome, » not something that you have to keep investing in
year after year. You must look at projects that you hope will become self-sustaining, so that they don’t become burdens on the society and the villages that they are working with. So, you start with a number of economic parameters.

A second notion is that of change. More and more, I have been looking at questions of flexibility of buildings and the way buildings have to adapt to changing society, particularly in the social field.

The third aspect that I have attached enormous importance to right from the beginning is the notion that people’s attitudes towards their homes change if they have an acceptable physical environment. If they live in a slum, whenever they have a little excess money, what do they do with it? One of the first things is to change the physical environment they live in. They put a metal shade roof on a hut or they move to a place where fresh water is available. The physical environment is part of people’s psyche and yet is very rarely articulated. It is a driving force in the way people look at their environment. So I think that in terms of encouraging development, one of the most important aspects is to help people live in better environments.

The cultural aspect is there all the time, whether you are talking about northern Pakistan or about the East African coast - the fact is that you are always dealing in a cultural context.

Of course, you look at questions of resource mobilisation. What is the nature of resource harnessing, which you can bring into play on the development process and which the development process can sustain? Development people, unfortunately, tend to look at the upside, because they are driven by hope. But when you get into the downside and things go wrong, and you have an avalanche of problems that come up, then the situation becomes very serious. So, what I would call the economic stability of the process is a critical factor.

RI: You mentioned ‘resource mobilisation.’ How do you organise your efforts for long-term development? Do you seek other participants and partnerships to achieve your specific goals?

RI: How do you organize your efforts for the long term?

HH: There are a number of processes that we look at and engage in. If it is the Trust for Culture, we would have a three-year or a five-year programme; for the Education Services, we have the same three-year or five-year planning.
The agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network all have forward-planning, which is a rolling process. The people in our education programme would be able to tell you the number of schools we intend to build, in the exact number of countries, and the number of students intended to serve. From there you get down to the question, 'what resources do we have?' 'What is the availability or shortfall?'

A third question is, 'whom can we associate with to get things moving?' And, for example, in humanitarian aid, the spectrum of support entities is very large, but support for culture is very small.

RI: After all, how many people or other philanthropic resources support artists?

HH: People have for much too long, in my view, thought of cultural change as being philanthropic, with no quantifiable outcome. That is not true. You can cause historic cities to become economic dynamos. Now, there is a downside to that because, in the process, there is a risk of gentrification and of land speculation. The fact is that every single one of the historic projects we are looking at has a social development process, which must be the outcome—otherwise we don’t go with it. When you talk about historic cities, you are not talking about culture, but about culture and development. We are also, in many ways, talking about social stabilisation, because where there is cultural support, and particularly pluralistic cultural support, we are speaking about social stabilisation. We are speaking about communities with different backgrounds, recognising the quality and the legitimacy of their own cultures, which is a very, very important thing in our world.

RI: It sounds like a worthwhile but sophisticated notion to transmit.

HH: It works. That’s the bottom line.

RI: What sort of partners do you find?

HH: The World Bank has a cultural fund. It is very new and it is not yet clear who is going to be able to access it, and how quickly, and for what funds. We are also working with the Swiss now, and with the Swedes and the Norwegians. It is interesting that many of these countries that have rural and mountain traditions which have disappeared in some sense, are very forthcoming also in that regard. Some are the private foundations, such as the Ford...
The Aga Khan Development Network, because of the way it is structured, can bring multi-input processes into these environments where not all of our work is the Trust for Culture. The Development Network includes the Aga Khan Foundation; it includes the Health Services, and the Education Services, so that we can build what I would call a form of support net going into these environments. That is just about the only way you can really create a sustainable process of change. Just impacting in one aspect, whether it is agriculture, or whether it is commerce, the one-input process doesn't really work in development. Don't ask me why, because I don't know the answer.

Because of the way AKDN (the Aga Khan Development Network) is structured, it can bring this multi-input process into these environments. It's not all the Trust for Culture. In addition to the cultural branch, the AKDN is composed of an economic development arm, and a social development arm. The latter one includes the foundation, health services, education services, and planning and building services. This means we can build what I would call a form of support net going into these environments. That is just about the only way you can really create a sustainable process of change. Just influencing one aspect, whether it's agriculture or commerce, doesn't really work in development. Don't ask me why.
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