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Mediating Resistance: Examining Critical Regionalism(s) in the Arab World through the Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Supervisor: Prof. Filippo De Pieri
Student: Ayman Hassanen (s298881)

ABSTRACT

As modernism receded towards the latter decades of the twentieth century, fertile ground for architectural rejuvenation emerged. Branded by Kenneth Frampton as an "architecture of resistance", critical regionalism has proven a popular framework through which to reform the modernist project and engage with "peripheral" architectural production, albeit not without its detractors and revisions. Concurrently, and with similar aspirations, the Aga Khan award for Architecture (AKAA) debuted in 1977 as a platform facilitating the formulation of new built identities grounded in "authenticity" and approaching "modernity" and "tradition" in novel ways in a largely postcolonial milieu.

Against this backdrop of burgeoning architectural enterprise, this study investigates the evolution, critiques, and implications of critical regionalism, as well as exploring the influence of the AKAA, with a particular focus on examining critical regionalism's manifestations and impact on the architectural culture, production, and historiography of the Arab World.

The region's engagements with regionalism, globalisation, and modernity and its derivative architectural paradigms has been rich and varied but is often overlooked as being of a peripheral nature to a "true" canonical architectural narrative. The study endeavours to provide a historical survey of architectural culture and production within the Arab world, throughout its varying engagements with modernity in a (post)colonial context, examining how such events influenced local architectural narratives and continuities of knowledge. To this end, the study's analysis covers the discourse surrounding historiographies of regionalism and vernacular architecture, and the postcolonial critiques levelled against normative histories of modernism and the place (or lack thereof) of the Arab world within them as a "peripheral" region is discussed vis-à-vis prevailing modernist, as well as local, histories towards elaborating a Saidian "intertwined" historical narrative.

Using this analytical framework as a basis to dissect prevailing narratives, labels, and discourse surrounding Arab architecture in addition to analysing paradigmatic AKAA winning projects, the study finally aims to highlight points of intersection and deviation between critical regionalism as a theory and the approach of the AKAA, discussing limitations and potential opportunities for mutual development towards a mediated response to the architectural challenges of our time.

Keywords:

Modernism, Authenticity, Historiography, Critical Regionalism, Postcolonial, Arab World, Aga Khan Award for Architecture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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[1] See jury citations in: Lepik, editor. *Architecture in Dialogue: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.*

Introduction

The decline of international modernism in the late twentieth century -aided by critics decrying its rigid inability to engage with architectural cultures in diverse geographic, cultural and political contexts- incited a flurry of intellectual activity and architectural discourse globally aiming to fill the void. The emergence of one of these challenges, postmodernism, caused particular furore. Catapulted to the fore of Western architectural thought through the iconic 1980 *La Strada Novissima* exhibition (curated by Paolo Portoghesi for the 1980 Venice Biennale), postmodernism presented it's visual manifesto, showcasing a diverse and perhaps indulgent use of historical architectural styles and symbols, irreverent of modernism's perceived sterile homogeneity.

However, not everyone was convinced to take such a path. Kenneth Frampton, wary of universal modernism's insensitive intransigence but also repelled by postmodernism's excesses, sought to fashion the increasingly critical discourse on global modernism into a new 'critical' regionalism, in an attempt to reform the modern project. This "architecture of resistance" purported to provide a framework for negotiation between local geographic and cultural tendencies with universal culture, and was positioned as defiant resistance of an increasingly globalised and homogenising architectural culture. Curating a selection of such architectural works of resistance from the architectural 'periphery', particularly susceptible to the dictates of such homogenization, Frampton laid the foundations for an ambitious architectural thesis that continues to be of relevance today. However, later critics argue it was built on unstable footing, exposing its latent implications.

Such dissatisfaction with the universal modernist imperative was not exclusive to Western circles. Within the hinterlands of the 'periphery', attempts at engaging with modernism, in architectural and even societal contexts, ranged between eager embrace, defiant rejection, and varying degrees of negotiation. The Arab world exemplifies such engagement, with a long and rich history of grappling with modernity and its challenges to questions of 'identity', 'tradition', and 'authenticity'. The complexities, nuances, and variation of such attempts are often neglected by wider architectural discourse, flying under the radar of the field's perceived lofty Eurocentric canonical narrative.

Not too far away, and within similar contexts of disillusionment with global homogeneity brewing in the West and the Arab world, The Aga Khan Award for architecture was established as a forum for interrogating architectural production in the 'periphery', generating open dialogue on tackling pertinent questions surrounding architectural identity and tradition towards realising an 'authentic' built environment. With this vision in mind, the award and its affiliate enterprises continue to feature many of these divergent responses to modernisation and globalisation,

pushing discourse towards a deliberative and 'mediated' response to the architectural challenges of the hour.

Highlighting these two attempts as 'resistance', this work aims to be a study of the historiography and culture surrounding the architectural landscape in the Arab world using these two paradigms as main frames of analysis; analysing critical regionalism in its various iterations as a paradigm, and the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and its evolution. It aims to critically analyse and dissect the narratives surrounding these architectural enterprises, surveying the debates and implications of these discourses and their respective effects on architectural culture. It also aims to shed light on the interaction between these two frameworks, and their relationships with important architectural issues within the Arab world, focusing on 'authenticity', 'identity', and 'tradition'. Additionally, it also tracks the evolution of both paradigms, highlighting differences and similarities as well the approaches that have aided in (or hindered) maintaining their relevance in contemporary architecture discourse in the wake of novel architectural challenges and opportunities, often technological and/or environmental in nature.

With this framework, this study first briefly surveys the origins of critical regionalism, focusing on its critiques, implications, and evolution. Using this lens, it then aims to explore the philosophy's impact and manifestations on the architectural culture of the Arab world, among explorations of local attempts at a 'critical' regionalism. Consequently, the Aga Khan Award for Architecture is analysed as a unique attempt at answering such architectural questions of its time, in light of specific discourse in Arab/Islamic societies calling for an 'authentic' architecture. Finally these experiences are contrasted and analysed in relation to one another, in an attempt to discern the benefits and implications of each of these forms of 'resistance' towards a 'mediated' response to the architectural concerns of our time.

Part I
The Critical Regionalist Paradigm

1. Genesis

1.1 Defining Critical Regionalism

The idea of critical regionalism as an architectural concept first came to light in the early 1980s[2] in accordance with the work of three primary theorists, the initial two of which were Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, first coining the phrase "critical regionalism" in their 1981 article "The Grid and the Pathway". Kenneth Frampton helped popularise the term, authoring an article titled "Prospects for a Critical Regionalism" on the same topic in 1983, as well as further developing his nascent thesis in his best-selling book, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* in 1985.[3] The term emphasises the relevance of "placelessness" by taking into account context-specific factors like scenery, historical references, and light without succumbing to restriction or traditionalist influences.[4] The concept gained traction as a blend of contemporary, universal characteristics with distinctive regional elements. This conception of buildings, seen as contemporary while still acknowledging contextual elements, led to the emergence of intriguing architectural designs and experimentations, facilitating a diverse range of fresh theoretical explorations through the incorporation of modern elements into vernacular settings.[5] Frampton, emerging as its primary theorist, would go onto drape the idea with a revolutionary cloak, proclaiming critical regionalism to be a militant 'architecture of resistance' that sought "to mediate the impact of universal civilization" and "to reflect and serve the limited constituencies" in which it was based.[6]

1.2 Theorization and Evolution

The genealogy of the ideas underpinning the concept of critical regionalism can be traced back to the classical era. Vitruvius first wrote about the concept of regional variations in architecture in the first century BCE. Vitruvius believed that the physical, intellectual, and behavioural characteristics of the people who produced architectural forms were primarily determined by geography. The "romantic regionalism" and "nationalist romanticism" practised in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries arose from similar determinist concepts of culture and geography. Lewis Mumford warned against this conception of regionalism in his 1941 book, *The South in*

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[2] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

[3] Giamarelos, "Architecture in the History/Theory Nexus: Building Critical Regionalism in Frampton's Greece," 79.

[4] Botz-Bornstein, *Transcultural architecture: The limits and opportunities of critical regionalism.*

[5] Ibid.

[6] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

Architecture, advocating a contemporary, self-reflexive regionalism that avoided revivalist mimicry and vacuous nostalgia.[7] In the book, he writes:

> "Regional forms are those which most closely meet the actual conditions of life and which most fully succeed in making a people feel at home in their environment: they do not merely utilise the soil but they reflect the current conditions of culture in the region."[8]

Instead of bearing an attitude of resistance, Mumford's regionalism developed as an engagement with the global, universalising world. Regionalism became an ongoing debate between the local and the global as a result of his innovative reinterpretation of what were seen to be outdated concepts. Lefaivre and Tzonis, the pioneers of critical regionalism, would later highlight five essential regionalist aspects based on Mumford's ideas.[9]

Historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock proposed enhancing modern architecture's capacity to impart "expressiveness" as the logical solution to the crisis of modern architecture's lack of meaningfulness. In his symposium intervention, Hitchcock emphasised two architectural expressions: 'domesticity' and 'monumentality', which were explored in the post war years.[10] Carmen Popescu in her article recounting the genesis of critical regionalism "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory" she contends that the concept of critical regionalism can be considered to have started here when the concept of "domesticity" arose in direct relation to the concept of 'site', renewing many of regionalism's virtues. This reinvigorated regionalism intended to provide a "humanised" modernity.[11] At the Darmstadt Fifth Colloquium in 1951, Martin Heidegger stated that space has no intrinsic significance unless it is understood as place, in its multilayered physicality and spirituality.[12] This influenced the evolution of two concurrent architectural leanings: regionalism (its 'critical' variation included), and phenomenology.[13] Texts by Sigfried Giedion exhorting a "new regionalism", contesting the idea of the international style, and Sibyl Moholy-Nagy lauding "anonymous architecture" presented several essential components for subsequent critical regionalism discussions, among which were the contribution of regional diversity, the connection with the site, the need to comprehend space as place, and the significance of tradition as continuity. The journal *Prospecta* introduced Heidegger to a large

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Mumford, *The South in Architecture.*

[9] Mađanović and Milić, "Uncharted architectural theory of critical regionalism in the work of Aleksandar Deroko between the world wars."

[10] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.

[11] Ibid

[12] Heidegger, "Building dwelling thinking," 143.

[13] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.

architectural audience through Kenneth Frampton and Christian Norberg-Schulz, setting the framework for the creation of new insights.[14] Heidegger's phenomenology of space and the impact of technology on contemporary civilization emphasises the value of roots above routes, while demonising technology as a harmful influence on humanity and their interaction with the natural world.[15]

The concept of critical regionalism was introduced in 1980-1981 by Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre in two texts which later became the fundamental documents of the concept, "Die Frage des Regionalismus" and "The Grid and the Pathway".[16] In their initial essays they discussed a new alternative to all of these recent aberrations which was then referred to as "the new architecture".[17] Anthony Alofsin, working under Tzonis, published "Constructive Regionalism", and Tzonis and Lefaivre replaced the term with "*Critical* Regionalism". Tzonis and Lefaivre criticised narcissism in contemporary architecture in their article in 1980 published in *Le Carré bleu*, the Team X publication, re-affirming "a new architecture" as an alternative.[18]

Following the *Strada Novissima* exhibition at the Venice Biennale in 1980, which advocated history as a fundamental player in the conception of architecture and its meaning, the new notion of "critical regionalism" began to take shape, providing a different approach to the same idea of architectural meaning. The primary motive behind the emerging theory's formulation was as a response to Paolo Portoghesi's installation, intended as an upgraded version of historic regionalism and as a solution to the ongoing architectural quandary.[19] Paolo Portoghesi, the curator of the biennale, proposed that architects should deal overtly with historical elements. All of the participating architects were creating new architecture that was a literal mimetic reproduction of architecture of the past. A co-curator, Kenneth Frampton, argued that this was not the appropriate direction, and his counter-proposal, an alternate method of counteracting the tendencies of modernism, was critical regionalism.

The Pomona meeting in 1989 was seen as the moment that consecrated critical regionalism as a legitimate concept.[20] The event presented the new trend as the architectural path to be followed,

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Hartoonian, "Critical Regionalism Reloaded," 142.

[16] Mozaffari and Westbrook, "Shushtar no'w: Urban Image and fabrication of place in an Iranian New Town, and its relation to the international discourse on Regionalism."

[17] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

both for its ethical ideals and its long-term legitimacy.[21] The meeting acknowledged Lefaivre and Tzonis as the theoretical founders of critical regionalism, while Frampton was presented as the inventor of an "embryonic canon," with his list of six points supplied as a definition of the movement.[22] Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre further emphasise, among the many conference papers, that "What distinguishes 'regionalist' from the simply 'regional' is that it incorporates regional elements into design as a means not only of adapting to local conditions but also of criticising an architecture of order that claims universal application".[23] Through the statements made at the meeting, Tzonis and Lefaivre intended to push critical regionalism beyond its position as a specialised architecture for purported "peripheral places" and onto the international scene. "Anomy and atopy," the global issues they were pointing to, were, in their judgement, most pressing in "super developed regions of the world,"[24] which bolstered their resolve to maintain this position. Popescu states critical eegionalism was prepared to accept the role of the ideal architectural crisis solution, free of its "chauvinistic" biases and picturesque unsubstantial frivolity.[25] Frampton published *Prospects for a Critical Regionalism*, carefully curating a selection of architects from diverse geographic contexts, in the 1983 issue of Perspecta on authenticity to demonstrate his concept of resistant architectural practices.[26]

Frampton imagined critical regionalism as a "culture of resistance" seeking to "self-consciously . . . deconstruct universal modernism in terms of locally cultivated values and images, while simultaneously adulterating these autochthonous elements with paradigms drawn from alien sources".[27] His theory called upon Heidegger's distinction between space and place and Paul Ricoeur's view of a "hybrid world culture".[28] He presented an articulated scheme of his theoretical construct as "six points for an architecture of resistance" in 1983. Through a series of notions he analyses the substance of critical regionalism; "culture and civilisation, the rise and fall of the avant-garde, critical regionalism and world culture, the resistance of the place-form, culture versus nature: topography, context, climate, light, and tectonic form, visual versus tactile. Later, this list was expanded to ten points before being summarised as five couples of opposing notions.[29]

[21] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Lefaivre and Tzonis,"Critical regionalism."
[24] Lefaivre and Tzonis,"Critical regionalism."
[25] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[26] Mota, "The Ambiguities of Critical Regionalism."
[27] Frampton, "Prospects for a critical regionalism," 147.
[28] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[29] Ibid.

2. Dissecting Narratives

Owing to its nature and wider perception as a quasi-radical response to the dominant and emergent trends of the time,[30] scholarly discourse surrounding critical regionalism in the four decades since its introduction has been prolific and varying in outlook. While the theory is considered to have enjoyed a generally positive global reception, its framework reappropriated by disciplines outside of the architectural field, creating "an illusion of a travelling concept",[31] several aspects of the theory have been problematized in critiques ranging in focus. These include criticisms of architectural, political, postcolonial, and globalising dispositions.[32] This chapter aims to shed light on critical regionalism as it relates to four key ideas; 'critical theory' and 'regionalism', 'postmodernism', 'postcolonialism', and the concept of 'history', while exploring the competing narratives and lines of critique to which they have given rise, particularly in the last twenty years.

2.1 Between Criticality and Regionalism

The term critical evokes notions of critical theory, which can refer to general and specific currents in philosophical thought. In its narrower definition, the term denotes the ideas of the Frankfurt school, comprising generations of German philosophers emerging from the Western European Marxist tradition.[33] For these critical theorists, a critical theory transcends a traditional one to the extent that it seeks an emancipatory end, aiming for an "emancipation from slavery" by working as a liberating force, and aiming "to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of men".[34] This framework has been used as a springboard for which other "critical" theories have developed, aiming to examine the extent of the domination of humans in modern societies, and providing foundations for social inquiry aimed at "decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all their forms".[35] critical regionalism, as first formulated by Lefaivre and Tzonis, and pioneered by Frampton, aimed to "prick the conscience" of viewers through a process of "defamiliarization",[36] asserting its identity as "subversive challenge to the status quo" with several references to the Frankfurt school.[37]

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[30] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.
[31] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[32] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 15.
[33] Bohman, "Critical theory."
[34] Horkheimer, "Critical theory: Selected essays."
[35] Bohman, "Critical theory."
[36] Lefaivre and Tzonis,"Critical regionalism."
[37] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

In light of this, a pertinent question surrounding critical regionalism arises concerning the meaning of its self-attributed criticality, what is meant by critical regionalism? The theory is primarily as a response to Paolo Portoghesi's Strada Novissima, and what was perceived to be its "misuses of history",[38] aiming to salvage architecture from the crisis of modernism. For its founders, its criticality was intended to encapsulate an "upgraded version of historic regionalism" uprooting the effects of modernism as well as its postmodern derivative's use of history.[39] Since then, Lefaivre and Tzonis have attempted to emphasise the criticality of their work, and to frame a coherent narrative of its place in the history of architectural thought, expounding on both the critical and regionalist aspects of their theory. In their book entitled *Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World* (2003) a redefined criticality emerged in light of contemporary architectural practice.[40] Therein, critical regionalism is presented as a framework characterised by a "universalism deployed through globalisation of information and western cultural values" as opposed to denoting architects who advocated an alternative to postmodernist appropriation of history, with this globalising turn seeming to clash with regionalist discourse.[41] However, in the recalibrated definition of their theory, the word critical is not utilised to express antagonism or resistance, underscoring the value of the particular and seeking a diversity "benefiting from universality".[42] This constitutes, in the view of Hartoonian (2006) a rapprochement of critical regionalism and the prevailing architectural discourse, eschewing the confrontation of criticality in favour of a realist approach, possibly to mitigate Kenneth Frampton's idea of nation in early critical regionalist works.

On the other hand, the use of the term regionalism anchors the theory in a historicist narrative, drawing upon notions of regional variations in architecture espoused by Vitruvius,[43] legitimising the nascent theory.[44] Regionalism hitherto had been manifest in the "romantic regionalism" and "nationalist romanticism" of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which were critiqued by Lewis Mumford in *The South in Architecture* (1941), calling for a revitalised regionalism devoid of nostalgic impulses, a call that was echoed most prominently by Tzonis and Lefaivre four decades later. Despite adopting the label, Lefaivre, Tzonis, and Frampton stressed the new criticality-infused regionalism was a decidedly progressive project.[45] Considering this, the dialectic between the critical and regionalist poles of the theory are further analysed by Popescu (2020),

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[38] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Hartoonian, "Critical Regionalism Reloaded," 142.
[41] Hartoonian, "Critical Regionalism Reloaded," 142.
[42] Lefaivre and Tzonis,*Critical regionalism: architecture and identity in a globalized world.*
[43] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.
[44] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[45] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

highlighting Tzonis's condemnation of the chauvinistic use of history in regionalist architecture since the nineteenth century,[46] constructing a narrative of antagonism between modernist and regionalist architecture.[47] However, Popescu notes how Tzonis made clear that the term Regionalism used was but a "conceptual device",[48] constituting a mere analytical tool to which the Kantian notion of criticality is combined. This manoeuvre mitigated potential misuses of the term regionalism,[49] while explaining a shift towards a realist, perhaps less critical outlook. Following from this, the criticality of contemporary critical regionalism has ceased to connote a symbol-oriented line of thought seeking to expose the impact of modernity on architecture, instead suggesting a focus on the tectonic as the source of autonomy in architecture, the other prolific theme in Frampton's work in the 1980s,[50] placing the region in a dominant order of globalisation which itself is predicated on notions of identity that strip architecture of such autonomy.[51]

2.2 (Post)colonial Implications

In the past two decades, the colonialist implications of Frampton's outlook have come to the fore of discourse on critical regionalism,[52] with critiques stemming from the work of Keith Eggener in the early 2000s, and later continued by scholars such as Mark Crinson.[53] Eggener posited that, despite its nature as a postcolonial concept, "engaging in fundamental binary oppositions", critical regionalism constituted a fundamentally colonial outlook, marginalising the areas it addressed.[54] This, according to Eggener, is evidenced by theorists' highlighting of regions that had not perceived their output as peripheral or marginal until designated as such by critical regionalists[55] their "cultural production" addressed in line with a "global picture that was out of the scope of their regional architectural developments and the concerns that underpinned them"[56] Taking such critique into consideration, it is worth noting how while the roots of the theory emanate from a postcolonial moment, the ideas main theorists practically neglected the examination of colonialism, resulting in critical regionalism and postcolonial studies developing in

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[46] Lefaivre and Tzonis,*Critical regionalism: architecture and identity in a globalized world.*
[47] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[48] Lefaivre and Tzonis,*Critical regionalism: architecture and identity in a globalized world.*
[49] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[50] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 14.
[51] Hartoonian, "Critical Regionalism Reloaded," 142.
[52] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 14.
[53] Ibid,
[54] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 350.

divergent trajectories, remaining tied to a "global Western European/First World colonial tradition".[57]

Critiques pertaining to the framing of regional architectural narratives where also highlighted by Eggener, denoting how theorists of critical regionalism often seem to emphasise the interpretation of regionalism belonging to a particular architect over others in the regions they discuss (Tadao Ando in Japan, Charles Correa in India, etc.), noting how "a single correct regional style was implied, or imposed, sometimes from inside, more often from outside the region".[58] The term itself has come to function as a fashionable label encompassing buildings markedly divergent in circumstances and context, lending credence to historian Anthony King's aversion to globalising theories of architecture[59] that view works of architecture from a fixed social and cultural position shunning or contradicting autochthonous notions of the building and founding a "new intellectual imperialism".[60] Jane M. Jacobs elaborates in *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the City* (2002) on how imperialist nostalgia often characterises the colonised as perpetually involved in a struggle against the imperial core, an idea Eggner relates to critical regionalism, as by elevating identity and resistance above other considerations, theorists impose on such regions a struggle that may not even exist.[61] In Crinson's 2007 study, the theory is noted for its deliberate lack of political circumstances, neglecting the political discourse central to Paul Ricoeur's 1961 essay *Universal Civilisation and National Cultures*, from which Frampton appropriated themes central to his work,[62] chiefly the mediation between modernity and a "return to sources".[63] These shortcomings culminate in what Eggener views as perhaps the primary missing feature of critical regionalist literature: a lack of consideration for the voices "states of mind" of those directly responsible for such building production.[64]

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[57] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 352.

[58] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

[59] Ibid.

[60] King, "Vernacular, transnational, post-colonia,." 63.

[61] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

[62] Crinson, "Singapore's moment: critical regionalism, its colonial roots and profound aftermath," 689.

[63] Ricoeur, "Civilisation universelle et cultures nationales," 439.

[64] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

2.3 Critical Regionalism as Postmodernism

The relationship between Critical Regionalism on one hand, and its intellectual adversaries of modernism and postmodernism on the other, have shaped the theory from its very inception. The theory constituted a resistant polemic against both dominant stances of the time, aiming to harmonise modernism's progressive agenda with local identities without descending into postmodern scenography.[65] Despite Frampton's militant opposition to postmodernism since what is considered to be its very beginnings at the 1980 Venice Biennale, elevating it to an internationalised and institutionalised status,[66] scholars have since indicated how both theories are not as divergent in nature, sharing several commonalities. Frampton's primary critiques of postmodernism centred around its partiality to the utilisation of a historical formal vocabulary for scenographic purposes. However, early forms of the theory can be considered multi-faceted, embracing tradition neglected my modernism and critiquing its tabula rasa approach devoid of context, both objections raised by prominent postmodern theoreticians Robert Venturi and Colin Rowe, demonstrating critical regionalism's fundamental concurrence with the underpinnings of postmodernism. As with critical regionalism, Rowe's main aim was the establishment of a radical middle ground in urban design theory, reconciling history and utopia. These tendencies can be perceived to share a common source with similar notions of mediation in Frampton's work, both referring to Paul Ricoeur's central endeavour of balancing modernity and tradition. In terms of Frampton's critique of postmodernism's use of representational facades, isolating the spatial and the iconographic, it can be argued that while such detachment later became central to Venturi's work, his early thought placed great emphasis on the spatial. This can be discerned from his master's thesis at Princeton University, and also writings included in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1977), once again demonstrating common ground with Frampton.[67] In addition to postmodernism, similarities between Frampton's ideas and modernism itself have also been deconstructed by scholars. In Frampton's 1980 book *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, Frampton recounts a narrative of modernism, framing critical regionalism as its logical response, seeming to co-opt modernism's linear myth of historical progress, a line of thought he proceeds to dismantle later in his writing.[68] Given this, it is evident that Critical Regionalism cannot be comprehended in isolation of postmodernism, both inextricably linked whether as accompanying ideas or competing narratives.[69]

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[65] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 1.
[66] Dağlioğlu, "On the Paradoxical Nature of Frampton's Critical Regionalism."
[67] Ibid.
[68] Holland, "Building, Writing, History."
[69] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

2.4 Critical Regionalism and History

The question of History as a contentious issue for architects predates the introduction of modernist discourse, However, it is within such discourse that History became a dilemma.[70] Not dissimilar to modernism and postmodernism, critical regionalism shares a complex relationship with the subject. The inception of the theory itself was undoubtedly triggered by the re-surfacing of history as a potent architectural notion in the 1980 Venice Biennale.[71] For Tzonis , Lefaivre and Frampton, the theory was conspicuously fashioned as a re-born regionalism, countering the resurgence of history.[72] Frampton aimed to eschew an emphasis on history in his work, focusing instead on a conceptualization of a site where light, climate, and topography are paramount. However, such focus on direct experience of topography imply an absence of any built context where architectural history can be discerned, something seemingly necessary to avoid the pitfalls of postmodern superficiality.[73] This approach was considered as an attempt at "excavating history through geography" adopting the "horizontality of geography" as opposed to the "verticality of history".[74] By doing this, Frampton effectively dismisses the local cultural conditions and context of the site as an architectural consideration, with physical experience superseding culture.[75] Additionally, this has been seen to erect a categorical "boundary" between the architect and the architectural critic, with the architect working within a a-historical present in opposition to the historicizing nature of the critic's work.[76] Holland (2019) also recounts how Frampton equates history to visual culture, causing him to reject both as mere exploitative visual clichés, demonstrating a "distrust of the visual" as an oppressive apparatus and a "bearer of ideology", as expounded on by Nancy Stieber in *Space, Time and Architectural History* (2006). This general suspicion towards the (visual) use of traditional elements as regressive fails to consider such uses in unique cultural and intellectual regional contexts, misinterpreting the circumstances and motives behind their utilisation. Perhaps this is most evident in some of the peripheral geographic contexts Frampton claimed to focus on, such as in Portugal, where such use of traditional elements was not motivated by a resistance against modernist tendencies, but rather what was perceived as "regressive and retrograde", endeavouring to revitalise modernism as opposed to eradicating its

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[70] Forty, *Words and buildings: A vocabulary of modern architecture*
[71] Popescu, "Flattening History: A Prequel to the Invention of Critical Regionalism."
[72] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[73] Holland, "Building, Writing, History."
[74] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Holland, "Building, Writing, History."

influence.[77] As the theory developed in later writings, the idea of history was further pushed out, "flattening" its role to maintain it within a modernist framework, replacing the historical with the geographic.[78] As for the mutual relationship between the historical and theoretical components of critical regionalism, little overlap exists between them developing independent of one another, with the theory uninfluenced by the architecture that supposedly embodies it. Such dissonance demonstrates an incongruence between the theory and the motives underlying the architecture it appropriates, ultimately elevating theory over history.[79]

3. Implications: Legacy and Future

3.1. Examining Divergent (Peripheral) Geographies

At the Pomona meeting, Tzonis, and Lefaivre claimed that critical regionalism has the potential to put any possible identity conflicts aside in order to address global issues and extrapolate them to developing regions of the world.[80] As a theory focusing on architecture in peripheral geographies, this section will examine critical regionalism through a number of case studies in diverse regional contexts. Among the globalised geographies in the Arab world is Khartoum, Sudan in which there has been little consideration for regional adaptations of architecture and environment. In the study by Bani and Saeed (2015), critical regionalism as a theory was proposed to normalise the impact of modernisation and integrate it with the local architecture in the contemporary context of the city. In this sense, Khartoum was analysed as a case study with respect to the six points (later extended to ten points) of Kenneth Frampton's "architecture of resistance"[81](fig.1).

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[77] Agarez, *Algarve Building: Modernism, Regionalism and Architecture in the South of Portugal, 1925–1965,* 4.

[78] Popescu, "Flattening History: A Prequel to the Invention of Critical Regionalism."

[79] Giamarelos, "Architecture in the History/Theory Nexus: Building Critical Regionalism in Frampton's Greece," 79.

[80] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.

[81] Bani and Saeed, "Critical regionalism:studies on contemporary residential architecture of khartoum-sudan."

Frampton's Six Points

- Culture and Civilization
- The Rise and Fall of the Avant-Garde
- Critical Regionalism and World Culture
- The Resistance of the Place-Form
- Culture Versus Nature
- The Visual Versus the Tactile

Frampton's Ten Points

- Critical Regionalism and Vernacular Form
- The Modern Movement
- The Myth and the Reality of the Region
- Information and Experience
- Space/Place
- Typology/Topography
- Architectonic/Scenographic
- Artificial/Natural
- Visual/Tactile
- Post-Modernism and Regionalism

Fig. 1: Frampton's "Six" and "Ten" points highlighting the concept's evolution. Diagram courtesy of Bani and Saeed (2015)

Thus, investigating existing residential buildings considering Frampton's points as basic knowledge can be considered a starting point in Khartoum paving the way for more context-related architecture.[82] The examined examples were designed by Jack Ishkanes and Abdel Moniem Mustafa. Each project represented one of the mentioned points, however, all of them were somewhat successful in their use of cultural values and fabric. Both cases featured courtyards and gardens as the main core of the residence. Additionally, the examples exhibited positive evaluations in terms of form selection, creating shaded areas and useful outdoor spaces aligned with the topography of the region. These instances demonstrate that, as architects seeking to realise a context sensitive approach, a mediation between local and global elements must be found to imbue critical regionalism in their designs.[83]

Further examination can be performed on the case of architecture in Greece, discussing critical regionalism's involvement in the history and theory of the region's building culture by analysing the works of Suzana and Dimitris Antonakakis from the viewpoints of Tzonis, Lefaivre, and Frampton.[84] The work of Greek architects became of particular interest to Frampton, owing to their work being firmly grounded in their specific topographical and geographical context

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Giamarelos, "Architecture in the History/Theory Nexus: Building Critical Regionalism in Frampton's Greece," 79.

mitigating the globalising modernist influences.[85] Tzonis and Lefaivre and Frampton interpreted such work with subtle differences, emphasising the "grid" and "pathway" aspects respectively of Suzana and Dimitris Konstantinidis's work exemplified by the Street apartment building in Athens (1973-1975) (fig. 2). This constitutes a design that passes through the traditional stereotype and presents the third critical phase of Greek regionalism which is rooted in the spirit of the location and social context.[86]

Fig. 2: Suzana & Dimitris Antonakakis, 118 Benaki Street apartment building, Athens. Photo courtesy of Atelier 66 (1973)

While Frampton shared commonalities with Tzonis and Lefaivre's theory, he emphasised the topographical aspect and placement of the building in the project(s) by Konstantinidis. Despite referring to the Greek projects as a mixture of 'the grid and the pathway', Tzonis & Lefaivre writing implied an assertion of just one of these templates. As an outside observer to the Greek architectural milieu, Frampton read-in international features and influences in the local architecture, citing influences from Le Corbusier, Aldo van Eyck, and Mies van der Rohe. According to his interpretation, in Greece, the sense of island settlements is still apparent in contemporary Athens, meaning each project has to adapt to divergent site conditions.[87]

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[85] Ibid.

[86] Ibid.

[87] Giamarelos, "Architecture in the History/Theory Nexus: Building Critical Regionalism in Frampton's Greece," 79.

3.2 A Post-Critical? Regionalism

In our contemporary age, significant debate has arisen around deficiencies of Critical Regionalism unaddressed in Kenneth Frampton's work. Two conspicuous, omitted narratives have been identified in contemporary discourse: climate change and the diminishing of resources, and global inequality. Such pertinent issues constitute a primary motive for the re-evaluation of topography, contextualization, and climate in design, aided with local insight and informed by regional peculiarities.[88] The phenomenon of global inequality is heavily tied to the "flattening" phenomenon as a product of globalisation, the valleys and hills of variance being gradually eradicated, ushering in an era where differences of all kinds lose relevance signalling the "end of geography".[89] In light of this, Critical Regionalism must engage with such modern dilemmas to achieve a post-critical regionalist definition that transcends labels of 'International Style', 'Modernism', 'Regionalism', or the 'vernacular' to freely engage with such issues.[90] According to De Cooman (2019), it is the critical aspect of the theory that holds the emphasis, positing a post-regionalist critical regionalism, possibly a critical globalism. Action and narrative are both present in architecture. A radical mindset in the process of construction is essential to addressing these inadequacies. Construction itself carries the potential for change through action, story, and outcome. Such frameworks are central to an empowered critical regionalism.[91]

4. Conclusion

Critical regionalism, in its four decades in the architectural discourse, has seen considerable debate, critique, and revision. First theorised by Lefaivre and Tzonis in 1981, then reaffirmed by Frampton two years later, it set out to provide a viable escape from a theoretical and practical discourse dominated by modernist understandings which were perceived to have failed in their stated aims. Setting itself apart from an emergent postmodernism, it presented itself as not a style, but a mindset,[92] emphasising a mediation between global culture and local site-specific peculiarities, As the theory matured, and critiques arose, its proponents have recalibrated its emphases, shifting from a critical regionalism to a realism, freeing itself from the connotations of its self-attributed criticality and regionalism. It is perhaps here where the theory's coherence unravels. In the past twenty years, critics have exposed incoherences in its argumentation as it

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[88] De Cooman, "Beyond Critical Regionalism. Grey Zones and Radicality in Contemporary Practice"

[89] Lefaivre and Tzonis, *Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalization: Peaks and Valleys in the Flat World*.

[90] De Cooman, "Beyond Critical Regionalism. Grey Zones and Radicality in Contemporary Practice"

[91] Ibid.

[92] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

struggled to emancipate itself from its modernist roots, attempting to refute that to which it is inextricably bound. It has exhibited paradoxical tendencies, shunning yet becoming itself a part of history[93] and endeavouring to become a general theory of the particular, embodying a globalising force it had been envisioned to mitigate, "collapsing under its own weight".[94] While its argumentation may be flawed, and its writings lacking key answers to the pertinent architectural questions of the contemporary age, the fact remains that the underlying motivation of the theory, a resistance to the globalising, flattening narratives of modernism, has maintained the theory's relevance. Perhaps a reformed, more inclusive notion of critical regionalism, free from the shackles of twentieth century modernist polemics, and taking into account the seminal architectural dilemmas of our time, can succeed where it had failed.

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[93] Holland, "Building, Writing, History."
[94] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

Part II

Regional Histories in The Arab World

1. Revising Historiographies

1.1 Modernism and Intertwined Histories

The historiography of architecture has emerged as an area of the field under increasing scrutiny and reexamination in recent decades. The underpinnings and methodologies upholding the discipline began to be subjected to serious critical analysis by the late twentieth century. Such endeavours were fueled by the prominence of a particular mode of architectural theory, rooted in Western philosophical and literary traditions, and activated by theoreticians to deconstruct the field's foundations, in addition to prevalent trends in adjacent scholarly disciplines such as art history.[95] Theorists such as Frampton among others[96] interrogated architecture's established canons in light of contemporaneous critical philosophical frameworks advanced by the Frankfurt school and French structuralists, placing the spotlight on architecture's intellectual history, rather than buildings and architects themselves.[97] Studies such as *The Historiography of Modern architecture* (2001) by Panayotis Tournikiotis, were pioneering in their examinations of the historiography of the modern architecture movement, exposing the theoretical assumptions of the main historians of modern architecture, and demonstrating the primacy of theory and writing over buildings and material.[98]

This recalibration of architectural history as a discipline enabled a reevaluation of the modernist paradigm, giving way to a revisions of modernist architecture as its increasingly prolific body of theory (that came to be produced as a result of sustained economic downturn), started to be historicized.[99] Through this revision project of tools and methods, the consideration of alternate geographies and hitherto external and "unpedigreed" works was facilitated,[100] and the need to challenge architecture's "Western Canon" of authoritative works elevated on the back of Eurocentric assumptions, and upheld by the field's educational institutions and professional practice dominated by Western actors, was made evident. This became of particular relevance after the emergence of what came to be termed as Postcolonial theory.[101]

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[95] Leach, "Architecture's Historiographical Turn," 19.
[96] Other theorists engaged in similar interrogations included Alan Colqhoun, Peter Eisenman, Denise Scott Brown, Manfredo Tafuri, Bernard Tschumi, and Colin Rowe.
[97] Leach, "Architecture's Historiographical Turn," 19.
[98] Higgott, "The Historiography of Modern Architecture." 80.
[99] de León, "Theorizing a Modern Tradition," 113.
[100] Leach, "Architecture's Historiographical Turn," 19.
[101] Akcan, "Postcolonial theories in architecture," 143.

Corresponding to reevaluation efforts from within the discipline, Postcolonialism, pioneered in large part by Edward Said and his seminal 1978 work *Orientalism*, affected entire fields of knowledge across academia.[102] Through this work, Said elaborated on the existing dynamic between empire as the centre of culture and power and the peripheral, erecting an imagined division between the Occident and the Orient, and intellectuals' role in perpetuating such a divide.[103] The term's main use in the architectural realm has been to investigate novel methods of interpreting architecture in "non-Western" contexts.[104] Though Said's criticism was seldom directed to architecture specifically, his work had a pivotal influence on voices from within the field, paving the way for a reassessment of historical architectural narratives, and "intertwined" and "global" architectural histories as a subject of inquiry. Said's book, while leaving an indelible mark on the study of the humanities, also seeped into architecture, albeit from behind the scenes. However, its role is more influential in the historical review of Islamic architecture as a discipline, helping to legitimise the field which had oftentimes been sidelined as a "self contained area of study that was religiously and culturally essentialist" at best, and at worst representative of a tradition that was "ornamentalist , ahistorical , and lacking in tectonic rationality".[105]

Prior to such reframing attempts, the history of architecture had often conceived of the evolution of the field as a linear, coherent and ossified succession of self-referential stylistic evolution from the classical to the modern, centering around an entrenched Eurocentric historical narrative,[106] and banishing the architectural production of other cultures to the hinterlands of the historical landscape, branding them as non historical. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the "tree of architecture" (fig. 3) featured in Sir Bannister Fletcher's highly consequential *A History of Architecture*, (1896)[107] depicting non European styles as "dead end branches",[108] as if to be barren mutations divorced of their historical context and incapable of begetting anything of true novelty. This rejection of the historicity and of any architecture perceived to be outside the institutionalised canon, which is presented as possessing a monopoly on history and development, reflected the core of Said's critique of the nature of Orientalist knowledge.[109] This narrative was maintained and bolstered by consequent surveys, presenting the European modernist paradigm as

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[102] Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[103] Akcan, "Postcolonial theories in architecture," 143.

[104] Ibid., In the paper Akcan acknowledges the implications of using the term "non-West" as perpetuating a colonial idea by implying the "West" and its "Other" are decidedly different, but in the absence of suitable alternative terminology prefers to use the term in "distancing and ironical" quotation marks.

[105] Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[106] Ibid,, and Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin"

[107] Akcan, "Postcolonial theories in architecture," 143., and Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[108] Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[109] Akcan, "Postcolonial theories in architecture," 143.

the rational culmination of modern society whose genealogical roots were free from external influence.[110] Such a narrative evolved to prioritise and de-emphasize specific histories based on underlying ideological, cultural, and political motives. With historical narrative playing an outsized role in the field's self perception, this makes the entire architecture field just as influenced by the political as it is by the technical or artistic.[111]
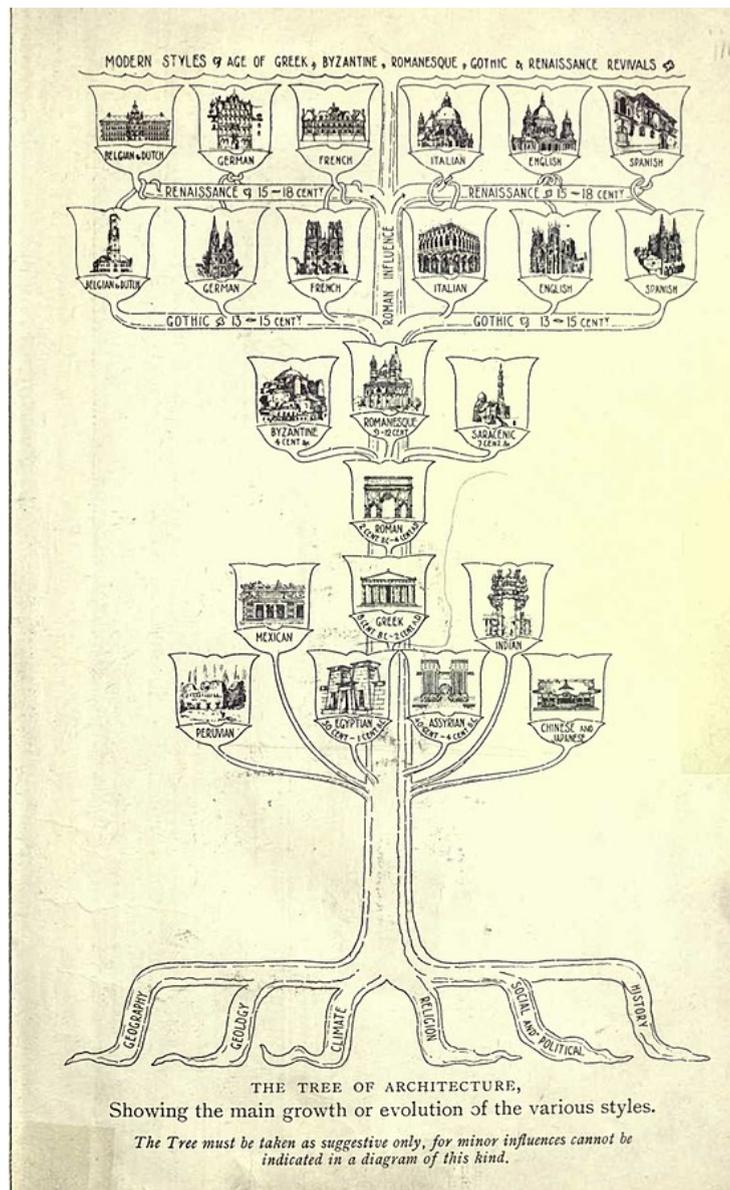
Fig. 3: Banister Fletcher's "*A Tree of Architecture*"

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[110] Bozdogan, "Architectural History in Professional Education: Reflections on Postcolonial Challenges to the Modern Survey," 207.

[111] Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin."

Scholars in The discipline slowly started to reflect these changes through reworked histories, in what could be termed as historical narratives considering "overlapping territories" and "intertwined histories" as advanced by Said,[112] in a landmark paper reprinted from his book, *Culture and Imperialism*, identifying the 'Empire' as a hybrid cultural realm in which both coloniser and colonised are entangled, and where a broader historical and cultural examination is called for. Within such a complex relationship bound together by imperialism, a dichotomous view of the cultures within such a landscape, as often touted by the colonial mindset, is countered by the necessity of surpassing fixed polarities in favour of an analysis of common exchange, mutual values, and intertwined histories.[113]

With this a new orientation towards emphasising hitherto unheard narratives outside the European/North American centre seeking a "global" architectural perspective started to develop.[114] It refuted the notion that the privileged architecture of the west developed in seclusion to architectural production elsewhere, particularly as the Western canon had deeply intertwined itself with the architecture of the "non-West" so as to render it no longer its sole custodian.[115] Several scholars have identified Spiro Kostof's *A History of Architecture* published in 1985 as being among these first attempts at a global history in the discipline.[116] Noted for chronicling simultaneously occurring developments in Europe and the Middle East during the Late mediaeval and renaissance periods, it has been seen as being evidently influenced by Said's criticism, although the book itself shows no direct acknowledgement of this.[117] While it has been critiqued as asymmetrical in its contextualization and historical presentation compared to its treatment of European history, the critical responses and new historical surveys it provoked were crucial in furthering this framework within the discipline.[118] Scholars have since chronicled the development of this notion of a "global" architectural history, exposing the nuances and "subtle instances of cross-cultural exchanges and universally shared values"[119] between architectural traditions, highlighting their interdependence or "intertwined" state, as argued by Bozdogan.

Fletcher's *A History of Architecture* was itself affected by the wave postcolonial and Saidian critique, seeing multiple revisions including its centennial edition in 1996 which added six new

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[112] Said, "Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories," 290.

[113] Ledent., "Cross-Culturality in Caryl Phillips's Crossing the River," 55.·

[114] de León, "Modern to Contemporary: A Historiography of Global in Architecture," 43.

[115] Bozdogan, "Architectural History in Professional Education: Reflections on Postcolonial Challenges to the Modern Survey," 207.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[118] de León, "Modern to Contemporary: A Historiography of Global in Architecture," 43.

[119] Ibid.

chapters focusing on the architecture of the Islamic world. Still though, according to Nasser Rabbat, it fails to eliminate the vestiges of an orientalist purview in some sections, by exoticising Islamic architecture by emphasising the immutability of vernacular forms among other common tropes.[120]

Interestingly, local 'canonical' architectural histories in the Arab world do not seem to diverge much from Western-based conceptions, seeming to accept the Western canon's paradigm of how architecture in the West emerged, and how its history is viewed. However, as is perhaps expected, the history of Islamic architecture is articulated in a more elaborate manner, even if the narration of such histoires mirrors colonial Western approaches. Histories are usually periodised according to ruling dynasties, and little mention of cross-cultural or global exchange is highlighted.[121]

With the emergence of historiography as a dominant theme within historical discourse on architecture,[122] the narration of the history of modernism has been particularly affected by this postcolonial paradigm. Macarena de la Vega de León, identifies several figures and works as important milestones towards the ongoing formulation of this new global approach. In her view, William J.R. Curtis's *Modern Architecture since 1900* (1996) and its subsequent revisions (first published in 1982), while written prior to the real takeoff of the "global" notion at the turn of the century, nevertheless represents an expanded consideration of the diverse geographies of modernist architecture, an attempt to expand the established canon beyond Europe and indirectly through his approach, challenging the rationale underpinning its formation. Through his continued emphasis on global exchanges contributing to the modernist tradition, it can be taken as the most consistent with Said's notion of "intertwined history", more so than any other history of modern architecture,[123] one of which being *World Architecture: A Critical Mosaic* (1999) edited by Frampton, along with Luis Fernandez-Galiano. A ten volume work, it encompasses architecture worldwide throughout the twentieth century and covers one thousand buildings, with local editors consulted on regional entries. Despite Frampton's attestation to its progressively balanced coverage compared to previous histories, some scholars have pointed out that the work's stratification of regional works implied Eurocentric connotations.[124]

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[120] Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[121] See Tawfiq Abdel Gawad's *Tarikh Al-'Imara*, 1969. (Translated as '*History of Architecture*'). Abdel Gawad was a prominent modernist Egyptian architect and scholar who was also editor of the *Al-'Imara* magazine which focused on modernist architecture. His book is still widely used in architectural education in Egypt.

[122] Tournikiotis, *The historiography of modern architecture.*

[123] de León, "*An Intertwined History: The Contribution of William JR Curtis to the Historiography of Modern Architecture.*"

[124] de León, "Modern to Contemporary: A Historiography of Global in Architecture," 43.

The notion of 'global' has also seen the expansion of its temporal dimension. A *global history of architecture*, written by Mark Jarzombek, Vikramadtiya Prakash, and Francis Ching in 2006, reframes the beginning of the architecture's historical narrative to the 35th century BCE while maintaining a worldwide geographical scope.[125] This survey signalled a deeper "break form the historical, even chronological, Eurocentrism of the survey mode", adopting an impartial and strictly chronological approach to periodization,[126] and relying on bracketing specific numeric intervals of time as opposed to an analytical structure centred on European stylistic development. The work is presented with the inevitable challenge of the significant disproportionality of the amount and quality of available resources and architectural data, which it actively tries to equalise.[127]

1.2 A Historiography of Regionalism

In the midst of the continued decolonizing attempts and critical revisions sweeping the studies of modernism in the late twentieth century, a parallel discussion, though sometimes intersecting, was being had about the notion of regionalism, and its relationship with tradition in the modern age.

Within wider historical discourse, the "region" as an object of historical analysis has only recently begun to resurface after the introduction of the centre-periphery model in the 1970s.[128] In an architectural context, consensus on the precise meaning of regionalism and what constitutes a 'region' has been sparse, subjecting the concept to considerable debate,[129] resulting in what has become a somewhat amorphous term. Talk of regionalism had existed since the 1930s,[130] but particular interest in the concept seemed to truly begin in the 1980s,[131] which saw the publication of Tzonis and Lefaivre's "The Grid and the Pathway" at the start of the decade, as well as Frampton's contributions to the emerging critical regionalist debate through *Prospects of a Critical Regionalism* and *Towards a Critical Regionalism*, published in 1983. Towards the decade's end, *The First International Colloquium on Critical Regionalism* was held at the Pomona College of Environmental Design, an event in which Frampton also played an active role, the

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[125] Ibid.

[126] Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[127] Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[128] Storm, "Regionalism in History, 1890-1945: the cultural approach," 251.

[129] de León, "Revisiting Quotations," and Alnaim and Bay, "Regionalism indicators and assessment approach of recent trends in Saudi Arabia's architecture: The Salmaniah architectural style and the King Salman Charter initiatives as a case study," 102.

[130] Alnaim and Bay, "Regionalism indicators and assessment approach of recent trends in Saudi Arabia's architecture: The Salmaniah architectural style and the King Salman Charter initiatives as a case study," 102.

[131] de León, "Revisiting Quotations."

event acting as the "consecration" of critical regionalism as a paradigm.[132] However, the theoreticians of critical regionalism were not alone in discussing the regionalism question. Curtis gave the concept of regional identity significant attention in his chronicling of modernism, devoting a chapter to the topic, as well as centering the book's conclusion on a discussion of modernity, tradition, and authenticity.[133]

Additionally, the establishment of the Aga Khan award for Architecture in 1977 as an award focused on architectural production in the Islamic world, also promoted "historical continuity, vernacular revival, and critical regionalism",[134] once again putting regionalist discourse under the spotlight. The award took an active role in shaping the discussion through the organisation of multiple events, of which the second regionalism seminar in 1985 was of particular relevance,[135] seeing the participation of Curtis and Frampton, as well as Suha Ozkan, Paul Rudolph, Balkrishna Doshi, and Habib Fida Ali among other prominent practitioners. While the event, held at the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, focused on regionalist discourse affecting Islamic cultures (particularly Bangladesh), it also acknowledged the increasing momentum regionalism was gaining as a counterpoint to international modernism.[136]

This idea of a dichotomy between regionalism on the one hand, and universalism and internationalisation on the other has been a pervasive theme throughout discussions on regionalism. However, scholars have noted the lack of uniformity in the usage of the latter two terms, sometimes used as synonyms.[137] This framing is acknowledged by Frampton in his work, referencing Paul Ricoeur's "dialectical interplay between civilization and culture",[138] drawing attention to Ricoeur's paradox faced by decolonizing nations: joining global civilization through modernization while maintaining their national spirit.[139]

In his contribution to the seminar proceedings titled "Regionalism as a Source of Inspiration of Architects", Habib Fida Ali notes the dominance of the regionalist "ideology" among the intellectuals in the third world, but cites how such cultures are becoming more integrated within universal culture.[140] He stresses an inevitability to the modernisation of local approaches in light

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[132] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.

[133] de León, "Revisiting Quotations."

[134] Rabbat, "The Hidden Hand: Edward Said's Orientalism and Architectural History," 388.

[135] de León, "Revisiting Quotations."

[136] Powell, "Foreword. Regionalism in architecture," 7.

[137] de León, "*An Intertwined History: The Contribution of William JR Curtis to the Historiography of Modern Architecture.*"

[138] Frampton, "Prospects for a critical regionalism," 147.

[139] Ricoeur, "Civilisation universelle et cultures nationales," 439.

[140] Fida Ali, "Regionalism as a Source of Inspiration for Architects," 92.

of the hegemony of Western economic power, without which survival becomes infeasible. To illustrate such adaption happening within local cultures He mentions the following anecdote:

> "A lot of middle class Pakistani families rely on the motorcycle as their sole means of transport. It was not very uncommon to hear of a couple having hurt themselves because the ladies' "dupatta", a long, scarf-like garment which is an essential part of the typical Pakistani ladies' attire, got caught in the rear wheels of the motorcycle This has resulted in ladies either avoiding the dupatta, or when on the motorcycle, tying it around their waists in a totally novel manner. This is a classic example of the adaptation or modification of a tradition to make it compatible or practicable with a technological development, instead of rejecting totally either the tradition or the technology." [141]

Ali uses this example and others to question the decrying of the loss of local culture and values. He stresses that through his interpretation of the international style's *form follows function* maxim in a philosophic as opposed to a stylistic manner. Such alterations constitute a mere adjustment to maintain usability and relevance in the modern age, and that some examples of regionalist architecture prioritise "regional traditions and heritage as the chief overriding design criterion." instead of making the best use of available materials and techniques.[142]

Thorsten Botz-Bornstein in his book on *Transcultural Architecture: The Limits and Opportunities of Critical Regionalism* (2015) elaborates on what he sees as the impetus behind the quest for regionalism, relating it to the "empathy vs. abstraction" paradigm established by German historian of art Wilhem Worringer. Botz-Bornstien puts forward the idea that "at the root of all regionalism resides the quest for a certain amount of empathy directed towards concrete cultural and historical expressions."[143] Through this framing, a "critical" regionalism can be defined as an attempt at negotiation between abstraction and the inherent empathy rooted in the mimicking of history, citing the work of Alvar Aalto as the most indicative of this specific methodology.[144]

Perhaps the most elaborate classification of regionalism within the modernist paradigm, was advanced by Turkish architect Suha Ozkan, in his written introduction to the previously discussed 1985 Aga Khan Award seminar's proceedings. noting the scant mention of regionalism before the 1970s, save for its use in the works of Jane Drew, Maxwell Fry, Hassan Fathy, and Rifat

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[141] Fida Ali, "Regionalism as a Source of Inspiration for Architects," 92.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Botz-Bornstein, *Transcultural architecture: The limits and opportunities of critical regionalism.*
[144] Ibid.

Chadirji.[145] For Ozkan, the idea of regionalism is classified into two tiers. The first distinguishes between a "Vernacularism" and a "Modern Regionalism". The former is split further into a conservative and an interpretive attitude, while the latter is conceived as consisting of a "concrete regionalism" and an "abstract regionalism." Both conservative and interpretive vernacularists aim to bring back vernacular forms but differ in their approach to technology and community. Conservative vernacularists used local knowledge, techniques, and materials as if to revive a holistic building tradition. He cites Nader Khalili, Hassan Fathy, Abdelwahed El Wakil, and Andre Raveau as proponents of this approach. On the other hand, interpretative vernacularists are more concerned with a "neovernacularism", utilising "heritage for new and contemporary functions", such as cultural tourism.[146] As for the trend of "modern regionalism", Ozkan points out that "concrete regionalism" describes the postmodern use of local architectural elements, ranging from "thoughtful eclecticism to a worthless pastiche",[147] while "abstract regionalism" denotes a more intentional focus on the underlying building principles and tradition abstracted and reinterpreted into a new form, making it a cultural as opposed to a superficial type of regionalism.[148]

In his article titled "Towards an Authentic Regionalism", for *Mimar*, Curtis advocated an alternative paradigm to Ozkan's classification of the concept. He defines regionalism in architecture as distinct from national, religious, or superficial cultural trends. Materials, climate, geography, and architectural patterns are all emphasised, asserting their existence before Islam and "Islamic architecture" casting the concept outside of the "regional" label, a judgement he also passes on national symbolism in architecture.[149] Hassan Pour et al make a comparative analysis of both conceptions, demonstrating how Ozkan's conception of regionalism is significantly broader, accounting for the full spectrum of regionalist reactions to internationalism, whilst Curtis's definition is restricted to what he posits is a true regionalism thus branding any other form of regionalism as a nothing more than casual vernacularism.[150] They astutely point out that Ozkan and Frampton's definitions of regionalism focus on its cultural dimension, while Curtis's definition is climactic,[151] and also classify Ozkan and Curtis's views on regionalism as indicative of a local and western approach to the matter respectively. One could contrast this assessment with Paul Rudolph's quote in *Regionalism in Architecture*, asserting that "'climate control' is not

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[145] Ozkan, "Regionalism within modernism." 8.
[146] Ibid.
[147] Ozkan, "Regionalism within modernism." 8.
[148] Hassan Pour, Lewis, and Guo, "The theoretical inapplicability of regionalism to analysing architectural aspects of Islamic shrines in Iran in the last two centuries."
[149] Ibid.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid.

regionalism.", in which using this negative definition underscores the lack of unity in pinpointing what regionalism actually is.[152] Hassan Pour et al ultimately conclude that discussions of regionalism have fallen short of providing a holistic analysis by limiting their analytic scope to modern expressions of regional identity.[153]

De León also compares Curtis's regionalism, against Frampton's critical regionalism. She notes how while Frampton centres his discourse around resisting globalisation and internationalism, Curtis in his stance stresses the necessity of acknowledging the changing conditions and growing interdependence in the present world, which seeks a more moderated and balanced approach,[154] a notion in alignment with the "intertwined history" of Said, and of particular importance to analysing the Arab world.

2. Reactions to Modernism in the Arab World

2.1 Colonialism and Architectural Culture

To understand the shifts in the architectural culture of the Arab world, it would perhaps be beneficial to dissect the region's complex relationship with modernity. Rabbat has written extensively on this, recounting the influence modernity and colonialism have had in terms of the architectural profession as well as on a broader historical scale.

The Arab world saw influence from European modernity until the early nineteenth century, slowly accumulating through the amplification of trade coming from European port cities, firstly from the late mediaeval Italian city-states, and later with the emergent Dutch, French, and British naval powers, introducing novel European goods.[155] This process intensified in the early nineteenth century, particularly after Napoleon Bonaparte's invasion and short lived occupation of Egypt in 1798, the "first modern colonial foray into the Arab world".[156] However, some historians have questioned the idea of Napoleon's arrival being the starting point of modernism in the region as "orientalist".[157] The gulf in military and technological advancement was made so

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[152] Ibid.

[153] Ibid.

[154] de León, "*An Intertwined History: The Contribution of William JR Curtis to the Historiography of Modern Architecture.*"

[155] Rabbat, "Encounters with modernity in the Arab world."

[156] Ibid.

[157] Varisco, "The Persistence of Orientalism: Anglo-American Historians and Modern Egypt by Peter Gran." 328.

apparent to the invaded Arabs that it kindled a will within Egypt, and throughout the wider Ottoman empire, for swift modernisation.

Concessions extracted by colonial powers from a weakening Ottoman state also ensured a privileged legal status for foreigners and native religious and ethnic minority communities of mostly Jews and Christians, leading to their domination of Arab-European trade. This led to the emergence of a "Levantine cosmopolitanism", where an ethnically mixed social class concentrated and intermingled in cities such as Cairo, Alexandria, Istanbul, and Beirut, themselves serving as places where east and west interact and standing as new European symbols of the Orient.[158] Budding Levantine culture pervaded the wider Arab world, especially in the *Mashreq,* providing a palatable synthesis between European sensibilities and a "conservative and traditional milieu".[159] Such cultural exchange manifested itself in an architectural eclecticism drawing upon myriad influences from Neo-moorish and Neo-baroque to Art-deco and Art nouveau.[160]

However, such changes in the building culture were not merely stylistic. Historically, as with almost all pre-modern cultures, architecture was viewed as an artisanal endeavour not dissimilar to other crafts practised in daily life.[161] Pre-colonial settlements were mostly made up of traditional pre-industrial communities, isolated in nature and with scant contact with external cultures, despite some mutual economic activity. Vernacular architecture and settlements were primarily the result of natural surroundings and social and cultural factors, making them closely tied to their inhabitants' sense of identity.[162] Colonial rule had exported a conception of the architect, as a figure and practice, rooted in a decidedly European renaissance tradition. The architects from the quattrocento onwards transformed this notion as architecture turned into an admired intellectual affair gaining its own conceptual framework epistemology, influenced by a renaissance era reconnection to classical aesthetic canons.[163] Along with industrial age's rationalisation of the discipline after, a clear recalibration of the professional role of the architect as a thinker, in addition to a builder, spread from Europe through the colonised world resulting in a disruption of the historical and centuries-long process of knowledge transmission through apprenticeship

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[158] Rabbat, "Encounters with modernity in the Arab world." Rabbat elaborates on the term "Levantine", stemming from the French word meaning "the place where the sun rises", *Levant.* The term thus became a new hybrid term facilitating cultural exchange, mixing "Eastern locale with a European cultural referent to designate the dual ethnic background of its bearer". Geographically, the term denotes the historical area of the Eastern Mediterranean encompassing Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan.

[159] Rabbat, "Encounters with modernity in the Arab world."

[160] Ibid.

[161] Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin."

[162] AlSayyad, "From modernism to globalization: The Middle East in context," 225.

[163] Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin."

instead of a formalised educational system.[164] Colonialism's direct political implications also subdued Arab and Middle Eastern urban spheres to the politics of occupation and control, uprooting traditional village life and corralling residents in planned settlements under the pretence of modernisation to quell rebellion.[165]

The presence of European colonialism also attracted the coloniser's interest in the colonised, exposing autochthonous building forms to Western study and binding it to a colonial orientalist narrative. In such a narrative, Arab architecture was confined to the domain of archaeology and conservation all of which was tied to a specific political project, described as "archeological systematic reconstruction of Hellenistic vestiges in order to prove the legitimacy of European presence."[166] With this, Arab architecture had been relegated from a dynamic living tradition to a distant, frozen category leading to its historicization and the cessation of its cultural continuity and local authorship. In so doing, the Arab architectural tradition was appropriated from local master-builders to a new class of colonial architects and artists.[167] Western architects operating in the Arab world at this time were often working for local westernised elites and rulers, who were patronised by colonial powers. They imported European neoclassicism, neo-baroque, art nouveau and art-deco styles into the local architectural vocabulary, likely as an affirmation of their own and their clients' modernity.[168]

A curiosity towards vernacular vocabulary, aided by this sidelining of indigenous architecture to the realm of conservation, did exist but was mostly limited to repurposing such elements into established European styles to provide it with a local flavour,[169] leading to the emergence of various new styles such as neo-mamluk, neo-moorish, and neo-pharaonic styles.[170] For such practitioners, Arab architecture, and the architecture of the Islamic world on a broader scale, were seen as dead traditions[171] unable to escape history's gravity and ascend into the modern orbit. Ornamental features were subsequently documented and categorised in a European analytical methodology then dominated by the French Beaux-Arts *envois* practice used for the study of

[164] Ibid.

[165] AlSayyad, "From modernism to globalization: The Middle East in context," 225.

[166] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[167] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[168] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"

[169] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[170] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"

[171] Ibid.

classical architecture, producing the aforementioned revivalist styles in line with existing revivalist architecture in the west.[172]

Such an atomized approach to the of vernacular building tradition, along with the imposition of incongruous eurocentric architectural practices on existing local formations, was symptomatic of the proliferation of a "top-down professionalisation of architecture" enabled by what was to locals an alien network of professional institutions and systems of learning and validation, "displaced the old practices and undermined their social relevance and epistemological value".[173] Nezar Alsayyad asserts that some of these changes resulted in permanent shifts in local architectural production, citing how the imposition of European building codes prescribing setbacks eliminated the authentic local typology of courtyard housing in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula in favour of climatically and culturally insensitive single-family houses. A renunciation of previously practical construction techniques under the pretence of their incompatibility with modernity lead to a "pseudo-modernised" and imbalanced urban environment.[174] It could be said that the primary effect colonialism had on local architectural culture was the rupture caused between an active and organic local building tradition and its indigenous cultural roots, consigning it to history, and prompting locals to negotiate a new path within these new hybridised conditions.

2.2 The Arab world in within the Modernist Narrative

The twentieth century saw the Arab world, along with many colonised nations, achieve independent rule as the colonial era faded into twilight. This ushered in a second stage of Arab modernity that was taking shape in the form of Arab nationalism, which would dominate the immediate post-colonial period in the region.[175] New Arab ruling elites began to look inward for identity and nation building. The pluralistic European influenced "Levantine" culture was supplanted by the recovery of an authentic Arab historical identity, which in turn redirected influence from westernised coastal cities to the historical Arab capitals of Cairo, Baghdad, and Damascus.[176] However, this forsaking of vestiges of European influence was nevertheless paired with a fixation on modernisation, even among more conservative regimes,[177] Who were keen to employ modernism and Western experts as nation building and regime legitimising tools.[178] In a

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[172] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?" The Beaux-Arts *envois* practice refers to a particular French pedagogical tradition in the study of classical arts that was widespread throughout Europe involving the rigorous analysis, drawing, painting, and sculpting of Classical art.

[173] Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin."

[174] AlSayyad, "From modernism to globalization: The Middle East in context," 225.

[175] Rabbat, "Encounters with modernity in the Arab world."

[176] Ibid.

[177] AlSayyad, "From modernism to globalization: The Middle East in context," 225.

[178] Pyla, "Baghdad's urban restructuring, 1958 aesthetics and politics of nation Building," 97.

newly-independent Iraq leading modernist names such as Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, Frank Lloyd Wright, Gio Ponti, and Walter Gropius (fig. 3) were all invited to take on ambitious modernisation projects.[179]
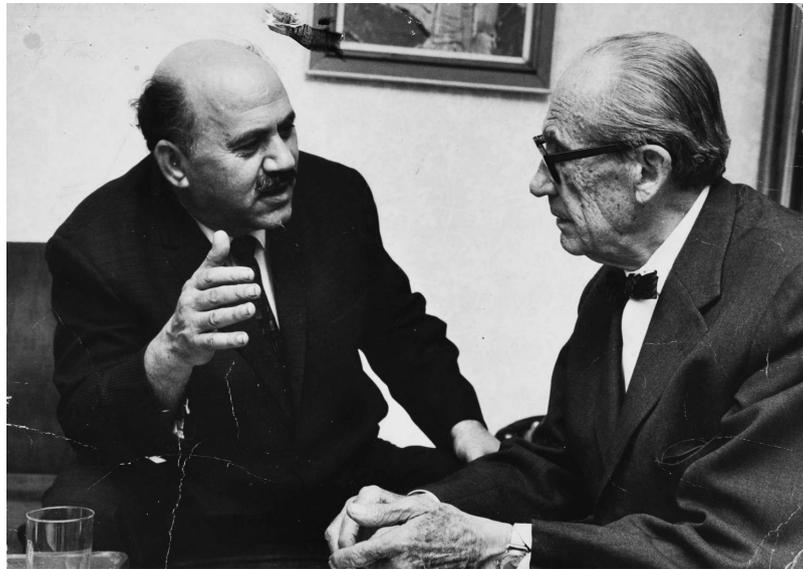
Fig. 4: Iraqi architect Mohamed Makiya (left) in conversation with Walter Gropius at the Mansour House (1958). Courtesy of ArchNet.

It was also in the not long before this colonial twilight that modern architecture began to consolidate across Europe. Experiencing its 'heroic age' in the 1920s, modernist architecture traced its roots back to the late eighteenth century as a reaction to the supposed haphazard eclecticism, resulting from a tendency towards revivalist styles[180] some of which were colonially inspired- that had become commonplace. Several stylistic movements exposed a self-labelled modernity, common among them the belief that a truly contemporary architecture must emanate from the means of its construction, and should be distilled of any historical impurities to embody the experiences of the modern age and "imply some vague vision of human betterment".[181] It was in the aforementioned age of consolidation, that the characteristics of an *international style*, articulated through Le Corbusier's 1923 book *Vers une architecture*[182]and one which divergent practitioners such as with Walter Gropius, and Mies Van der Rohe seemed to corral around, became the "one true architecture of the twentieth century".[183]

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[179] Divleli and Divleli, "Pioneering Architect in the Construction of Post-Colonial Irak: Rifat Chadirji and His Monument Designs," 106.

[180] Curtis, *Modern architecture since 1900.*

[181] Ibid.

[182] Sobin, "Veils and Shadows: Le Corbusier in North Africa 1928-1936," 187.

[183] Curtis, *Modern architecture since 1900.*

Despite newly independent nationalist regimes embracing an apparently anti-western supranational Arab nationalism paired with a "hollowed out state socialism",[184] the status of international style emerging as the regnant form of progress and modernity meant it became as the architectural ideology of choice in Nasser's Cairo, who had come to be seen as the regional figurehead of Arab nationalism, in an attempt to position the Egyptian capital within the global architectural discourse. Yasser Elsheshtawy cites the Tahrir square Hilton hotel as a defining example of such architecture.[185]

However, one may ask questions of how purely *Western* canonical modernity was to begin with within an intertwined colonial context. While non Western architectural production was largely neglected from the formation of the wWestern and modernist canon, some modernist figureheads did show considerable appreciation for Arab vernacular forms particularly in the *Maghreb*, applying a "eastern form reduction" to their designs[186] This was particularly the case with the characteristically anti-regionalist, machine-inspired poster child of the international style Le Corbusier, perhaps the twentieth century's preeminent architectural figure.[187] He had somewhat extensive contact with the Arab world, in which he first designed a residence in Tunis in 1928 and visited French colonial Algeria in 1931. His initial attempts at designing in the former were hampered by the lack of adaptability of his international style to local climatic conditions. His fascination with the urban fabric of the traditional islamic *medina*[188] in Algeria prompted his five month-long *voyage d'orient*, touring the eastern mediterranean and often making note of the agrestal and primitive nature of local urban life,[189] as well as what he saw as the unity of the vernacular forms.[190] Writings and sketches from the voyage presented The concept of the "veil" worn by local women as a source of great allure and curiosity to him, betraying a common European orientalist obsession of the time.[191] Incorporating the concealment and mystique of religious and cultural attire into the metaphorical "architectural veil" idea, along with his exposure to the masonry screens of North African buildings to keep out the sun, gave rise to the brise-soleil sunbreakers he later became famous for featuring his subsequent modernist designs in Mar del plata and Chandigarh in Argentina and India respectively.[192] His interest in the architecture of the east continued to act as an influence on his work throughout his career,

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[184] Rabbat, "Encounters with modernity in the Arab world."

[185] Elsheshtawy, "City interrupted: modernity and architecture in Nasser's post-1952 Cairo," 347.

[186] Hagedorn, "Islam in the Modern Age: Art and Architecture," 586.

[187] Sobin, "Veils and Shadows: Le Corbusier in North Africa 1928-1936," 187.

[188] The term *Medina* is Arabic for "city" or "town" and is used to denote the walled historic city centres in Arab cities. Particularly in North Africa.

[189] Sobin, "Veils and Shadows: Le Corbusier in North Africa 1928-1936," 187.

[190] Çelik, "Le Corbusier, orientalism, colonialism," 59.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Sobin, "Veils and Shadows: Le Corbusier in North Africa 1928-1936," 187.

although this inspiration did turn into a challenge when working on his Algiers colonial projects, particularly the *Obus plan* to redesign the city.[193] Here, Harris J. Sobin notes a cogent example of a "reverse" knowledge and cultural flow paradigm, wherein cultural innovation or influence is imported from colonised to the coloniser, defying the conventional colonial dynamic.[194]

In a post colonial Arab world, Arab artistic and architectural production specifically seemed to come under the influence of a modernist paradigm that had supplanted traditional institutions and continuous knowledge so as to diminish their epistemological value, endorsing a modern-premodern dichotomy, ascribing the former as the sole domain of the west. For the premodern subaltern, admission into modernity meant adopting the ways of the Western metropolis at home, with knowledge provided by Western expertise, and often built by Western practitioners.[195]The exemplary modernism of established Western colonial centres were viewed as the ideal forms compared to which modern projects in the colonies were relegated to a being seen as "as derivative, tangential, peripheral, and, at best, alternative"[196] It has also been noted how such a dichotomy has defined the role - or lack thereof - of traditional architecture, excluding it from the global canon of architecture as a pre-modern reflection of a cultural homogeneity incompatible with the subjective expressions of modernism.[197]

In his history of modernism, Curtis affirms the idea of modernist production in the developing world in general being "lacking in the poetry and depth of meaning" compared to the canonical works of the international style.[198] He justifies this "degraded version of modern design" by explaining that it was the result of accelerated economic growth precipitating the functions and technologies conducive to a modernist architecture, in addition to being the result of the "brainwashing" of post-colonial elites who were native-born but educated in Western cultures with progressive Western mores which were in turn presented as antagonistic to a stagnant regressive past.[199] Nevertheless, Curtis has been credited for an attempt to shift the window of modernist discourse to the present, explicating the later development of the modernist paradigm as opposed to the oft-discussed foundational roots.[200] His chronicling of the history of

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[193] Çelik, "Le Corbusier, orientalism, colonialism," 59. The *Obus plan* was Le Corbusier's 1933 proposed scheme to modernise and redesign colonial Algiers, involving the segregation of the city using huge linear structure that ran through parts of the city's historic *Casbah* which would be destroyed. The plan has been much discussed but ultimately was left unimplemented.

[194] Sobin, "Veils and Shadows: Le Corbusier in North Africa 1928-1936," 187.

[195] Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin."

[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid.

[198] Curtis, *Modern architecture since 1900.*

[199] Ibid.

[200] de León, "Theorizing a Modern Tradition," 113.

modernism includes his discussion of an authentic regionalism, citing work from several postcolonial developing nations and of which he cites the Middle East, particularly Hassan Fathy's work, as an exemplar, referencing his *New Gourna* project extensively.[201] This perspective enabled Curtis to consider non-western architecture as part of a developing modern tradition rather than a mere inspirational source.[202]

2.3 Reactions to (Post)Modernism

Modernism and the rapid modernisation it perpetuated caused similar identitarian cultural crises all over the newly-liberated non-Western sphere, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, whose foreign-built modernist architecture tended to be seen as "crude", lacking consideration for local cultural climactic and traditional factors.[203] However, for its advocates in a post-independence Arab world, it became a symbol of globalisation and method of luring foreign investment. This aided in pushing some dissenting architects towards cultural introspection, albeit if patrons for such endeavours were few and far between. Curtis likens this cultural and architectural friction to a temporally condensed version of the dilemma of industrialization experienced in nineteenth century Europe and North America, with the colonised world adapting to a process of dramatic change from agrarian to industrial societies within a single generation.[204] He also juxtaposes the use of organic and indigenous tools to facilitate this transformation in the Western case, with their alien nature to colonised societies.[205] Consequently, scholars have questioned whether an industrialised culture can ever be extricated from Eurocentrism.[206]Modernism in the Arab world has therefore tended to be considered less of an ideological framework and more of an admiration for material technologies and the forms they can generate[207] demonstrating perhaps a more teleological approach to modernity.

Despite this, some architects seemed to take a more fundamentalist modernist approach, seeing no barrier to the application of modernist principles within local contexts, and were often patronised by local clients and regimes seeking to cultivate an image of refinement and modernity.[208] These architects, such as Naoum Chebib, Mahmoud Riad, and Sayed Karim in Egypt, were often card-carrying modernists educated in the Western world, the latter two trained

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[201] Curtis, *Modern architecture since 1900.*
[202] de León, "Theorizing a Modern Tradition," 113.
[203] Curtis, *Modern architecture since 1900.*
[204] Ibid.
[205] Curtis, *Modern architecture since 1900.*
[206] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.
[207] Ibid.
[208] Elshahed, "*Revolutionary Modernism? Architecture and the Politics of Transition in Egypt 1936-1967*"

in Liverpool and Zurich respectively. They could be considered as exemplars of a vanguard generation of Arab architects who espoused a progressive architectural agenda and embrace of technology for its own sake.[209] Chebib, Riad, and Karim in particular were later viewed as being among a group of modernist pioneers practising in Egypt around the time of the Egyptian revolution of 1952 and the consequent republican transformation. With many having studied and practised in the west, they often saw themselves on equal footing to Western practitioners and did not see the built environment as a conduit for asserting a counter European identity to modernity. They viewed modernist building principles not as formal rules but rather a framework representative of a truly *international* style.[210] However, it is important to note that Elshahed points out how Karim believed an international architecture can be trans-national, possessing a common international vocabulary that can incorporate adjustments from country to country, enabling a modern yet still national style. Karim thus worked to produce a modern Egyptian architecture that is "national while belonging to an international corpus of architectural production, challenging the duality of national/international".[211] Some practitioners, such as the Iraqi Rifat Chadirji, attempted to walk a somewhat finer line between vernacular tradition and the modern, stressing the underlying importance of technology to architectural revival, and the "synthesis between traditional forms and inevitable advent of modern technology".[212]

On the other hand, others seemed to be more concerned as to the aforementioned cultural dissonance modernism caused within the context of an Arab region undergoing an unprecedented period of fundamental cultural and political upheaval. Local responses to the obtrusion of the modernist paradigm were varied. There were those who repudiated the importation of foreign European architectural trends in favour of upholding what they viewed to be authentic traditional forms. Radione cites Cairene architect Farid Mahmud Eshafi'i as a prominent proponent of this approach, along with the later Maath Al-Alousi based in Iraq. Radione quotes Eshafi'i's book *The Arabo-Islamic Architecture, Past, Present, and Future* (1982) noting how the increase of Arab practitioners studying at the colonial centres of such trends had facilitated their proliferation upon returning to their native lands.[213] However, while Radione affirms Eshafi'i's advocacy for traditional forms as appropriate for the local context, he identifies this attitude as feeding into the "archaeological trap" of regurgitating static, nostalgic historical forms, leading to a failure to foster a sustainable regional architectural tradition.[214]

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[209] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[210] Elshahed, "*Revolutionary Modernism? Architecture and the Politics of Transition in Egypt 1936-1967*"

[211] Ibid.

[212] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[213] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[214] Ibid.

Within a local as well as a global context, Hassan Fathy emerged as the champion of a conservative vernacular trend not too dissimilar to Eshafi'i. However, his response to modernism has been characterised as more partial to a meta-analysis of vernacular forms through the revival of a local tradition of building technique through which new regional expressions, in continuity with the past can be derived, as opposed to Eshafi'i's more direct reproduction of forms.[215] Given this, Fathy has been touted as the harbinger of an "alternative modernism", with scholars suggesting he may have more in common with the ideals of the modern movement than he might like to admit, and his eventual association with a traditionalist architecture the result of an orientalist marginalisation.[216] His approach has also been dubbed a "neovernacular" as a nationalist architect who extracted the essence of collective cultural attributes and re-instilling them into his work.[217] Perhaps Fathy's work is best described as an attempt to prioritise an architecture with a clear continuity with the past, and it is in this point where his break with modernist philosophy lies. Nevertheless Fathy was highly influential within his native Egypt and the wider Arab world, with his prominent student, Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil, continuing his school of thought, and Fathy's work being considered a forerunner to the global sustainable architecture movement.[218] Interestingly, while the "neovernacular" label is used by Rabbat to describe Fathy's relationship vis-a-vis the vernacular, Ozkan classifies Fathy as a "conservative" vernacularist, reserving the neovernacular label for what he describes as an interpretive approach to vernacularism, one that provides a mere "lip services to regional components" while making use of unabashedly modern technical and infrastructural building techniques and systems".[219] This semantic incongruence again points to a lack of coherence in terms used in wider regionalist discourse.

The aforementioned use of visually historical elements is linked to the emergence of a postmodern discourse from the 1970s to the 1990s, reigniting the interest in historical building forms. This coincided with a region-wide retreat of the ruling socialist-infused pan-Arab nationalism as it suffered repeated setbacks after the death of its chief of Egypt's Nasser in 1970 and successive economic and military failures, which were also viewed as failures of the modernist project.[220] In its place appeared yet another iteration of the complex narrative of Arab engagement with modernity; the rise of the conservative Gulf[221] monarchies. Through the accrual of

[215] Ibid.

[216] Miles, "Utopias of mud? Hassan Fathy and alternative modernisms," 115.

[217] Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin."

[218] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[219] Ozkan, "Regionalism within modernism." 8.

[220] Elsheshtawy, "Revolutionary Cairo and Urban Modernity: Lessons from the Sixties."

[221] The Gulf mentioned throughout the article refers to what is known as the *Persian/Arabian* gulf situated between Iran and the Arabian peninsula. For political reasons, its naming remains a controversial issue in the Middle East with Arab states referring to it as the *Arabian* gulf, and the Iranian government using the name *Persian* gulf. I have

unrivalled wealth in the region after the 1973 oil embargo, and the influx of swathes of non-gulf Arabs to the Gulf for employment, the region began to imbibe a "religiously-imbued neoliberal capitalism" built in their image.[222] This meant a power shift once again to new centres of Arab cultural, political and economic influence in the cities of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, and Doha.[223] Scholars such as Elsheshtawy have pointed to the aforementioned cultural shifts, along with the global neoliberal turn, as an interpretation for a current proclivity in Cairo for "a postmodern pastiche of Arab-Islamic elements" motivated by populist and touristic appeal. Egyptian Architect and Aga Khan award winner Abdelhalim Ibrahim has been touted as exemplary of this trend, particularly in the Egyptian context, which has been branded as a "reactionary" architecture, seen by Elsheshtawy as the contemporaneous conservative zeitgeist (fig. 5).[224] Staunchly critical of Gulf architectural trends and their apparent regional proliferation, Elsheshtawy writes:

"Stylistically they respond to similar trends taking place elsewhere in the world characterised by an ostentatious display of wealth, the liberal borrowing and adoption of historical elements, and perhaps most significantly the lack of any clear aesthetic orientation. Indeed, the architectural language is not steeped in any one particular direction but seems to – in true Gulf inspired fashion – be based on commodification and the glorification of spectacle." [225]

Fig. 5: Abdelhalim Ibrahim's Cultural Park for Children in Cairo, Recipient of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 1992. Ibrahim makes liberal use of what was seen as historical forms, some branding his work as postmodern. Courtesy of ArchNet.

opted to use the neutral "Gulf" without qualifiers, as it is usually referred to in everyday speech by most Arabic speakers.
[222] Rabbat, "Encounters with modernity in the Arab world."
[223] Andraos, "The Arab City."
[224] Elsheshtawy, "City interrupted: modernity and architecture in Nasser's post-1952 Cairo," 347.
[225] Ibid.

3. Critical Regionalism from the 'Periphery'

3.1 A local (Critical) Regionalism

Considering this spectrum of local reactions to the Western modernist paradigm and its later postmodern derivation, one can say that it has mostly been characterised by an attempt to find an authentic critical framework to approaching the region's vernacular architecture, whilst being equally wary of modernisms censorious historical dictates. The world over, this a reappreciation of a "non-pedigreed architecture", epitomised by vernacular traditions as described by Bernard Rudolfsky in *Architecture without Architects* (1987), sowed the seeds of a of what amounted modernist reformation from within, nurtured by modernist architects working in non-Western peripheral contexts.[226] Alvar Aalto, Balkrishna Doshi, and Luis Barragan were some among this movement of architects in the modernist margins utilising local techniques and forms as catalysts for the regeneration of new manifestations of modernism,[227] alternative modernisms that were not opposed to its core ideological assertions. This place-referential modernism was the genesis of what would later be branded as critical regionalism.[228]

However, this conception renders these vernacular and cultural elements as mere collateral, subordinate to the overarching modernist framework. The burden is on the place and local context to conform to modern rationality instead of the inverse in an attempt to contextualise the place within an international abstract modernism.[229] Critical regionalism then is not centred on vernacular revival, but a vernacularization of modern forms[230] Hassan Radione cites this as the barrier to the generation of any authentic continuity with history, and convincingly argues that in this sense, such a regionalism and modernism can be taken as "two sides of the same coin, because the first was invented to cure the emptiness of the second".[231]

Although critical regionalism does owe its emergence to the work of architects working in peripheral regions, perhaps there lies a need to take the paradigm a step further, including the underlying assumptions of modernism itself within its realm of interrogation. Botz-Bornstein discusses this, highlighting that critical regionalism is contingent on a specific view of history and its relationship to the present, "a critical form of historicism" emerging from eighteenth century

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[226] Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin."

[227] Ibid.

[228] Ibid.

[229] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[230] Botz-Bornstein, *Transcultural architecture: The limits and opportunities of critical regionalism.*

[231] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

Europe.[232] by emphasising a transcultural approach where the criticality of critical regionalism is made more flexible and responsive to cultural and intangible factors in disperate geographical contexts, most notably in contexts where such historical understandings of criticality are not present. This also helps soften criticisms of it, most notable by Keith Eggener, of its imposition of foreign Western paradigms and struggles forged through Western experiences.[233] What emerges may be conceived of as a culturally sensitive criticality when approaching history.

Viewing the work of local architects through the perspectives discussed above, several examples warrant discussion. Saudi Arabian architect Sami Angawi, educated in the United States and United Kingdom, seems to lay the groundwork for a local critical approach, although hardly any English-language literature has explored histheorisations. He engages with the traditional and the modern through a methodological concept he calls *Mizan* (balance), which he also extends outside the architectural realm to general culture. From a design standpoint, the framework involves the acumen to blend heritage and the modern in an appropriate manner depending on the cultural, social, and functional determinants at play[234] He refuses the label of "modernist" or "traditionalist" to describe his own approach,[235] and prefers to engage with the Arabic term *Assri* (عصري) which can be translated as 'modern', but is perhaps closer to the meaning of the term 'contemporaneity'. This decouples the idea of contemporaneity in the present moment from the historical and cultural baggage of a Western modernism. He also states the need for this contemporaneity to be rooted in learning from tradition highlighting the importance of the existence of a continuum between the past and present.[236]

This search for a contemporary architecture rooted in historical continuity was also shared by British-trained Iraqi architect Mohammed Saleh Makiya. In his view, true contemporaneity should not neglect heritage and its underlying values for mere technological advancement, lest it become subservient to the tools of its creation,[237] He differentiated himself from Western

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[232] Botz-Bornstein, *Transcultural architecture: The limits and opportunities of critical regionalism.*

[233] Botz-Bornstein, *Transcultural architecture: The limits and opportunities of critical regionalism.*

[234] Ibid.

[235] Ibid.

[236] This approach in recognising the significance of local heritage, is noteworthy given the political and religious nature of the Saudi state. Despite the apparent conservatism of the prevalent religious teachings of eighteenth century Islamic cleric *Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab* (a school of thought often termed *Wahhabism* though the name is considered pejorative by its adherents), its insistence on strict decoupling of religion and culture affords it a remarkably progressive stance vis-a-vis the built environment. This has been particularly evident regarding the religious built heritage in the holy cities of Makkah and Medina, the former of which Agnawi is a native. This legitimised the extensive razing of scores of hitherto preserved monuments and tombs of religious significance out of fear of possible idolatrous veneration. Botz-Bernstein calls this a highly unique "traditionally progressive" stance.

[237] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

modernism, (equating the two terms), by actively pursuing a place and time aware architectural identity for the Arab region, which he believed had been stymied by the importation of foreign architects and their theories.[238] Radione places Makiya as an instrumental figure in this regional Arab movement for contemporary architecture in both theory and practice, engaging critically with the wide spectrum of Iraqi cultural tradition to identify opportunities for appropriate continuity in contemporary design, surpassing both a shallow postmodernism and a modernist critical regionalism.[239] His design of the Kuwait state mosque (Fig. 6) marries modern construction technology and materials, primarily the use of raw concrete, with local precedents in monumentality, visual arrangement and spatial organisation.[240]

INTERIOR VIEW TOWARDS LADIES' GALLERY
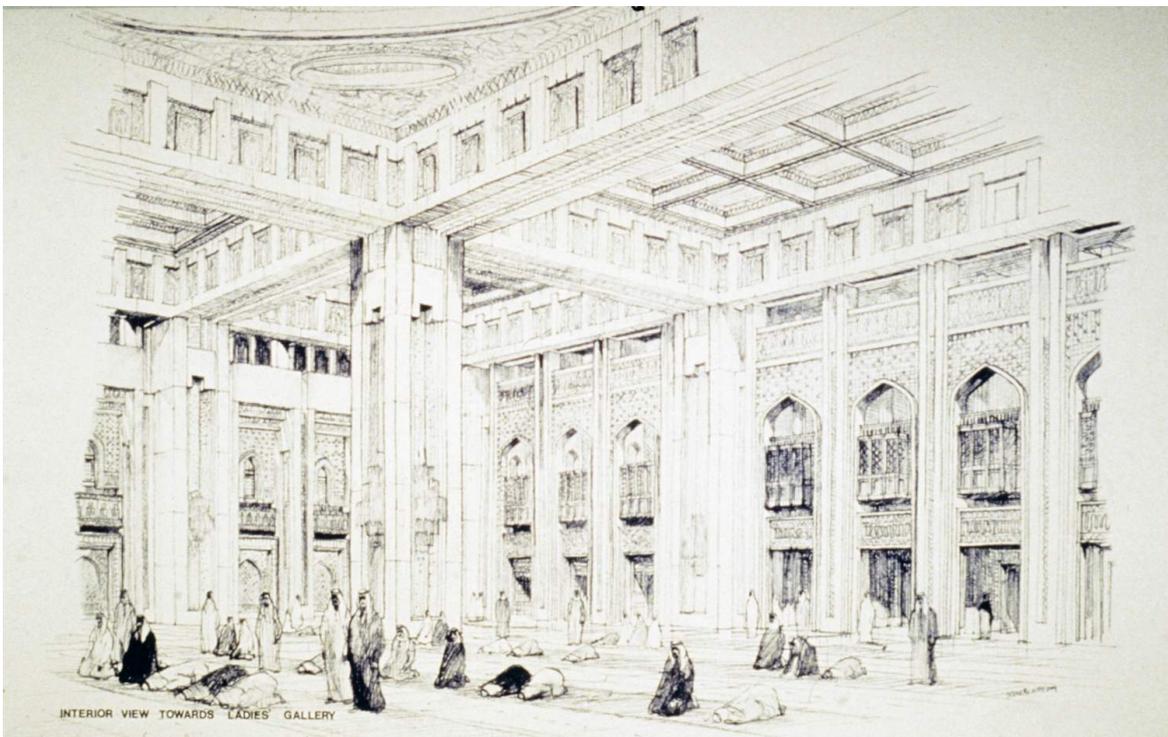
Fig. 6: Drawing showing interior of prayer hall of Makiya's Kuwait state mosque completed in 1984, view toward ladies' gallery. Courtesy of ArchNet.

Fellow Iraqi Rifat Chadirji is also worth mentioning as an example of a second generation of Iraqi architects associated with ambitious nation building initiatives and in a newly republican post-coup Iraq.[241] Educated in London, his philosophy was initially more faithful to international style modernism, evidenced by small scale residential projects designed on his return to Baghdad.

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[238] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[239] Ibid.

[240] Kultermann, " Contemporary Arab architects and their contribution to the renaissance of architecture in the Arab States," 41, and Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[241] Divleli and Divleli, "Pioneering Architect in the Construction of Post-Colonial Irak: Rifat Chadirji and His Monument Designs," 106.

After being approached to design several public monuments in the wake of the dissolution of the Hashemite Kingdom of Iraq in the 1958 coup, his approach began to incorporate historic Iraqi precedents, mainly through consideration of climatic and vernacular factors.[242] Considering this, Chadijri exemplifies an "articulate facadism"[243] (fig. 7), aiming to localise modernist principles with an Iraqi context,[244] without compromising modern technological and technical innovation.[245] Collectively, both Makiya and Chadirji, have played pivotal roles in the development of architecture in Baghdad, while influencing the work of architects across the Arab world.[246]
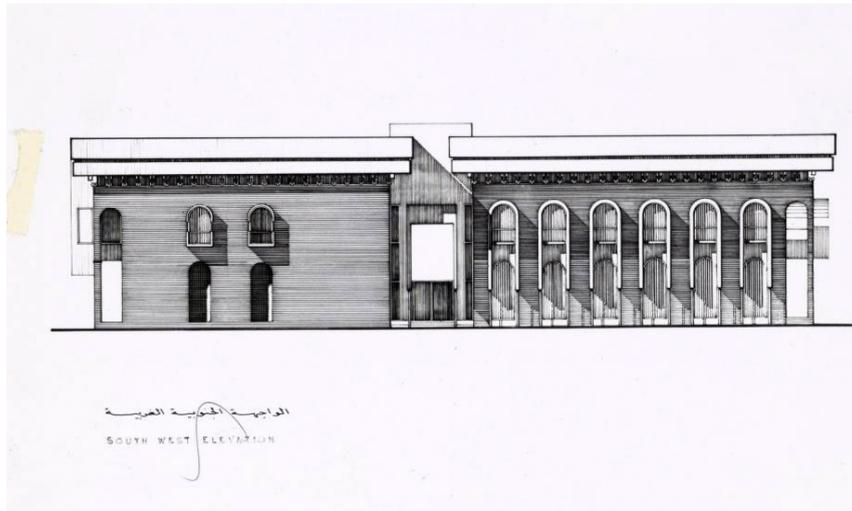
Fig. 7: Drawing of the Iraqi Scientific Academy Building, constructed in 1965. (Kamil and Rifat Chadirji Photographic Archive, courtesy of Aga Khan Documentation Center, MIT Libraries)

Khaled Asfour identifies Jerusalem-born and German-trained architect Rasem Badran, as indicative of a synthesising approach when dealing with history as a design criterion.[247] To illustrate this, Asfour identifies two methodologies for approaching history used by architects of the region. The first, exemplified by Abdelhalim Ibrahim utilises "visual abstraction" by focusing on the visual compositions of traditional architecture, sometimes with some modification or abstraction, manifesting history through the visual. Others expanded this notion by using "conceptual abstraction", extrapolating new forms by deriving the underlying functional or

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[242] Divleli and Divleli, "Pioneering Architect in the Construction of Post-Colonial Irak: Rifat Chadirji and His Monument Designs," 106.

[243] Ozkan, "Regionalism within modernism." 8.

[244] Divleli and Divleli, "Pioneering Architect in the Construction of Post-Colonial Irak: Rifat Chadirji and His Monument Designs," 106.

[245] Radoine, "Contemporary Arabic architecture: a quest for a sense of regionalism," 377.

[246] Kultermann, " Contemporary Arab architects and their contribution to the renaissance of architecture in the Arab States," 41.

[247] Asfour, "*The villa and the modern Egyptian intelligentsia: a critique of conventionalism.*"

cultural rules within traditional architecture, thus manifesting history through concept.[248] Badran considers both these approaches as "inspiring icons" and takes a pragmatic stance, relying on both visual and conceptual inputs according to relevance and rational analysis.[249] His philosophy also directs this synthesising approach and pragmatism to modernist architecture and universal elements.[250] Badran's approach is also characterised by primacy of local context, both in terms of culture and site, to his design aiming to weave into his designs a "local image" and sense of place.[251] For Badran, the analysis of the vernacular architecture is an important heuristic tool in and of itself,[252] particularly through a use of analytical sketches.[253] Here Badran averts the pitfalls of critical regionalism by not subjecting place to modernist ordinances. Scholars have noted his design for the 1995 Aga Khan award winning *Qasr Al Hukm* (Palace of Governance) in Riyadh (Fig. 8) as exemplary of his synthesising methodology,making liberal use of modern construction techniques and materials whilst encasing them within a culturally appropriate skin replete with material and conceptual references to local Najdi architecture.[254] Here Badran is seen to have surpassed Frampton's conceptualization of regionalism in that he actively establishes architectural dialogue and narrative between the old and the new, attempting to create historical continuity and legitimises cultural transmission.[255]

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[248] Ibid.

[249] Ibid.

[250] Abuorf and Wafi, "Investigating the Relation of Culture to Architecture: the case of Rasem Badran Style of Architecture."

[251] Ibid,

[252] Ali, "*The use of precedents in contemporary Arab architecture: case studies; Rasem Badran and Henning Larsen.*"

[253] Abuorf and Wafi, "Investigating the Relation of Culture to Architecture: the case of Rasem Badran Style of Architecture."

[254] Abuorf and Wafi, "Investigating the Relation of Culture to Architecture: the case of Rasem Badran Style of Architecture.

[255] Ibid.
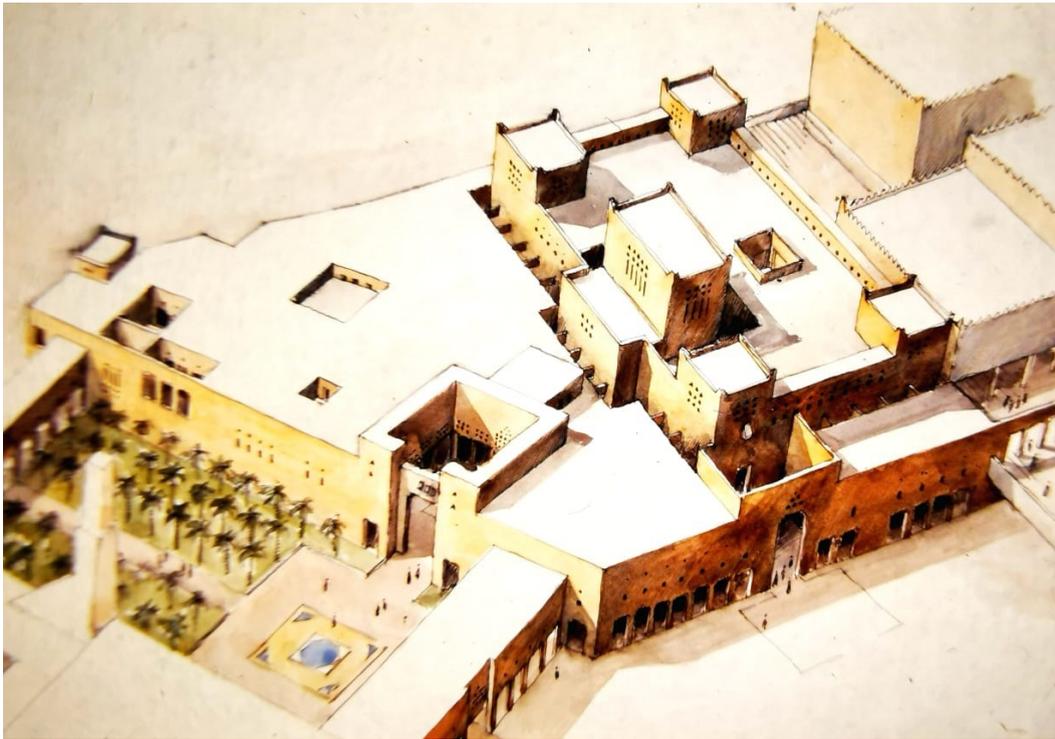
Fig. 8: Sketch of the *Qasr Al Hukm* in Riyadh, inspired by local *Najdi* vernacular. Courtesy of Badran's practice *Dar Al Omran*

With the exception of the work of Hassan Fathy, the work of such architects, particularly their local attempts to traverse the divides between the international and the local, and the historical and the contemporary, have rarely been surveyed in general and modernist architectural histories of the twentieth century. Despite making an attempt to incorporate modernism's development in developing countries[256] and his discussions of regionalism, Curtis does not seem to mention any Arab engagements with regionalism or modernism, barring Hassan Fathy. Also, In Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (1980), Frampton acknowledges his neglect of Middle Eastern, Indian, Latin American, Australian, and Canadian examples.[257] However, efforts to bring attention to non-Western architecture, particularly in light of postcolonial influences on the field, are increasing, but still have much to do to bridge the gap.[258]

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[256] Bozdogan, "Architectural History in Professional Education: Reflections on Postcolonial Challenges to the Modern Survey," 207. Here Bozdogan points out that despite this, Curtis uses the same terminology and adopts some "categories that are questioned by postcolonial theory." She alludes to his use of the terms "developing world" and his evocation of a modernity/tradition dichotomy.

[257] Bozdogan, "Architectural History in Professional Education: Reflections on Postcolonial Challenges to the Modern Survey," 207.

[258] James-Chakraborty, "Beyond postcolonialism: New directions for the history of nonwestern architecture," 1.

3.2 Critical Regionalism as a Historiographical Framework

The preceding sections have been an attempt to illustrate the richness of original efforts at navigating differences pertaining to the local and the global, the inadequacies of the critical regionalist paradigm in accounting for such attempts, and also the problematic nature of modernist histories vis-a-vis non-Western architecture. As Rabat points out, only modernist-conforming critical regionalist architects have been recognized by the modernist architecture narrative highlights its "canonical rigidity" seldom acknowledging architectural endeavours outside "its own geopolitical and epistemological domain", particularly those driven by a resistive stance, making it the sole realm of privileged works and architects of the "correct" lineage.[259] Considering this, perhaps it would be useful to analyse this in light of Stylianos Giamarelos's conception of critical regionalism as a historical project. His study *Greece, the modern margin in the classical centre: seven points for critical regionalism as historiography* (2020) explores the emergence of critical regionalism as a theory from Greece and its effect on the double image of the country as both a classical historical centre and a modern periphery.[260] Using this analysis of the roots and implications of the dual margin/centre dichotomy in Western architectural historiography, Giamarelos proposes seven points to "transform critical regionalism from an architectural theory of the 1980s into a manifesto for architectural historiography in the twenty-first century".[261] His points can be summed up as:

1) Discarding critical regionalism's focus on selected "talented individuals" as generalised representations of entire countries' architectural production.
2) The acknowledgement of emergent post-colonial nation states that Critical regionalism failed to account for by equating them with monolithic architectural regions, failing to highlight interactions and overlaps between cultures
3) Leaving behind idealised concepts such "juxtaposition of place and production" to emphasise the study of hybrid regional architectures.
4) Expanding on critical regionalism's pioneering discourse on sustainability and environmental concerns within design by prioritising working with site-specific conditions and materials.
5) Using "informed insiders'" view of culture"s to cultivate a holistic interdisciplinary readings of cultural currents and developments in specific regions

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[259] Rabbat, "The pedigreed domain of architecture: A view from the cultural margin."

[260] Giamarelos, "Greece, the modern margin in the classical centre: seven points for critical regionalism as historiography," 1086.

[261] Ibid.

6) Eschewing hierarchical conceptions of western modernity and its use as a barometer for inclusion in a "Critical regionalist canon" betraying colonial implications

7) Uprooting colonial approaches to architecture and history, urging further research into the links between nationalism, racism, imperialism, and colonialism in architecture, including addressing questions of provinciality and narrative structures.[262]

Here, Giamarelos provides comprehensive guiding principles constituting a framework for approaching architectural history through the lens of critical regionalim's initial priorities, and mindful of current discourse in architectural historiography. Addressing the regional architectural production of the Arab world through these analytical considerations could be of particular benefit, given the region's marginal status. Additionally, such approaches would be particularly relevant given the region's uniquely political, cultural, and historic peculiarities, its intertwined relationship with the notion of Islamic architecture, and in its nuanced engagements with issues of modernity, colonialism, and globalisation.

4. Conclusion

The Arab world's engagement(s) with modernity and the architectural paradigms it has generated has been rich and varied, but often overlooked as marginal and of a peripheral nature to a "true" canonical architectural narrative. The revision of historiographies in architectural history has led to a much needed critical reexamination of such established canons and methodologies. Postcolonial theory and the influence of Edward Said's "Orientalism", particularly when considering the cultures of the Arab and Islamic worlds, have played a pivotal role in reshaping narratives, emphasising intertwined and global architectural histories sensitive to the nuanced nature of postcolonial contexts and rejecting reductive dichotomies. The discussion of an "Arab regionalism", particularly in the context of modernity, has further enriched this discourse, with nuanced approaches providing valuable insights into the complex interplay between tradition, modernity, and regional identity in architectural history.

In light of such historiographical recalibration, how useful then is critical regionalism as a design paradigm in producing and interpreting Arab architectural production since the advent of modernism? While discourse surrounding critical regionalism has certainly enriched and helped draw attention to the notion of a contextual, place-referential architecture within European and Western circles, its inextricable binding to these traditions means it falls short of living up to its

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[262] Giamarelos, "Greece, the modern margin in the classical centre: seven points for critical regionalism as historiography," 1086.

promise as a "humanistic design theory of the future", emerging as a dated, "unfulfilled project".[263] In peripheral geographic and cultural contexts, the tools and assumptions behind the theory, while useful to some extent when considering climatic aspects, fail to equip local architects with a holistic means for engaging with their local contexts and histories in a 'culturally authentic' manner. In their attempts to navigate the intertwined histories and overlapping geographies of a complex postcolonial Arab milieu, Arab architects have generated a spectrum of original responses in both theory and practice, to create an indigenous regional discourse, moored in the history and geography of the region, and perhaps most of all in continuity with a ruptured historical tradition, actively engaging with but not ultimately bound to Western conceptions. Perhaps through the historiographical conception of the critical regionalism project in light of architecture's global and postcolonial turns, can we begin to properly situate Arab architectural production on paper, while enabling a more culturally aware architecture on the ground.

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[263] Giamarelos, "Greece, the modern margin in the classical centre: seven points for critical regionalism as historiography," 1086.

Part III

Meditating An 'Authentic' Built Identity

1. The 'Authentic' in Architecture

1.1 Philosophical Framing

What constitutes an *authentic* work of architecture? The notion of authenticity has struck a chord within numerous fields, with much discussion emerging surrounding authenticity and its utility vis-à-vis philosophy, psychology, art theory, and the human condition at large. It has also been questioned as a useful category altogether, and its meaning is subject to debate and contention. Maybe this is not as surprising given the notion's far reaching influence. This has been especially the case in the wake of the advent of modernity, where themes revolving around the inauthenticity and the spuriousness of modern life have perhaps constituted the single most dominant question in Western cultural discourse of the last two hundred years.[264] Any investigation of authenticity and its application within architecture necessitates framing the concept of 'the authentic' within adjacent frameworks as a prerequisite to situating the term accurately within contemporary architectural discourse.

When we use the term 'authentic', two invocations are often at play. One embodies authenticity in a more robust sense as being "of undisputed origin or authorship", and another, more tempered in nature signifying originality, that is to say a sincere, proper, and accurate representation of what something or someone is.[265] While at some level attributing a given thought, action or expression to oneself is ineluctable, it is possible to interrogate as to what extent these are veritably one's own and a genuine reflection of oneself. Such a conception produces moral, psychological, identitarian implications.[266]

Such a personal conception for analysing how one relates to oneself has its roots in seventeenth century Western cultural and intellectual shifts, departing form a vision of society as an organic whole consisting of interacting components, to a view of societies as agglomerations of individual self standing entities capable of distinctness and uniqueness.[267] This renders the idea a Western ontological construct anchored in specific Western conceptions of the individual that have emerged as "defining aspects of modern culture",[268] culminating into what Charles Taylor calls in his 2007 book *A Secular Age* "the age of authenticity", heralding a paradigm shift in how

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[264] Upton, "Authentic anxieties," 298.

[265] Varga and Guinon, "Authenticity."

[266] Ibid.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Handler,"Authenticity," 2.

individuals express identities and beliefs by looking inward.[269] In such a culture, to live authentically expressing oneself and making one's own choices is all that remains as the ultimate virtue.[270] An authentic life has been seen to harbour significant value in and of itself, irrespective of its ability to facilitate potential material or personal advantages. This romantic outlook is espoused by Rousseau, arguing that authenticity moores us to an inner moral voice of conscience acting as an intuitive guiding sentiment for one's actions. Such a view of what it means to be authentic often implies that there is a quintessentially original and distinctive potential for development within a person's nature, a destiny they should fulfil. This is an idea identified as having first been first expressed by Johann Gottfried Herder.[271] Considering the implications of this 'age of authenticity', ethical considerations loom over the horizon. Taylor warns of a trivialisation and neutralisation of values onset by a prioritisation of the act of self expression for its own sake, exercising one's decision making agency over the substance of the choices themselves.[272]

As a philosophical idea, authenticity is today most discussed within the framework of existentialist philosophy, in which it is considered a primary virtue and first elaborated by Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard, and developed further throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[273] Kierkegaard's authenticity stems from a critical look at social realities of his time which stymied the developmental potential of individuals, viewing them as mere proxies, fomenting a sense of inauthenticity which, in turn breeds despair. To become authentic then is to overcome such despair, and engage in a "passionate commitment to a relation to something outside oneself that bestows one's life with meaning.".[274] Friedrich Nietzsche, Existentialism's other founding figure, further echoed this authentic emphasis, and both philosophers greatly influenced Hiedigger's vision of *eigentlichkeit*, often translated as authenticity.[275] Hieddeger is widely credited with introducing the term of authenticity into common parlance,[276] with his idea being somewhat distinct from previous conceptions of authenticity. His authenticity relates to human existence, or what he termed *Dasien*.[277] This refers to the cognizance of one's existence within the world, suggesting individuals mould their

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[269] Varga and Guinon, "Authenticity."

[270] Spector, "Architecture and the Ethics of Authenticity," 23.

[271] Guignon, "Authenticity," 277.

[272] Spector, "Architecture and the Ethics of Authenticity," 24.

[273] Guignon, "Authenticity," 277.

[274] Varga and Guinon, "Authenticity."

[275] The term *Eigentlichkeit* used by Heidegger has historically been rendered as 'authenticity' in translation, but considerable scholarly debate exists as to whether this is an accurate translation.

[276] Guignon, "Authenticity," 277.

[277] There has also been some debate about the accurate translation of Heidegger's *Dasein*. While it is commonly translated as "existence" or "being-there," some scholars argue that there is not a perfect equivalent in English.

identities from the cultural context in which they exist and shaping these possibilities into personal interpretations of themselves, facilitated by the acknowledgement of one's mortal nature 'being-toward-death'.[278] Through this mode of being, one's actions and identity become truly authentic, independent of extrinsic factors and influences. Failure to embrace one's finitude leads to an inauthentic mode of being *Uneigentlichkeit*. Authenticity endured as a powerful idea among some of the twentieth century's most influential thinkers[279], but it is perhaps Walter Benjamin's engagement with the idea that is the most relevant in relation to art theory. Benjamin's construction of authenticity is most apparent in what is his most well-known work, *The Work of Art in The Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) in which he defines the existence of an original work as a necessitating condition for the concept of authenticity, which in itself is inextricably rooted in the idea of tradition and ritual, a work's entanglement with which affords it a unique 'aura'.[280] This 'aura', embodying a work's organic temporal and spatial contexts, constitutes a unique and authentic quality inherent in the original with which one seeks to engage, and is subject to deterioration as the work is mechanically reproduced, from its ripping it out of its native "sphere of tradition" [281] and therefore diminishing its authentic quality.[282]

With authenticity emerging as the late modern zeitgeist, calls for a true, authentic cultural expression have also been echoed within architectural discourse. The architecture and art of the modern movement exalted the notion of authenticity as a laudable objective, underwriting the repudiation of "the falsity and pretentiousness of nineteenth-century bourgeois culture".[283] According to Hilde Heynen, scholars of the day considered architecture to have retained authenticity up until the mid-nineteenth century, after which it succumbed to artificiality. The modern movement advocated a return to a mode of authentic architectural and artistic expression.[284] This search for authenticity has endured as a key cultural theme into the twentieth and twenty first centuries, maintaining its central position in cultural discourse today as a fixation with the "natural, the unspun, the real" which can also mean ethical and morally coherent.[285] She also notes how authenticity can be interpreted as the "beauty of places as opposed to non-places,

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[278] Guignon, "Authenticity," 277.

[279] Varga and Guinon, "Authenticity." Some notable twentieth century figures that discussed authenticity in their philosophical discourse include Albert Camus, Simone de Beauvoir, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

[280] Rickly-Boyd, "Authenticity & aura: A Benjaminian approach to tourism," 269.

[281] Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction."

[282] Rickly-Boyd, "Authenticity & aura: A Benjaminian approach to tourism," 269. Rickly-Boyd paints a picture of Benjamin's work as being "enigmatic," with scholars discussing the implications of this loss of 'aura' and whether Benjamin actually had any positive or negative views on the phenomenon. The assumption that Benjamin is lamenting the loss of 'aura' in modern life cannot be taken for granted.

[283] Heynen, "Questioning authenticity," 287.

[284] Ibid.

[285] Ibid.

with rootedness in a tradition or place of origin", with the authentic invoking a real experience that is deep and multi dimensional.[286] Relating such notions to Benjamin's *Aura*, authentic architectural works embody a sense of nativeness to their time and place that inauthentic works lack. The standard bearers of the modern movement including Le Corbusier, Van de Velde, and Loos all appeared to agree on preaching a jettisoning of the "potemkin attitude and embrace of honesty and unpretentiousness"[287]. Architecture was seen to have failed to live up to the utilitarian spirit of the age, dominated by machines and instruments appearing to be designed according to unapologetic calculations and not decorative ornamentation that had no grounding in how the house- as a machine for living in - was actually used.[288]

In the wake of such repudiation of past theoretical frameworks, what does it mean to be original, when discussing authentic expression? Discussions around original works often stress the novel purity of a work of art, born of a unilateral act of creation. Only works exhibiting such a quality are branded as original. Such a quest for an absolute origin point of creation, one that presents a "severe rupture" from existing expressions, has been challenged by attempts to shift the conversation away from this 'zero point'. In such conceptions, the critical engagement with such a zero point is where the focus should be shifted.[289] It is here where authenticity, "operating within the bounds of accumulated knowledge" can flourish,[290] and reference through acts of imitation, pastiche and appropriation can also be considered as authentic gestures similar to the act of creation, when engaged critically. Here authenticity can be wielded critically as an analytical tool.[291] This counteracts conventional perceptions of the 'authentic' as dictated by formal expressions alone, a symptom of an intensely visual culture fueled by the economic and cultural implications of modern globalisation.[292]

However, even within the architectural milieu, notions of what constitutes the authentic have been vague, dynamic, and even outright contradictory in certain contexts, having particular implications for conservation and restoration theory. *The Nara Document on Authenticity,* published by ICOMOS in 1994 attempts to define authenticity in this context as an underlying quality present in all world cultures and linked in each to specific values through which it is judged in each culture, including tangible and intangible cultural expressions.[293] Considering this,

[286] Ibid.

[287] Heynen, "Questioning authenticity," 287.

[288] Ibid.

[289] Dingil, "*The sources and limits of authenticity in contemporary architecture.*"

[290] Ibid.

[291] Ibid.

[292] Ibid.

[293] Heynen, "Questioning authenticity," 287.

the concept is still amorphous, and the quest to achieve it has been described as "elusive, highly subjective, and ultimately impossible to achieve in an absolute sense."[294] Heynen cites the dilemma of the conservation of modern buildings designed and constructed for relatively short term use compared to older buildings. After their technical lifespan comes to an end, the invasive and costly interventions required to secure their continuity end up categorically contradicting the modernist buildings' raison d'etre and design logic.[295] In such a case, one could argue that the conservation of such structures, in an attempt to rescue authenticity, only produces the inauthentic. Materiality is also a key consideration for authentic restoration according to the Venice charter,(elaboration note) which stipulates clear-cut variance between authentic and reconstructed parts of a restored structure, making reconstruction with original materials a falsification and is largely seen as "taboo".[296]

1.2 Authenticity and the Modern-Traditional Dichotomy

All things considered, perhaps the most relevant aspect of authenticity when examining architecture, particularly in postcolonial contexts, is the notion of '*cultural* authenticity'. One may ask what *cultural* authenticity actually entails. Often it is tied to notions of tradition based in an identity free from representations of foreign or colonial influence - a sense of ingenuousness. This has been echoed in a 1986 article in *Mimar* by Yuswadi Saliya in his "Notes on Architectural Identity in the Cultural Context", alluding to the apparent futility of differentiating between genuine and fake architectural expression in the midst of a hyper globalised world with the "noisy" exchange of information and proliferation of mass media. In his view, resistance, which he specifies from a cultural standpoint, can only be channelled through producing an "authentic" stream of information as a counter, "right from our deepest possible consciousness". Here we can observe the articulation of notions of a culturally authentic expression of architecture.[297]

Within a colonialist context and the implications of subsequent globalisation, there has been a marked effect on architectural expression, aided by the wholesale replacement of indigenous cultural values. This spurs questions on how the emergent pressures of a contemporary modernity could be negotiated, and perhaps appropriated, as a conduit for an 'authentic' and

[294] Quinan, "Frank Lloyd Wright, Preservation, and the Question of Authenticity," 6.
[295] Heynen, "Questioning authenticity," 291.
[296] Ibid. 295.
[297] Saliya, "Notes on the Architectural Identity in the Cultural Context," 34.

indigenous, yet modern expression. This, for Tzonis and Lefaivre, is the essence of a 'critical' regionalism.[298]

Considering these tensions, it is not difficult for one to discern how architecture in the modernist paradigm is often conceived through dichotomies, pitting 'secular' against 'sacred', 'modern' against 'traditional', 'space' against 'void', and so on. However several scholars in the field have cast doubt over the utility of such binaries, and even whether 'modernity' and 'tradition' remain meaningful categories. Some have likened the use of such binaries revolving around the global and the local in architecture as a reductive "Jihad vs. McWorld dichotomy",[299] alluding to Benjamin Barber's book by the same name in which an inevitable confrontation between a local tribal traditionalism and a global neo-liberal order is articulated, summoning a 'clash of civilizations' thesis.[300] This is not confined to architecture, and is indicative of a larger trend within Western social science, which has a predilection to classification using unidimensional spectra as a way of conceptualising the transition of societies from one configuration to another.[301] European theoreticians of the early twentieth century tended to formulate such continua as an interpretive tool classifying divergent ways of life.[302]

Janet Abu-Lughod identifies three such progressions of particular relevance to the idea of 'tradition'. The first being the rural to urban by way of urbanisation, second being preindustrial to industrial society through the process of industrialisation, and the third as 'backward' to 'modern' by means of modernisation. Abu-Lughod notes that in each of these spectra, the "starting point" constituted the idea of the traditional: rural, pre-industrial, and backward.[303] Such dichotomies have been given a geopolitical and economic dimension since the Cold war era, often mapping onto notions of a "Third", "Developing", "non-Western" world on one hand and a "First" "Developed" "Western" world on the other. Within an architectural context, Abu-Lughod identifies this traditional-modern, and later traditional-postmodern tension with

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[298] Heynen, "Questioning authenticity," 295.

[299] Andraos, "The Arab City."

[300] While both Samuel Huntington's 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order' and Benjamin Barber's book both warn of a dichotomous clash, there are differences in the motivations behind such tension. Huntington explores the idea that cultural and religious identities, not ideological or economic factors, will be the primary source of conflict post-Cold War. Benjamin Barber contends that globalisation leads to a tension between tribal identities and a homogenising market-driven global culture.

[301] Abu-Lughod, "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World-Third World; Traditional-Modern," 7.

[302] Further examples Abu-Lughod references include Henry Maine's shift "from status to contract," Ferdinand Toennies's transition "from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft," Emile Durkheim's evolution "from mechanical to organic solidarity," and also Marx's progression "from feudalism to capitalism," although she notes that in that in Marx's case this was not seen as an endpoint.

[303] Abu-Lughod, "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World-Third World; Traditional-Modern," 7.

how postmodern motifs tend to recycle 'traditional' visual cues.[304] The traditional as an idea becomes difficult to pin down using such reductive frameworks. For Abu Lughod, such formations lack credibility and consign vernacular and tradition to attempts at bracketing instances of local "insulated culture or regional specificity" untouched by globalisation and international influences.[305] These become progressively rarer and more implicated in the globalised system, engaging with the modern subject and experience, or in some cases forced to be expressed through modern techniques or materials impacting its inevitable manifestation. With such an intertwined composition, questions regarding its traditionality and authenticity naturally arise, but can also be levelled against the designations themselves.[306]

Additionally, for many scholars, this opens up questions regarding the 'purity' of such cultural products, and whether it is meaningful to brand them as belonging to a particular ethnic group as such. Dell Upton elaborates on this in "Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Invented Traditions" (1996) discussing widespread suppositions on ethnicity and ethnic cultures and their ramifications on viewing architectural production.[307] These involve a positivist evaluation of ethnicity as a repository of a particular set of unique ideals distinguishable from other groups, and reified through culture (architecture included), creating dichotomies between ethnic groups and each other. Another assumption is the ossified and constant nature of ethnic cultures, delineated through "memory" and whose authenticity is tainted by "experience".[308] Here, such cultures are perceived as existing in mutually exclusive categories, where embrace of cultural aspects from one culture by another constitutes a loss of the former's authentic credentials. Upton relates this conception by which ethnicity is represented to a romantic idea of an "Ur-culture".[309] The third assumption is that ethnicity is incarnated in the material realm, as in the contention that "artefacts are bearers of culture".[310] While Upton acknowledges that such conclusions are inevitable to some extent, when read through the inferences of the previous two suppositions, the evaluation of cultural artefacts as less and more legitimate embodiments of a given culture naturally presents itself and promotes a "romantic essentialism" born of a modern outlook fueled by touristic conceptions of heritage;[311] Such an approach obscures our attempts to view true reflections of past societies instead of as platonic ideals.

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[304] Ibid.

[305] Ibid.

[306] Abu-Lughod, "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World-Third World; Traditional-Modern," 7.

[307] Upton, "Ethnicity, authenticity, and invented traditions."

[308] Ibid.

[309] Ibid. The concept of an "ur-culture" is a term used in sociology referring to a hypothetical original or foundational culture from which other cultures may have evolved or emerged. The term "ur" if from the German word for "original" or "primitive."

[310] Ibid.

[311] Ibid.

Upton and Abu-Lughod, among others, have also elaborated on perceived implications or motivating factors animating such conceptions of the traditional. Upton cites how the manufacturing of both tradition and modernity was a global project affecting both Europe and its colonial realms, preceding the idea of manufacturing heritage.[312] Such acts within the framework of capitalism's impulse for constant commodification not just of tangible raw material for industrial goods, but also the intangible cultural "raw material" for "consuming tradition and manufacturing heritage", through which modern conservation and restoration and tourism can be understood.[313] This would not be possible without the exaltation of heritage which he identifies as central to the modern experience. But this engagement with traditional heritage is not limited to the average tourist. Upton implicates scholars of tradition themselves as upholding or neglecting to challenge the idea of a concrete and definable "tradition" with verifiable authentic credentials as a counterpoint to an artificial modern, failing to see this concept for its own artificiality. Thus in their attempt to critique modernity through this endorsement of the traditional, they exercise a "continued allegiance to modernity" through such discourse[314] Tradition is also seen to possess political utility. Abu-Lughod asserts the tight connection between vernacular architecture and urbanism and such societies' structure and way of life, particularly as it is seen to have germinated in an organic manner free from outside forces. Thus, Abu-Lughod questions to what extent advocacy for traditional architectural forms is a proxy for the promotion of 'traditional' vernacular societal hierarchies, structures, and lifestyles, highlighting a perceived potentially regressive consequence of upholding the "traditional architecture" distinction. She also points out that such a use of the concept in promotion of traditional building forms that perpetuate such societal structures strips said architecture of its "traditional" credentials as it is deployed in a modern political context and may obstruct organic vernacular impulses for reform.[315]

However, such scepticism towards the normative conception of the "traditional" is not shared by all. AlSayyad thoroughly details the aforementioned position, as well as the dissenting viewpoint, in his book chapter "The End Of Tradition Or A Tradition Of Endings" (2004), particularly within the context of interpreting the built environment. Amos Rapoport and Henry Glassie are cited as prominent antagonists of the sceptical camp, both appearing as advocates for the traditional not only as a legitimate historical category and upholding vernacular architecture's embodiment of a society's culture, but also the rootedness of such architecture in a egalitarian and

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[312] Upton, "Authentic anxieties," 298.
[313] Upton, "Authentic anxieties," 298.
[314] Ibid.
[315] Abu-Lughod, "Disappearing Dichotomies: First World-Third World; Traditional-Modern," 7.

participatory mode of cultural production, modern architecture's bond with which has been diluted in modern society.[316] Thus the realm of the ethnic and traditional is also seen as a direct contrast to the idea of high architecture and the academic sphere. AlSayyad also clarifies Glassie's position by noting that the modern approach is less a repudiation of such vernacular foundations and more of an aggrandisement of a particular inclination within it, being the desire for emancipation from environmental conditions. This position, contrary to that of Abu-Lughod and Upton, is centred on the assumption of the built environment of societies being "the material realisation of cultural norms".[317] AlSayyad himself expands on this discussion by addressing the role of globalisation in the production of space and identity, which he posits as having undergone four stages. These commence with an "insular" period where mostly local forces shaped an autochthonous vernacular architectural production. This is followed by a "colonial period" where 'hybritidy' begins to set in, and where central and peripheral stylistic cores exchange influence, albeit on unequal footing and with particularly noticeable alteration in indigenous styles. A period characterised by "independence and nation building" gives rise to the "modern and pseudo modern", where modernism, entangled with postcolonial nation building mandates, beget the idea of "invented traditions" to foment social unity locally and project an image of such cohesion globally. Finally, the current era of "globalisation" witnesses the homogenization of architecture on a global scale, but not without an increasing recognition of sub community identities predicated on religion, race, and ethnicity, marking a rupture between identity tradition and physical place, and the begging of "informationally based" traditions and identities independent of geography.[318]

There is also the fact that modernism in architecture itself can be conceived of as a new tradition, breaking the terms associated with a certain type of premodern expression. The term "modern tradition" is used extensively in Curtis's survey of modern architecture, redefining the concept's significance. Thus Curtis in the book's conclusion makes the claim that rather than having witnessed the end of tradition with modernism's dominance, we are seeing its beginning, a distinctly new modern one, comparing modernism's paradigm shifting rupture with the Renaissance,[319] reinforcing the rebirth motif. Thus it is within this context and through this prevailing discursive framework, that the idea of a culturally authentic architectural expression can be elucidated, even if highly contentious.

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[316] AlSayyad, "The end of tradition?."

[317] AlSayyad, "The end of tradition?."

[318] Ibid.

[319] Curtis, *Modern architecture since 1900.*

1.3 The Arab World: Identity and Authenticity

Debates pertaining to 'identity' in the philosophical and psychological realms have tended to revolve around personal identity, particularly its temporal fluctuations. Study of the identity of physical objects, have also garnered attention. The lion's share of such discourse has centred on the questions of the criterions of identity, analyses of identity alteration over time, and the notion of the existence of "absolute" and "relative" identities, the existence of which has been contested.[320]

Owing to the "conceptual murkiness" and largely undefined nature of identity[321] and the equivocal, "slippery" nature of identity as a concept, different and oftentimes contested conceptions of the concept and its foundational mechanics have been discussed. At its core and base level, identity encompasses the way in which individuals and groups perceive themselves and how they relate to others.[322] Historically, identity has been seen to be primarily defined with birth-given factors seen as immutable objectives, such as race, sex and ethnicity, denoting a view of identity as "primordial" and "ascriptive".[323] Alternative perspectives highlight the significance of identities shaped through habitual actions rather than solely by birth. This stance emphasises the potency of practices over ascriptive traits, where religion and socioeconomic factors, can profoundly shape one's identity through habitual practice. While acknowledging such identities like religion can indeed be regarded as acquired by birth, the idea of routine practice in maintaining and forming identity cannot be ignored.[324] However, many would contend that even such primary and ascriptive identities are usually less immutable than one may think. Jilian Schwedler argues that such factors "vary significantly across social contexts", and that identities are better understood as formed hinges on an individual's positioning within intricate social structures, where different identities hold varying significance depending on the context.[325]

Architecture has always been a vessel for the expression and dissemination of a culture's values systems and ideas (Salama 2012). As has been discussed, the relationship architecture as a cultural product and the society from which it emerges has been the subject of a considerable portion of modern architectural discourse, particularly in the wake of the disciplinary shakeup instigated by the modern movement and its apparent homeginsing influences. The term Identity is often

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[320] Noonan and Curtis, "Identity."
[321] Schwedler, "Islamic Identity."
[322] Ibid.
[323] Ibid.
[324] Ibid,
[325] Ibid.

invoked in this context and not unlike previously discussed concepts, it is often nebulous, its definition malleable in meaning and its influence on architecture hard to pin down.[326]

In terms of identity as it relates to the physical, Ashraf Salama delineates identity as a construct undergirded by three key facets. The first of these is temporal permanence, implying its resilience to environmental influence below a certain extent. Secondly Salama cites the establishment of boundaries to identity to assert its uniqueness to others, calling it a "notion of unity". Thirdly a relationship between two constituent elements enabling their recognition as identical, This tripartite framework emphasises permanence, distinction, and recognizability as fundamental determinants of identity in physical objects and architectural works. According to Salama, The recognition and differentiation of an object or a portion of the built environment hinge on these characteristics, culminating in its definitive recognizability.[327] The perceived identity of such societies comes into play as a potent force shaping architectural production, or rather, the search for an identity in light of a palimpsest of rich and multifaceted histories especially in postcolonial contexts. The Middle East and Arab world has also been a theatre for such quests of identity, with the built environment a prolific character.[328]

Such study of the dissection (and construction) of identity, much like discourse surrounding urbanism itself, arose from the rapid historical and societal changes heralded by globalisation in the past century. These changes manifested themselves physically and spatially in urban contexts, intersecting with identity politics urban regeneration, with cities acting as augmentors and theatres for the construction of collective identities and national narratives.[329] These shifting landscapes, often unfolding in the wake of postcolonial transformations, play an integral role in shaping the living environment and experiences of their residents.[330] Distinctions have been made between a depiction of space, conducted by urban design and planning practitioners, and the representation of space imbued with meaning ascribed to it by its everyday users. In this sense, the making of space is paramount to making meaning itself, suggesting consequential implications for design as a practice.[331]

The discourse surrounding the Aga Khan award has proven an active incubator for such endeavours. In his paper in the *Architecture and Identity* conference held by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in Kuala Lumpur, 1983, Charles Correa presents a theory of identity as not

[326] Saliya, "Notes on the Architectural Identity in the Cultural Context," 34.
[327] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."
[328] Ibid.
[329] Diener and Hagen, *The city as power: urban space, place, and national identity.*
[330] Bekus and Medeuova, "Re-interpreting National Ideology in the contemporary urban space of Astana."
[331] Neill, "Memory, collective identity and urban design: The future of Berlin's Palast der Republik."

something that can be manufactured, but more of an organic, subconscious impulse we betray pervading our actions, to be "found" by understanding ourselves and our environmental context this process facilitating a greater sensitivity of the environment.[332] Ashraf Salama notes this, and contrasts it with other theories of identity posting them as constructed first and foremost, involving the active prioritisation of particular cultural attributes to curate a particular indeed structure, forwarding an agency based view.[333] This is perhaps not too not dissimilar to Upton's views on how tradition is produced, suggesting a deep entanglement between our conception of "tradition" and "identity" and how they are engaged with in wider cultural discourse. Salama also cites Yuswadi Saliya, elucidating the function of identity, constituting a fundamental human need, almost an end within itself, as possessing an identity itself has societal currency.[334] However, while Saliya affirms the createdness of architectural identity as a product of an intentional design act, such an act is accompanied by a "tint of consciousness" bound to a particular culture whose relationship with nature, materials which are tied to "meaning", architecture included.[335] Among such observations, Saliya makes clear his aversion to the implications of this view of identity, as intentionally seeking it out hinders its reveal which is established only after one "becomes somebody", a by-product of such a process.[336] In this sense, identity as an approach to discourse surrounding authentic cultural expressions of architecture is not of utmost relevance.[337] The informational bombardment heralded by post 1950s mass media is also seen to some extent exert influence on such identity manifestation, a stance adopted by several practitioners and scholars writing for *Mimar*. Brian Brace Taylor also ascribes the phenomenon as highly relevant to how assumed notions of 'identity' sway designers (and all levels of society at large) , with the onslaught of images and data provoking divergent reactions. He observes some as opting to resist by retreating to known native vernaculars, others engage in an introspective "soul-searching",[338] similar to Saliya's notion of authentic consciousness in identity seeking endeavours. Others engage more adaptively to such trends. Taylor goes on to impugn the ultimate benefit of 'identity' , along with similar labels such as 'regionalism' altogether as a critical tool, employed as imprecise catch-all designations for comparing architects and their works, of which are disparate nature, cultural context, and design motivation.[339]

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[332] Correa, "Quest for identity."

[333] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."

[334] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."and Saliya, "Notes on the Architectural Identity in the Cultural Context," 34.

[335] Saliya, "Notes on the Architectural Identity in the Cultural Context," 34.

[336] Ibid.

[337] Ibid.

[338] Taylor, "Perspectives and Limits on Regionalism and Architectural Identity."

[339] Ibid.

With this, the unique makeup of the Arab region and its history makes discussions of identity a particularly prolific and sometimes contested issue, be it in architecture or wider cultural discourse. The Arab world is a fertile ground for identity germination and questions of identity and character have been much discussed. With a population similar to that of the European Union, and a geographic area spanning the Atlantic to the gulf (or from the 'ocean to the gulf' as Arabs tend to say) the region harbours many ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups.[340] Significant non-Arab identifying groups include approximately 20 million Berber-Amazigh people, making up around 40 percent and 25 percent of the respective populations of Morocco and Algeria, situated in the Maghreb region. Ethnic Kurds makeup roughly five million, whose homeland spans northern Syria and Iraq. While the Islamic faith is adhered to by a large majority of people in the Arab world, greatly informing Arab identity, there are sizable populations of Druze, Jews, and Hindus living in the region, in addition to a significant number of Christian adherents [341] mostly Coptic Christians in Egypt, as well as diverse Christian denominations in Lebanon and Syria. Scholars have tended to subdivide the region into four primary cultural-geographic areas (fig. 9). The Fertile Crescent denotes the area commonly known as the Levant or *Bilad al-sham* in Arabic (Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Lebanon), in addition to Iraq. This region is home to arguably the most ethno-religious diversity, which while facilitating remarkable cultural richness on the one hand, has seen considerable conflict in recent decades.[342] The Gulf states comprising the monarchies of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The region saw little development and international attention prior to the discovery of oil in the twentieth century, retaining relatively conservative and traditional societal structures, and generally little political freedoms.[343] Since the oil boom, has since enjoyed significant socioeconomic prosperity catapulting it to international relevance, and cultural ascendancy within the Arab word itself. The Nile Valley region, occupying a central location within the region between its African and Asian constituents, comprises Egypt and Sudan, the former representing far and away the most populous state in the region, its capital Cairo constituting the largest metropolitan area in Africa and the wider Middle East. Cairo is also the home to the Arab league headquarters, with Egypt in particular having held a pivotal political and cultural role in the Arab world in the twentieth century. Finally, the Maghreb region in the region's west is made up of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania. As home to significant Berber-Amazigh populations, civil strife concerning their cultural representation has sometimes come to the fore.

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[340] Harb, "The Arab region: Cultures, values, and identities." 11.
[341] Ibid.
[342] Ibid.
[343] Ibid.

The region was mostly colonised by France which left a distinct impact on local culture, and unlike the rest of the Arab world French remains the most widely used foreign language.[344]
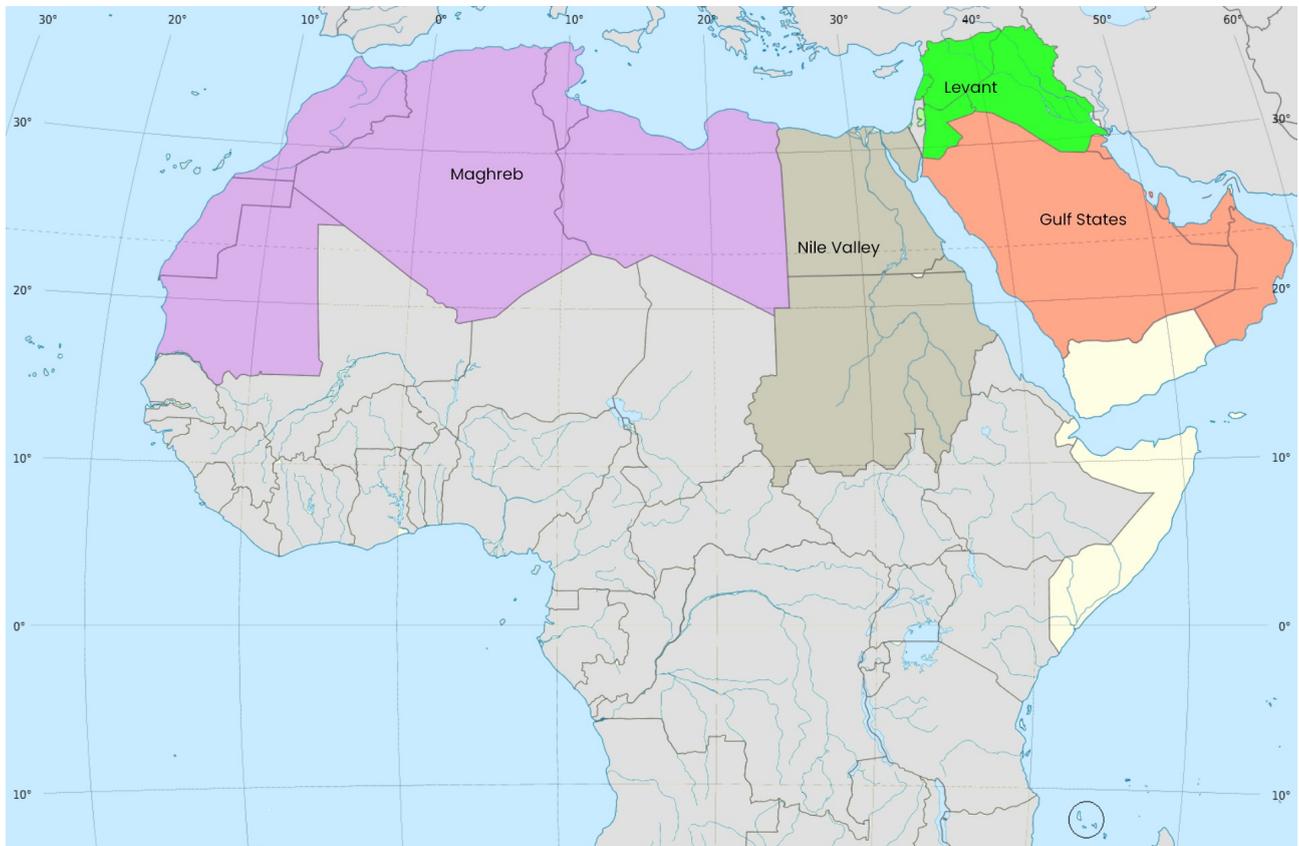
Fig. 9: Political map of the Arab states, designated in the four regions identified in Harb's article (2015). Some states (Somalia, Yemen, etc.) are not considered constituents of a regional grouping. Ciagram by Author.

It is perhaps useful to analyse Arab identity through modern Arab's relationship to the Arabic language as a basis. Although Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) acts as a lingua franca across the region, and is adopted as the official or co-official language by all Arab states helping shape a notion of a collective identity, each sub-region (generally corresponding with the four aforementioned regions) identifies with a regional spoken dialect that is used locally, which generally related to the standard *Fusha* Arabic.[345] Here states exhibit a type of affirmation of and loyalty to a clear collective 'super' identity, while allowing for local differences within specific regions of historical and geographic contexts.

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[344] Ibid.

[345] Holt, "Divided loyalties: Language and ethnic identity in the Arab world." Holt notes that while MSA has permeated all local dialects and binds them together, not all of the local dialects originate directly from it. The Arabic term *Fusha* is the word Arabs use to refer to MSA. The world's rough translation is "eloquent speech".

As a result of this large degree of variance, political and cultural identity differ between individual states. Charles Harb categorises states as one of three main categories. Socially homogeneous societies, usually dominated by a well integrated group, leading to a homogenous and centralised political structure. These include Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya. Lebanon and Sudan represent societies consisting of a "societal mosaic", where subgroup identities tend to overrule collective national identity and where political power sharing becomes a necessity.[346] Iraq, Algeria, Syria, and Morocco exhibit a social pluralism, various groups maintain distinct identities but have achieved a consensus between their individual and collective national identities. Despite preserving their uniqueness, they adopt shared nation-building elements.[347] Considering all this, it is worth noting the central role Islam has occupied in discussions of Arab and Middle Eastern identity. Orientalist Bernard Lewis has been noted to stress the unique circumstance of the formation of the modern Middle Eastern identity, where ancient and well entrenched identities were only subject to change with the onset of modernity and and interaction with the West, introducing the region to new ideologies and technologies compeling populations to redefine their self image.[348] In this conception new identities based on nationality and citizenship are not 'authentic' cultural determinants of identity, something lying decidedly in the religious realm. However, recent critical scholarship has disputed these views as reductionist, citing a more intricate complexity influencing identity formation in the region away from a "civilizational clashes" kind of rhetoric viewing the region in monolithic terms, perpetuated by the likes of Lewis and Samuel Huntington.[349]

With such elaborate ethnic, linguistic, and religious factors at play, in addition to a looming legacy of colonialism, the built environment has been subject to disparate influences steemin from these experiences. Salama notes how the Arab region's unique cultural makeup often leads to a "type of symbolism difficult to comprehend".[350] Such symbolism as an expression of cultural identity appears to have gained preponderance as a result of the emergence of international postmodernism in the 1980s, a repudiation of modernist theses and reasserting the functional and cultural need for symbolism.[351] Thus Salama notes how numerous voices in Arab design discourse from the mid 1980s advocated for a larger consideration of "public taste codes"[352] in architectural aesthetics, which around that time has seen a conspicuous shift towards a more

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[346] Harb, "The Arab region: Cultures, values, and identities." 11.
[347] Ibid.
[348] Schwedler, "Islamic Identity."
[349] Ibid.
[350] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."
[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid.

conservative, hence more heritage-based outlook.[353] This has been taken as an uncritical conversion from international modernism to international postmodernism jettisoning any consideration of local cultural contexts.[354] Khaled Asfour notes how this mechanism of "cutting and pasting" has been a feature of design in the region since colonial times, appropriating foreign ideas from their original context hoping to replicate similar results. He ascribes this, as others have, to a preponderance of images and the visual as a design criterion, with such an approach enduring in contemporary Arab design.[355]Such observations aside, Asfour does acknowledge that such an approach with regards to direct replication of history has been replaced with a broader awareness regarding the notion of identity, incorporating environmental concerns in the process.[356]

Salama also notes how architectural identity in the region since the 1990s has often been " constructed" by dictates of cultural, social and political institutions imposing selective visual preferences (Salama) perhaps not the empowering of public tastes it has seemed. These impulses feuling an appetite for traditional visual references, have also generated interest in an expansion for restoration of historic monuments and buildings across the Arab world,[357] reinforcing the idea of the manufacturer of heritage for self-definition purposes as espoused by AlSayyad.[358]

Particular attention in this regard may be warranted when observing trends emerging from the Gulf region, where global and local influences interact most blatantly. Gulf capitals saw a transition from vernacular settlements in the mid 1960s to modern planned urban centres, where focus on traditional roots was spurned in favour of embracing a global modernity. A severing of associations with tradition was often the result of a view of tradition as linked to poverty and rudimentary modes of living.[359] Be that as it may, scholars have come to identify heritage as playing a powerful role in Gulf statecraft, in architecture as well as wider culture, with leaders seeking to fuse a global hypermodernity with tradition where architects "play the role of shrewd diplomat, skillfully weaving together traditional and modern into a mash-up of signifiers for both"[360] While acknowledging this, Salama however upholds the notion that gulf rulers have tended to favour a type of globalised image catering to an international audience, embracing

[353] Rabbat, "Encounters with modernity in the Arab world."

[354] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."

[355] Asfour, "Identity in the Arab Region: Architects and Projects from Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar."

[356] Ibid.

[357] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."

[358] AlSayyad, Nezar. "Consuming heritage or the end of tradition: the new challenges of globalization," 171.

[359] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."

[360] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."

cutting edge technology and sometimes competing with other gulf cities[361]In this sense, Gulf states are perceived as perpetrators of what has come to be called a "reverse orientalism", still depicted as "'outside history" but instead of being perceived as backwards and static, they are depicted as hyper modern and futuristic.[362]

Architectural discourse on identity appears to have undergone an evolution from the eschewing of tradition and vernacularism and an embrace of modernism to a reconnection with heritage, reacting to global flows[363] of information and trends. Salama argues that the question of whether these attempts to construct a collective Arab architectural identity have succeeded, is confounded by the dubious nature of the existence of such a singular "collective mind", such discourse homogenising what exists as a diverse plurality.[364] Here, Salalma advocates for an "anti-positivism" in dealing with architectural identity, emphasising the multiplicity of architectural expression avoiding "objective" approaches to interpretation which restrain divergent social and cultural viewpoints.[365] As will be demonstrated, this pluralistic disposition presents the potential for intriguing avenues of cooperation between different architectural ideas.

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[361] Andraos, "The Arab City."
[362] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."
[363] Manuel Castells's notion of "global flows" encapsulates the cross-border movement of information, capital, goods, services, and people, reflecting interconnections of contemporary globalisation.
[364] Salama, "Architectural Identity Demystified."
[365] Ibid.

2. An 'Islamic' Architecture?

2.1 Disciplinary History

Discussions of architecture in the Arab and wider Middle East region cannot be explicated from the notion of 'Islamic architecture', given the term's prolific academic and popular usage. In some sense, the notion of an Arab architecture cannot be explicated from the concept. Many scholars have attempted to define its ontology and limits. Nasser Rabbat is perhaps the most preeminent contemporary scholar of the history and historiography of the Islamic architecture discipline, chronicling its conception and evolution in Western academic circles as well as in contemporary practice particularly eloquently in his 2012 article "What is Islamic Architecture Anyway?".

Interest in the study of Islamic art and architecture in the Arab world and beyond was kindled by Enlightenment sentiments and romanticism sweeping the intellectual life of eighteenth century Europe, intensifying further in the proceeding century.[366] The origins of the study of the architecture of the Islamic world lie in post-enlightenment Europe, with interest in the "Orient" first acted upon by adventure seeking architects, artists, and draughtsmen. The scope of such travels was wide, encompassing the Iberian peninsula, Egypt, Anatolia, the Levant, and India, the exotic architecture of which was documented for the first time.[367] Rabbat recounts how in the absence of a framework through which to situate such findings, Eurocentric appellations such as 'Saracenic', (the term used by Sir Bannister Fletcher's history of architecture), in addition to terms such as 'Mohammedan', 'Moorish', and 'Oriental' were all used as names for this foreign architecture, with 'Islamic' architecture emerging as the established name around the end of the nineteenth century, assigning such architecture as "a formal expression of Islam".[368]

As Europeans laid the groundwork for the field, against the backdrop of colonial enterprise and later Westernisation and modernisation, a "degree of incongruity" between the 'Islamic' architecture the Europeans found, and the modernism that seemed to replace it throughout the Islamic world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,[369] giving rise to the view that the tradition of Islamic architecture had ended with their arrival. Rabbat notes that this is perhaps due to the idea that the architecture produced under the yoke of colonialism and even after independence was seen as decidedly modern, and therefore unislamic, or at most the product of a

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[366] Jalali et al, "A Comparative Study of Traditionalism and Historiography in the Explanation of Mosque Architecture by Focusing on the notions of Titus Burckhardt and Oleg Grabar's Model." 113. Translated from Persian.
[367] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"
[368] Ibid.
[369] Ibid.

type of cultural hybridisation, the domain of modernist scholars and area specialists.[370] This isolated the architectural production in the Islamic world from the colonial period onwards as a mere derivative of Western ideas, not particularly worthy of serious analysis.[371] This placed the lifespan of the Islamic architectural tradition from the emergence of the Islamic civilization in the late seventh century to the late eighteenth century after the commencement of European domination, when it was seen as being 'authentic'.

Situated in this context, what concrete criteria describe Islamic architecture? The history of the discipline has had a considerable portion of its discourse discussing this very dilemma. There have been scholars arguing for the existence of common aesthetic and formal attributes pervading all such architectures, directly discernible through visual means. Others have argued that underlying principles undergird most Islamic architecture, making it a viable identifying category. [372] This approach looked more towards the existence of an inherent 'spirit' within Islamic culture, (a notion later echoed by institutions such as the Aga Khan Award) informing a design philosophy producing particular architectural and spatial features, such as perceived Islamic notions of introspection, contemplation, and privacy. Rabbat identifies German art historian Ernst Grube as a proponent of such a position.[373] However, French-born historian of art Oleg Grabar has arguably had the most influential role in shaping the contemporary academic conception of Islamic architecture, prescribing what has come to be seen as the dominant view in the field. Grabar defined the disciple in a more "pragmatic" framework[374] focusing on a practical definition encompassing architecture produced by adherents of Islam, in a Muslim cultural domain where a cultural independence can be exercised, such as a Muslim majority country.[375] Rabbat notes that while such a broad definition granted a cosmopolitan mandate to Islamic architecture, able to lay claim to a wide variety of geographical and historical contexts and different styles and traditions, it did jettison any religious meaning the term had previously represented.[376] This view decoupled the category from any relation to Islamic religious teaching, jurisprudence, mysticism or theology. Rabbat here describes such an understanding as one that "shunned religion as an ontological category",[377] and one that is born out of the "rationalist and secular humanist roots" of Orientalism and art history, whose intersection birthed the study of Islamic art and

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[370] Ibid.
[371] Ibid.
[372] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"
[373] Ibid.
[374] Ibid.
[375] Ibid.
[376] Ibid.
[377] Ibid.

architecture.[378] While this historical and social and cultural analysis of Islamic architecture, seeking socio-cultural and climatic interpretations to architectural phenomena, came naturally within the context of academic study, some have contrasted this with alternate paradigms of understanding.[379] According to these perspectives, Islamic art and architecture was indeed a deeply religious phenomenon, stemming from a unique Islamic mystical tradition "seeking transhistorical truths".[380] Swiss Muslim writer Titus Burckhardt has been cited as espousing this particular perspective,[381] approaching the topic from his background as a proponent of the traditionalist/perennialist school of thought. Here, such art is seen as an embodiment of a universal and primordial (perennial) wisdom common in all faith traditions. This worldview has its roots in Hegelian writing in late nineteenth century art history scholarship, with art, architecture and wider culture seen to embody manifestations "considered to come from a single spirit", spurring the likes of Burckhardt to search for "timeless" principles in at as opposed to Grabar's approach based in ethnology.[382] Observing such a comparison, while Grabar and Burckhardt both affirm religion's impact, whether from an ontological or civilisational perspective. Burkhart sees Islamic architecture as deeply intertwined with Islamic teachings, acknowledging Islamic ontological contribution to the discipline, particularly that of Sufism[383] and Islamic mysticism. Meanwhile Grabar regarded religious influence as more of an anthropological component linked to Islamic culture rather than the religion itself, emphasising symbolism and meaning association in Islamic architectural forms. Scholars have noted that since Grabar's contributions to the field's epistemological framework as one of several "reviews of the Islamic architecture and art fields have been carried out, widening the field's horizons and maintaining its relevance in the face of important challenges both from within academia and the political realities in the Arab world." [384] Grabar has been credited with maintaining architecture's seat at the art history table, at least as far as Islamic *architecture* is concerned, in light of their "divorce" in wider art history circles around the 1970s, with Grabar consecrating architecture as

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[378] Ibid.

[379] Jalali et al, "A Comparative Study of Traditionalism and Historiography in the Explanation of Mosque Architecture by Focusing on the notions of Titus Burckhardt and Oleg Grabar's Model." 113. Translated from Persian.

[380] Ibid.

[381] Ibid.

[382] Jalali et al, "A Comparative Study of Traditionalism and Historiography in the Explanation of Mosque Architecture by Focusing on the notions of Titus Burckhardt and Oleg Grabar's Model." 113. Translated from Persian.

[383] Sufism is a loose body of Islamic practice and belief focusing on mystical aspects of the Islamic faith tradition. It has its roots early in Islamic history and has and continues to influence spirituality, culture, and art in the Muslim world.

[384] O'Kane, "Widening the Horizons for the Study of Islamic Architecture." O'Kane points to challenges involving heritage destruction due to multiple ongoing conflicts.

the paradigmatic genre of art in Islamic civilisation.[385] He also saw the nascent field as uniquely placed to swiftly adopt innovative theoretical and methodological frameworks into its structure (Flood and Necipoglu 2017), foreshadowing the versatility of the Aga Khan Award. Nevertheless, while Islamic architecture has gained prominence, the overwhelming dominance of Western architecture in modern academic study still persists,[386] as well as the internal debates pertaining to geographical scope and the inclusion of modern and contemporary art into the Islamic art canon, still primarily shaped by medievalists.[387]

However, Rabbat highlights the aforementioned incapacity to engage with the "Islamic" part of the modern discipline's designation, considering such questions to have come to the forefront with the emergence of students of Islamic architecture, primarily of Muslim heritage along with practitioners of architecture in the Islamic world, who came to view it as a ongoing heritage and school of architectural thought that represented a tradition of deep personal significance. Unlike the Western progenitors of the academic discipline, the category was a notion they deeply identified with.[388]

The concept of Islamic architecture exerted a significant influence on practices within the Arab world and beyond. Particularly after gaining independence, architects in this region endeavoured to reincarnate the 'spirit' of Islamic architecture within the built environment. This revival occurred alongside discussions about traditional architecture, local building styles, and regional identity. The idea of Islamic architecture proved especially valuable, helping architects situate their designs within an established pre-colonial tradition while also serving as a catalyst for shaping a new national architectural identity[389] (as elaborated in Part II of this study). This became even more evident as the disparate phenomena of ascendant political Islam as an 'authentic' alternative to a waning pan-arabism, the rise of conservative Gulf state influence in the region, and the emergence of international postmodernism connoting a reintegration of history, all served as accelerators increasing Islamic architecture's momentum,[390] with a pan-islamic identity supplanted a pan-arabist one.

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[385] Ibid.

[386] Ibid.

[387] Flood and Necipoğlu. Frameworks of Islamic art and architectural history: Concepts, approaches, and historiographies."

[388] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"

[389] Ibid.

[390] Ibid.

Rabbat among others[391] in multiple instances allude to the founding of both the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Aga Khan Programs for Islamic Architecture at the Massachusetts institute of Technology[392] and Harvard University, as a seminal moment in both the practice and study of Islamic architecture across the Muslim world, acting as the predominant definer, promoter and regulator of the concept.[393]

2.2 A Disputed Term: Between The Sacred and Profane

In spite of the progress the field has made, and perhaps alluded to in the previous section, the term 'Islamic' architecture remains hotly contested and debated from those internal and external to the discipline. A lot of the contention regarding Islamic architecture lies in the name itself, implying strictly religious motivations behind the architecture. Rabbat identifies this line of critique as the primary enduring criticism of the field, informing most debates surrounding the term particularly within the context of globalisation and poscolonial interrogations of the field's internal epistemology.[394]Additionally, the scope and periodisation of Islamic architecture, particularly the timeframe in which it is seen to have emerged and, controversially, "ended" also incites discussions within the field.[395] The view of the end of Islamic architecture with Western influence implies had been subject to a kind of contamination, before which Islamic architecture was 'authentic', existing as a pristine tradition (possibly rooted in a romantic idea of the architecture of a noble savage), existing before the advent of civilising western modernity which again raises questions of a postcolonial bent. Circling back to initial European views of Islamic architecture, it is noteworthy to point out how the architectural production of such a vast geographic area, from Iberia to South East Asia, was generally seen as belonging to a single tradition. Proponents of the designation may point to this as intuitive evidence of an underlying unified impulse generating such forms,[396] although it is understandable how detractors can point to such a designation as an orientalist essentialization and reductionist view, refusing to acknowledge such variance in favour of a dismissive labelling of an ahistorical "other". This constitutes a central contention of Amale Andraos's problematization of the term in her 2016

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[391] This includes many scholars of the field cited in this study, including Bernard O'Kane.

[392] Rabbat himself is the Aga Khan Professor at MIT and has been serving as Director of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT since 1999.

[393] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"

[394] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"

[395] Ibid.

[396] In "What is Islamic architecture anyway?" Rabbat cites scholars such as Georges Marçais, who emphasised the visual distinctiveness of Islamic art, suggesting that a discerning individual familiar with a multitude of global architectural photos could intuitively identify the Islamic structures among them.

article "The Arab City". For Andraos, the term perpetuates an essentialization of the architecture of the region, influencing architectural production whether of Arab or foreign authorship, encouraging the production of reductive architectural language and elevating tropes such as the arab *souk* or *medina*. This essentializing impulse, Anraos argues, is what Edward Said warns against as "offensive" representational forms facilitating colonialism.[397] Such approaches obscure architects to the nuances of art and architectural practice in varying contexts, obliterating the centrality of unique geographic and cultural conditions informing architectural practice from Istanbul to Doha, only to force all such variance across time and space into the container of a single constricted and hegemonic tradition.[398] Following from this, perhaps Andraos's even greater consternation, lies in the identitarian implications of the notion, asserting the bizarreness of the existence of a culturally cohesive Islamic people across the Muslim world. Here, it can be argued that Adnraos shuns the idea of the existence of a historically coherent pan-Islamic identity, going as far as to implicate this view of a hackneyed idea of Islamic unity in the emergence of "the dystopia of ISIS".[399] She also cites such notions as actively legitimating fundamentalist destruction of heritage itself, particularly that which is seen as not sufficiently Islamic.[400]

While perhaps less hyperbolic, similar sentiments sceptical of the invented idea of the cath-all Islamic naming have been expressed by Curtis, in his writing for *Mimar*. In "Towards an Authentic Regionalism" (1986) Curtis concurs with the idea that the Islamic architecture designation is but a mere cloaking of already existent vernacular vocabularies before the spread of Islam.[401] Here the implication is that the lens of Islamic architecture is in fact inauthentic, distorting the reality of already established architectural traditions. Vernacular forms are seen to "have been appropriated as a sort of instant Islamic identity kit; a piece of acceptable costume", even where such forms have had no prior historical precedent[402] or make little tectonic sense. Scholars have also read in such writing a tendency to dismiss the contribution of cultural factors, represented in religious or nationalist impulses, to vernacular forms, focusing on solely climatic and tectonic interpretations, a reading which seems to contradict Frampton's critical regionalism.[403] Taking into account the points on the homogenising consequences of the term put forward by Andraos, and to a lesser extent Curtis, perhaps one could address such concerns by conceiving of the category in a similar vein to the conception of the global in modern

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[397] Andraos, "The Arab City."
[398] Ibid.
[399] Ibid.
[400] Ibid.
[401] Curtis, "Towards an authentic regionalism."
[402] Ibid.
[403] Hassan Pour, Lewis, and Guo, "The theoretical inapplicability of regionalism to analysing architectural aspects of Islamic shrines in Iran in the last two centuries."

architectural historiography, underscoring transcultural exchanges and dialogue within the cultures of the Islamic world. Islamic architecture demonstrates a deliberate interaction within its multicultural environment, as well as with diverse past and contemporary cultures globally encompassing a wide spectrum of architectural traditions during its developmental phase. Rather than mere imitation, this process of exchange involves a conscious and vibrant interchange among various architectural traditions, influencing each other's output.[404]

Questions of addressing the 'Islamic' in Islamic architecture have also gone the other way, attempting to affirm the faith's immanence to such architecture. These voices seem to echo the aforementioned position of Burckhardt, which has been branded by some as a reinforcement of orientalist particularistic frameworks of architecture.[405] However, perhaps there is something to be said for the fact that a sizable number of voices within the Muslim world itself seem to support the idea of an allegiance to some degree to a monolithic tradition in which religious teaching plays a central role, perhaps an echo of the significance of faith in contemporary Muslim/Arab identity. Secular views of Islamic architecture have been criticised for not even making the attempt to analyse such architecture through an Islamic epistemological lens, constituting an exclusively materialist viewpoint inevitably misinterpreting its underlying meanings.[406] This frame of reference tends to lead into the notion that an Islamic architecture, as far as religious motivation is concerned, can only be mosque architecture. Some contend this imposes a modern secular framework when analysing "non-religious" building typologies, suggesting that such a separation between "mosque and state" is absent in Muslim thought and that a "muslim house serves as much of a religious function as does the congregational mosque".[407]

While not necessarily endorsing such assessments, Rabbat appears to be sensitive to such critiques from inner voices. He addresses these sentiments by examining a popular counterpoint for opponents of the Islamic architecture classification; where is the Christian architecture outside of churches? He frames such discussions differently by advancing the idea that there was a large role for Christianity to play in European architecture as a whole in the mediaeval period, pervading all aspects of society, the sacred and the profane alike, up until the the enlightenment rupture with religious epistemology.[408] Crucially, this rupture was not an architectural issue, but one at the wider societal level. The Muslim world never underwent its own similar processes of secularisation and industrialisation, with a significant narrative of the region's relationship with

[404] Rabbat, "Toward a Critical Historiography of Islamic Architecture."

[405] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"

[406] Mankani, "A Socio-Political Perspective On Islamic Architecture."

[407] Mankani, "A Socio-Political Perspective On Islamic Architecture."

[408] Rabbat, "What is Islamic architecture anyway?"

modernity coloured by a resistance to such secular modernism, or at least its adaptation into a religiously acceptable form.[409] Thus Islam as a way of life emerged from its contact with European modernism "changed but not defeated",[410] remaining a potent force in Muslim societies in ways that Western analysts may find confusing.[411]

It is springing from this nuanced attempt to understand the term acknowledging all its dimensions, that Rabbat defines his version of Islamic architecture as "the architecture of these cultures, regions or societies, that have directly or via some intermediary processes accepted Islam as an integral component of of their epistemological and socio-cultural makeup".[412]

3. The Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA)

3.1 Origins and Development

As debates over regionalism and responses to modernism in Europe and the Western world were intensifying, parallel voices within a "developing" world emancipated from colonial rule while grappling with its legacy, were embarking on interrogations of the architectural status-quo on their own terms. One can argue that within the Islamic and Arab worlds, such interrogations have tended to hinge upon notions of 'authentic' identity, stressing such points in addition to more universal climactic, tectonic, and site-specific considerations articulated by Western theorists like Frampton. Such efforts were provided further substantiation with the 1977 establishment of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA) by His Highness Aga Khan IV, the current Imam of the Nizari Ismaili subsect of Shia Islam,[413] along with its accompanying seminars and conferences providing a hitherto unprecedented platform for facilitating such interrogations. In many respects, the AKAA and what it has come to represent within architectural discourse, lies at the intersection of the myriad labels, narratives, and 'isms' pertaining to Arab architecture discussed in this study. The AKAA constitutes a pivotal component of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture,

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[409] Ibid.

[410] Ibid

[411] Ibid

[412] Ibid

[413] Islam's two main 'sects' are the majority *Sunni* sect and a minority *Shia* sect, differing early in Islam's history on matters of spiritual and political succession to the Prophet Muhammad. Within the Shia sect, several branches and sub-branches exist with each following a sacred line of spiritual *Imams* as religious and political leaders, tracing their lineage back to the Prophet. The *Ismaili Shia number* around *15-17 million mainly inhabiting parts of the Middle East and South Asia, and they* are the second largest Shia group. Its Nizari sub-branch constitutes the majority of *Ismaili Shia* worldwide, and its adherents consider The Aga Khan IV the divinely ordained *Imam*. It is worth noting that as *Sunnis,* the majority of the world's muslims do not adhere to an 'imamate' doctrine.

itself a key agency of the wider Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The AKDN is intended as an philanthropic initiative comprising an assembly of institutions with separate yet complementary missions aimed at enhancing the well-being and opportunities of individuals in developing regions, with a specific focus on the Asian and African continents.

The Aga Khan's motivations for initiating this endeavour are elucidated in his opening remarks in the first AKAA seminar "Towards an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam", the opening seminar in a Series titled: *Architectural Transformations in the Islamic World*, held in Aiglemont, France in 1978. Intended as an initial forum of discussion laying the groundwork for the inaugural AKAA cycle in 1980, it marked the opening salvo in a multifaceted effort to overcome the "great challenge" facing architecture in Muslim societies.[414] As a private patron of many architectural works, the Aga Khan describes a particular experience commissioning a hospital in Karachi as one of the catalysts for adopting this cause, noting his frustration at the lack of proposed design solutions embodying a uniquely Islamic essence and alluding to a lack of contemporary manifestations of architecture informed by Islamic principles, "soulless mimicry" of historical forms notwithstanding.[415] Thus, it is made clear from its inception that the AKAA and its affiliated initiatives disavow a 'spirit of Islam' summoned through pastiche, and make an unequivocal plea for a novel and contemporary architecture and urbanism, a peculiar yet praised feature of given the usual penchant for a "conservative postmodern architecture" exhibited by figures of royal extraction.[416] This described failure on the part of contemporary architects was chalked up to a lack of true creative vision from practitioners and private patrons, but also, perhaps most interestingly, an oversaturation of visual cues.[417] in a similar vein to other critics previously mentioned. The stage was further set by four additional seminars in the series exploring themes of conservation, identity, urban space, and housing before culminating in the 1980 award ceremony in Lahore. Since its inaugural cycle, international architectural experts, as well as specialists in the fields of Islamic art and architecture from across academia and practice, have been heavily involved in contributing to the enterprise. Renata Holod and Hassan-Uddin Khan (Note on who they are) were enlisted as the initial conveners of the award managing the jury and the formulation of its nomination criteria.[418] Since then, a large variety of established practitioners from varying origins and disciplinary outlooks have been recurring contributors to the award's master jury or steering committees, including Balkrishna V. Doshi, Charles Correa, Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Jaques Herzog, Peter Eisenmann, Fumhiko Maki, and Charles

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[414] Aga Khan IV's opening remarks in Holod, editor, "Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam."

[415] Ibid.

[416] Bozdogan, "The aga khan award for architecture: A philosophy of reconciliation." 182.

[417] See Aga Khan IV's opening remarks in Holod, editor, "Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam."

[418] Khan, "*Developing Discourses on Architecture: The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Journal Mimar: Architecture in Development, and Other Adventures.*"

Jencks[419] as well as prominent scholars and historians including Homi K. Babha, Oleg Grabar, Sir Hugh Casson, Ronald Lewcock, Mohammed Arkoun, and William Porter. As evidenced by the inclusion of such figures, adherence to or scholarly specialisation in Islamic tradition or indeed architecture itself was not considered a prerequisite for admission to the AKAA's open forum.[420]

The award follows a somewhat unique operative framework, setting it apart from similar schemes. Through a triennial cycle, the AKAA steering committee oversees the selection of projects by a master jury, uniquely assembled for each cycle with the goal of "Aspiring to a new identity that is liberated from inherited 'isms' and clichés imposed on the Muslim world".[421] Nominated Projects adhering to stringent criteria undergo a rigorous evaluation process that includes nominations by architects from around the world, technical reviews by trained experts, and on-site visits for extensive data collection. Shortlisted projects are examined and scrutinised by a master jury accounting for thematic categories including identity, revitalization, and sustainability.[422] Thus, the AKAA has garnered recognition as a unique architectural project in numerous ways. It is considered as the only award program incorporating on-site reviewers and acknowledging the efforts of all contributors to a given project, including master builders and craftspeople.[423] In this regard, the AKAA has been juxtaposed with other prominent international awards, such as the Pritzker prize, lauded as rejecting the veneration of a "cult of the fountainhead" [424], shunning a celebrity-obsessed 'starchitectict' culture pervading other architectural enterprises. Its natural focus on architectural production in non-Western communities as well as the involvement of scholars and practitioners from diverse backgrounds in evaluation and publication procedures render it a unique and unparalleled forum for architectural dialogue, with the award's deliberations, seminars, and publications serving as platforms for stimulating cross-cultural discourses[425] and perhaps the first award body of its kind actively asking questions about the field's inherent Western bias. The formulation of the AKAA's criteria and their boundaries undergo thorough examination, discussion, and evaluation through seminars, workshops, and scholarly debates centred on the role of architecture and urbanism in Islamic societies, with such publications serving as a means for the Award to diffuse and advocate the distinctive ideas of the

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[419] Munkittrick, "*The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Creation of an Islamic Built Identity, 1976-2007*."

[420] Bartsch, "*Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter*"

[421] Salama and El-Ashmouni, *Architectural Excellence in Islamic Societies: Distinction Through the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.*

[422] Ibid.

[423] Ibid.

[424] Bartsch, "*Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter*"

[425] Salama and El-Ashmouni, *Architectural Excellence in Islamic Societies: Distinction Through the Aga Khan Award for Architecture.*

recognized projects.[426] Throughout its fifteen completed cycles to date, the latest of which concluding in 2022, the AKAA has recognized over 110 projects across more than 8,000 submissions, establishing itself as among the architecture's premier institutions.[427]

As alluded to before, the AKAA initiative is bolstered in its effort by a complementary family of multimedia ventures aiming to foster a unique "space for freedom"[428] entertaining divergent ideological viewpoints and facilitating architectural experimentation.[429] This included the aforementioned seminar cycles which mainly accompanied the early award cycles, and played pivotal roles in establishing the ideas behind selection criteria while setting the agenda for their respective award cycles.[430] Further research, discourse, and professional education is facilitated through the Aga Khan Programs for Islamic Architecture (AKPIA) at the Masschusessts institute of technology (MIT) And Harvard University initiated in 1979. Chosen for their standing as two of the foremost institutions of architectural education in the Western world, the programs were initially headed by Oleg Grabar and Gülru Necipoğlu and continue to attract students from Western and non-Western backgrounds alike, aiming to train practitioners working in developing contexts.[431] In addition to the AKPIA's own journal *Muqarnas*, a joint venture between the AKPIA at MIT resulted in *ArchNet* in 2001, an open-access digital resource on the built-environment focusing on the developing world, ensuring access to the AKTC's scholarship and various collections (note on collections) to a wider audience.[432] Other initiatives include the Historic Cities Support Program (HCSP) focused on urban revitalisation and conservation endeavours, and perhaps among the most ambitious ventures funded by the Aga Khan, the journal *Mimar*[433], referenced multiple times in this work. *Mimar: Architecture in Development* made its debut in 1981 and comprised 43 editions during its publication span. The brainchild of Hassan-Uddin Khan,[434] Mimar stood as the singular global architecture periodical concentrated on the built environment in developing nations and associated critical topics. Its primary objective was to facilitate the exchange of concepts and visuals among nations seeking innovative

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[426] Ibid.

[427] Ibid.

[428] This has become somewhat of a slogan for the AKAA, particularly in academic circles, coined by Ismail Serageldin.

[429] Bartsch, "*Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter*"

[430] Ibid.

[431] Ibid.

[432] Ibid.

[433] *Mimar originates* from an Arabic word that can mean "architecture" and also "master-builder".

[434] Khan, "*Developing Discourses on Architecture: The Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Journal Mimar: Architecture in Development, and Other Adventures.*"

approaches to shaping their architectural landscapes.[435] Thus in light of this complex network, Islamic Architecture was in the process of becoming "institutionalised" by the AKAA, not dissimilar to how the Museum of Modern Art in New York championed modern art as a patron-institution[436] and shaping discourse and practice in the Islamic world and beyond.

3.2 Heeding the Call for Authenticity

In analysing the discourse emanating from the AKAA and its wider platform, one can identify a clear call for a type of 'authentic' architecture, emanating from an indigenous identity and utilising a 'native' architectural language. The Aga Khan in opening remarks in the very first seminar in Aiglemont illuminates the challenges facing building in Islamic societies, and while he concedes a lot of them also exist in the West, he cites how there have been attempts there to ameliorate such conditions, and the Islamic world needed its own authentic response catered to its unique needs and modes of living.[437] This inclination can be discerned from the seminars own from the choice of title: "Towards an Architecture in the *Spirit of Islam*", implying the existence of a uniquely Islamic architectural identity, if not informed by doctrine than at least inspired by Islamic civilisation. Here it can be argued that such a conception of a distinctively Islamic cultural essence mirrors the previously mentioned positivistic view of ethnicity as a repository of specific exclusive set of values challenged by Upton (differences between ethnicity and Islam as a religion notwithstanding). While discourse surrounding such issues has seen considerable discussion both for and against such notions within the seminars themselves, perhaps influencing the AKAA's trajectory over time, this seemingly essentialising impulse remains at the heart of the AKAA's founding myth, highlighting the primacy of the 'authentic'. Katharine Bartsch identifies this as born out of a wider sentiment in architectural historiography, beginning in the nineteenth century, partial to essentialist representation of the architecture of different cultures, exemplified by culturally representative displays encouraged in the international exhibitions of the time. This partiality endured in the proceeding century, with architects expected to express the prevailing zeitgeist.[438] However, this idea of an authentically Islamic architecture has been challenged from the award's very inception, and has perhaps expanded in scope as the AKAA developed through dialogue between its myriad contributors.

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[435] See the page for the *Mimar* collection on ArchNet:archnet.org/collections/56

[436] Hamid, *Hassan Fathy and continuity in Islamic Architecture: the birth of a new modern*.

[437] See Aga Khan IV's opening remarks in Holod, editor, "Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam."

[438] Bartsch, *"Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter"*

This can be observed in the discussions that played out at the inaugural seminar. In the first presentation, "The Contemporary Muslim and the Architectural Transformation of the Islamic Urban Environment", Iranian theologian and philosopher Seyyed Hossein Nasr bemoaned the urbanisation crisis in the regions of the Islamic world (concurring with a sentiment expressed by the Aga Khan in his opening remarks) leading to a preponderance of external influences brought upon the back of Western educated architects shaping the built environment according to the sensibilities of an elite clientele. This in his contention was exacerbated by the import of Western epistemological frameworks and a disregard of the inherent sensitivity and reverence towards nature that defined earlier architectural creations, such creativity and synergy with the natural, facilitated by an appreciation of religious mysticism, which has receded in modern times. Only through a revival of such epistemologies, one could say 'a return to sources' would a solution be found in "which *authentic* Islamic art and architecture have always been and always will be."[439] This view is not surprising given Nasr's association with perennialist philosophy, similar to Burckhardt, both being seen as advocates of "sacred art".[440] Dogan Kuban, in his commentary, presents a counterargument from a secular vantage point, highlighting that such urban and identitarian concerns are of a global nature, negating the notion of such architecture having any basis in religious doctrine or metaphysics. For Kuban, such architecture was the product of purely historical and material conditions.[441]

This tension remained throughout discussions of the first seminar, and indeed the other seminars in the series, with some such as Charles Correa and Nader Ardalan, attempting to reconcile both views by acknowledging validity in both claims. Burckhardt, participating in the fourth seminar by the name of "Architecture as Symbol and Self Identity" cited the architecture of Islam's unique focus on manifesting "divine unity" and rejection of anthropomorphic symbolism based on solely doctrinal grounds as evidence for his stance. Also cited as an authentically Islamic concern was a focus on "interiority".[442] This particular notion was disputed by Hassan Fathy, who while questioning introversion as an intrinsically Islamic trait, affirmed that an architecture discordant with its immediate surrounding environment as counter to Islam.[443]

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[439] Nasr, "The Contemporary Muslim and the Architectural Transformation of the Islamic Urban Environment."
[440] Maftouni and Mahdi. "The Sacred Art of Burckhardt and Seyyed Hossein Nasr: the Contemporary Approach of Farabi's Virtuous City's Art and Suhrawardi's Illuminating Art."
[441] See Kuban "Prepared Commentary" in Holod, editor, "Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam."

[442] Katz, Jonathan G., editor. *Architecture as Symbol and Self-Identity. Philadelphia: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.*
[443] Ibid.

This precise discussion as it pertains to 'authenticity' in Arab and Islamic architecture is elaborated on by Egyptian scholar Ismail Serageldin, a member of the award jury and steering committee across multiple cycles. In his 1989 book aimed at arab readers titled التجديد و التأصيل في عمارة" المجتمعات الإسلامية", translated as "*Innovation and Authenticity in the Architecture of Muslim Societies*", he presents an overview of the projects that have received awards in the decade since its first cycle. His focus is characterised by a notable emphasis on the 1989 recipients, and perhaps more crucially, delving into the award's historical trajectory and its foundational philosophy and development since. Serageldin in his discussion of "Civilisational Continuity and Authenticity" identifies a discernible sentiment in contemporary Islamic societies mourning the loss of identity and searching for a bygone authenticity through "returning to the core of Islamic doctrine", (Serageldin 1989) thus describing a fundamentalist impulse to cleanse contemporary identity from elements onset by Western hegemony . He follows this by asserting that the AKAA is a repudiation of such parochial and 'romantic' exaggerations,[444] defining the AKAA's position to be one of rigorous historical analysis from an unapologetically contemporary point of reference, and determining heritage elements of "enduring value" from the "old [and] worn-out". An emphasis on the rootedness of Islamic vernacular in historical and societal factors is also made. Nevertheless, Serageldin qualifies this by adding that such a disposition, while based in an academic and scholarly outlook, aims to arrive at a "deep and meticulous comprehension of the essence of culture in all its manifestations",[445] branding what he perceives to be the two extremes of "escapist romanticism" and "wholesale import of technology and sensibility" from the West as equally myopic.[446]Serageldin here attempts to place the AKAA as a 'third way' between two camps prevalent in design circles in the Arab and Islamic worlds, arguing that the one side advocates a slow form of suicide as isolation from the global and modern is infeasible, while the other represents a complete denial of identity and a outright rejection of its history. It is only through this mediated position when building anew, while ensuring the conservation of the old, that an "authentic" cultural continuity in the built environment can be realised.[447]

This nuanced position towards the authentic seems like an apparent vindication of the position held by the likes of Grabar at the expense of the previously discussed ideas of Nasr and Burckhardt, but still maintains Islamic culture as possessing a *jawhar* جوهر, an "essence" that must be distilled and ensouled in future works to maintain a sense of authenticity and continuity, using similar language to the assumptions behind the first seminar; searching for a 'spirit of islam'

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[444] See Serageldin, *Innovation and Authenticity in the Architecture of Muslim Societies* / التجديد والتأصيل في عمارة المجتمعات الإسلامية.
[445] Ibid.
[446] See Serageldin, *Innovation and Authenticity in the Architecture of Muslim Societies* / التجديد والتأصيل في عمارة المجتمعات الإسلامية.
[447] Ibid.

in architecture. This could be seen as a synthesis between differing views of authenticity, between a conservative thesis tying authenticity to history and tradition, and a modern antithesis rooting authenticity in an embodiment of a 'spirit of the age'. Thus in Serageldin's discourse, the zeitgeist is embodied primarily in epistemological approach and critical historical analysis and not necessarily in utilitarian aesthetics. It is also interesting that Serageldin ascribes this negotiating stance to the AKAA as a prominent contributor serving on its steering committee and multiple master juries. Notably, the Arabic book *"Innovation and Authenticity in the Architecture of Muslim Societies"* was published in English as an expanded volume, reviewing the first three AKAA cycles, given the title *"Spaces for Freedom: The Search for Architectural Excellence in Muslim Societies"* (1989), emphasising to a global audience the award's role as an open forum for discourse, of which such 'authenticity' discourse was central. The slogan 'space for freedom' has since become a distinguishing trait of the AKAA, emphasising ideological non-alignment and openness to at times contradicting viewpoints.[448] The views in Serageldin's volume, while situating the AKAA's position in a middle ground, does appear to betray an allegiance to the idea of centrist mediation itself, appearing to be careful not to fully endorse views espoused by the likes of the staunchly anti modernist[449] Egyptian architect, and Hassan Fathy protégé, Abdel-Wahed El-Wakil, and the more progressive stances advocated by Kuban.

3.3 Implications in the Arab World

As with the wider Islamic world and indeed most of the 'developing world', the AKAA has left its mark on Arab architectural discourse. There have been studies surveying the views of prominent practitioners and academics on the contributions of the AKAA's discourse within the Arab world. Marwa El-Ashmouni surveys such discourse, as well as some local reactions to the AKAA's vision and eventual evolution, particularly within the Egyptian context. Her work illuminates a particularly relevant dialogue emerging from Egypt within a very similar timeframe to the articulation of both the AKAA and Frampton's critical regionalism, all responses interacting (along with international postmodernism), looking to resist the universality of modernism in their own way. Through this, we can compare and contrast between the AKAA's approach to the 'resistance' paradigm with other Arab discourses. El-Ashmouni Spotlights the Egyptian publication *Alam al-Bina (*roughly translating from Arabic as 'world of construction'), a monthly architectural magazine coming out of *The Center of Planning and Architectural Studies (CPAS)* an "the first integrated centre of its kind in the Arab world . . . in the field of architecture

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[448] Bartsch, *"Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter"*

[449] Bozdogan, "The aga khan award for architecture: A philosophy of reconciliation." 182.

and planning, with consultation services in Egypt and other Arab countries".[450] Founded by academics Dr. Abdelbaki Ibrahim and Dr. Hazem Ibrahim.[451] The publication, while aligned with the AKAA's early vision in reinvigorating a 'spirit of Islam', fractures started to appear. The writing at *Alam al-Bina* was largely critical of the AKAA for being complicit in a kind of appropriation of what was viewed to be the religiously informed designation of *Islamic* architecture, and taken it out of its natural context, bestowing it on works that were viewed and anathemic to Islamic architecture.[452] What constituted their primary criticism, which was accompanied by much of the conservative criticism elaborated in previous sections, was the AKKA's large non-Muslim contingent,[453] who were seen to be corrupting established and known paradigms and were embodying yet another supra-national, increasing western body dictating conformity (fig. 10). In context, the discourse of 'resistance' was aimed at the AKAA, (as well as international postmodernism). As far as the AKAA was concerned, the discourse in *Alam al-Bina*, saw such an attempt at the 'revival' of Islamic architecture as 'inauthentic'; mere spectacle. Only through a revival of the "intellectual reasoning of a culture" could an authentic revival be possible.[454] This can be seen as a critique of the "space of freedom", whereby an oversaturation of discourse impeded the ability to take what they perceived to be a much needed decisive stance. The discourse disseminated by the publication was seen as reminiscent of a postcolonial 'us vs. them' dichotomy, seeming to shun extra-Islamic cultural exchange. However, the magazine's influence on local architectural practice was deemed to be minimal.[455]

Contrary to the consternations of *Alam al-Bina*, the majority of Egyptian academics and practitioners of the time were generally appreciative of the AKAA's facilitation of a new open architectural discourse, which had largely stagnated in Egypt after an initial post-independence experimentation with the international style.[456] In his interview with El-Ashmouni as part of the work informing her PhD dissertation, AlSayyad asserts the "very positive" influence of the AKAA on architectural practice across the Muslim world, and its varying degrees of success in the Middle East. However, he concedes the fact it had a relatively small influence as far as the local Egyptian context, with only a few Egyptian architects within its inner circle seeing much benefit. While some scholars have focused on its somewhat limited local implications within Egypt, there exists a

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[450] See the page for the *Alam al-bina* collection on ArchNet:https://www.archnet.org/collections/33

[451] El-Ashmouni, "*The rationale of architectural discourses in post-independence Egypt: a contrapuntal reading of 'alam Al-Bena'a (1980-2000)*." 212.

[452] Ibid, 264-265.

[453] Ibid.

[454] El-Ashmouni, "*The rationale of architectural discourses in post-independence Egypt: a contrapuntal reading of 'alam Al-Bena'a (1980-2000)*." 266.

[455] Ibid, 378.

[456] Ibid, 383

prevalent consensus that the AKAA illuminates the Arab region as an integral facet of the Muslim world, offering a globally esteemed platform for the architectural field.[457] The Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Alexandria encapsulates the complexities of this tension within Egypt and the Arab world, representing an emblematic project for the AKAA in Egypt (fig.11). Garnering the award during its ninth cycle in 2001, in which Frampton was served on the master jury, the building serves as a contemporary revival of the classical Library of Alexandria. Celebrated for its engagement with historical context while integrating local elements into a modern manifestation, it evoked controversy within *Alam al-Bina* and local discussions due to its bold monumentalism and unabashedly contemporary design[458]. However, its overall impact has been widely recognized as a significant success.[459] It has emerged as a city icon and a symbol of a kind of contextual modern architecture within the broader Arab world.

Fig. 10: A group photo presenting the AKAA master jury, with the Aga Khan and other associated contributors, for its ninth cycle, featuring the inclusion of many 'inner' and 'outer' voices including Frampton (middle row on the far right). Courtesy of the Aga Khan Development Network

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[457] Ibid, 384.
[458] Ibid, 131.
[459] Ibid, 384.

Fig. 11: Aerial view of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. No architectural work in Egypt has been awarded the AKAA since its recognition in 2001. (Photo courtesy of the architect, Snøhetta)

4. (Critical) Regionalism and the AKAA

3.1 Critical Regionalist Influences

Bearing in mind the myriad prevailing and emerging narratives in this thesis, one may be inclined to inquire; does the AKAA with its larger framework of derivative platforms, embody a *critical* regionalism? It is a plausible assertion to make considering the degree to which both frameworks can be seen to coincide. Some have made the case for classifying the Aga Khan IV, when parsing his statements on architecture, as a regionalist.[460] The essence of this regionalism, despite the term's many shifting meanings and implications, can be summed up in simple terms as the antithesis of globalisation, as advanced by Tzonis[461] Here there exists clear commonality between critical regionalism and the driving force behind the AKAA. The Aga Khan IV alludes to the overpowering and corroding influence of globalisation, and its tendency to corrupt and override the authenticity and clarity of expression. To this end, he provides the following analogy:

> "Many of us here speak several languages, and I am sure we would agree that our ability to communicate in several tongues sometimes impedes our expressing ourselves clearly in any one of them. If our command over several languages can erode our precision of expression, I wonder how quickly our eyes lose their ability to discern their integrity of a visual language.The undiscriminating exposure to many different kinds of visual languages must not lead to blindness. Surely, one day we will be asked why we have done nothing to develop our own system of a physical environment rather than replacing it wholesale with a garble of other languages." [462]

Such an attitude to globalisation makes regular appearances in *Mimar*.[463] Most interestingly, This also corroborates with the 'resistance' paradigm articulated by Frampton, highlighting the homogenising nature of international modernism and postmodernism alike as facets of an international culture. This is made particularly evident through his citation of Paul Ricouer's *Universal civilization and national cultures*, highlighting the primacy of such approaches to Frampton's recension of critical regionalism. It is also a potent theme in Lefaivre and Tzonis's

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[460] Munkittrick, "*The Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Creation of an Islamic Built Identity, 1976-2007.*"
[461] Storm, "A global history of regionalism?."
[462] See Aga Khan IV's opening remarks in Holod, editor, "Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam."
[463] See the previously cited essay in Part II by Brian Brace Taylor and Yuswadi Saliya.

work, even if recent scholars have contended that the original theory before its crystallisation was not originally formulated as a direct response to globalisation.[464] However, this "fundamental strategy" to "mediate the impact of universal civilization" [465]as the lynchpin of critical regionalism despite its inextricable attachment to modernism and the wider postmodern-modern dialectic.[466] can be viewed in a similar, parallel light within the context of the AKAA's relationship with Islamic architecture. In Frampton's writing, an allegiance to a 'universal civilization' in the form of modernism is not disavowed, only mediated. A "paradoxical creation of a regionally based 'world culture'" [467] is advocated as a mediation to mitigate its power and present a progressive and enlightened modernism cognizant of topographic and cultural context.[468] It can be argued that it is this treatment of the global and the local that begets *critical* regionalism. Comparably, we find similar conversations surrounding regionalism in the Islamic world vis-a-vis a wider overarching notion of a unified "Islamic architecture". Once more, this notion is found in the AKAA's founding moments. The Aga Khan IV makes it clear that while many young Muslim nations are seeking a unique identity in light of newfound postcolonial freedom which is "at the same time specific and regional", a clear proclamation that such an identity must continue to be seen as a constituent of a collective civilisational and historical Islam is made.[469] Some cynics may argue that fealty to such a supra-regional, supra-rational label, perhaps less defined than international modernism but still considered by some to mandate specific aesthetics,[470] as a similarly 'flattening' agent acting upon local architecture, may warrant additional layers of 'mediation'; a *critical* Islamic architecture Frampton might say. However such suggestions hinge on the viability of an 'Islamic' architecture in the first place, and any speculative implications of such a suggestion have perhaps been countervailed by the eventual centrality of regionalism (whether in relation to the global or the Islamic) as a discourse to the AKAA's platform. 1983 witnessed a new and intensified emphasis on the regional within the Islamic world through the commencement of a set of regional seminars held in several cities throughout the 1980s, often harbouring viewpoints "peppered with contradiction",[471] quite characteristic of the 'space for freedom' provided by the AKAA. The 1985 iteration of the seminars, held in Dhaka and referenced earlier in Part II of this work, saw the participation of Frampton, at a time when his ideas for critical regionalism were still maturing. In the seminar's discussions, he is referred to by Iftekhar Mazhar Khan as conceiving of

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[464] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture.*

[465] Frampton, "Toward a critical regionalism: Six points for an architecture of resistance."

[466] Holland, "Building, Writing, History."

[467] Frampton, *Modern architecture: a critical history.*

[468] Ibid.

[469] See Aga Khan IV's opening remarks in Holod, editor, "Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam."

[470] Curtis, "Towards an authentic regionalism."

[471] Bartsch, "*Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter*"

critical regionalism as the advocacy of a group of local architects in arguing in favour of their regional constituency's interests as resistance in the face of universalism.[472] Curtis's participation also saw his advancement of his "authentic regionalism" paradigm enthused by regional structures but eschewing a view focusing solely on the vernacular and pastiche. Thus an authentic regionalism is still one that maintains international relevance.[473] Such ideas would constitute an integral part of the critical regionalist framework, and while several conceptions of the regional were discussed through the seminars, we can observe the unambiguous influence of this notion within the AKAA's discourses.

In reference to these points, several critiques levelled at the AKAA from opposing ends of the ideological spectrum have emerged. Katharine Bartsch details some scholars' questioning of the AKAA's susceptibility to such influence from Western voices.[474] Samer Akkach suggests this as the AKAA attempting to simulate Western discourse on the topics, despite its founding mission being centred on muslim societies. Here it is deemed to betray a contradiction between its raison d'etre and its operational practice, in a possible bid to gain global legitimacy.[475] In a somewhat contrasting angle of critique, scholars have problematised the very idea of the dichotomy the award establishes between Islam as a collective and the 'other', even though the official name for the award contains no references to Islam. In this conception, the AKAA neutralises variance within the regions it surveys under the weight of the faithfulness to an overarching Islamic architecture.[476] This again circles back to a scepticism towards the notion of a collective Islamic architecture, viewing the constructed term as reductive and a perpetuation of self inflicted orientalist characterizations. It also draws parallels with the antagonism towards the universal in critical regionalist writings. Bartsch identifies this underlying tension born of internal contradiction between the struggle for authentic expression, and the need and desire to meaningfully engage with modernity.[477] If one were to align the AKAA with any specific label, Bartsch contends it would be "modern regionalism", with the approach enduring as "one of the most consistent messages of the AKAA",[478] even if not all prize winners or AKAA contributors adhere to such doctrine. Despite fears of homogenisation, it is also such divergent views that have allowed the AKAA to be uniquely placed to exhibit the "heterogenous portrait of Islam", one

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[472] See Powell, editor, *Regionalism in Architecture.*

[473] Curtis, "Towards an authentic regionalism."

[474] Bartsch, "*Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter"*

[475] Bartsch, "*Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter"*

[476] Bozdogan, "The aga khan award for architecture: A philosophy of reconciliation." 182.

[477] Bartsch, "*Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter"*

[478] Ibid.

that transcends narratives of continuity through conservation, vernacular architecture, or critical regionalism, facilitating "plural identities" that have been elaborated thorough Islam, Arabism, nationhood, community, and progress among others.[479]

3.2 'A Space for Freedom': Beyond Critical Regionalism

Given the commonalities between the context surrounding the creation of both the AKAA, and the genesis of critical regionalism as prophetic missions illuminating the perils of the effects of universal culture, and presenting their own visions for deliverance, it is perhaps not surprising that both paradigms have succumbed to some similar critiques. However, an analysis of both frameworks can divulge new ways through which both discourses can engage, learning from the other's missteps.

As discussed in Part I, critical regionalism has been subject to (post)colonial critiques stemming from accusations of promoting outdated centre/periphery models of global exchange.[480] This leads to an isolation of critical regionalist works from their foundational and creative context, by neglecting the voices of the 'peripheral' authors themselves, culminating in a projection of eurocentric concerns of 'resistance' against an imperial core when one may not necessarily exist. This is because since its inception, critical regionalism has remained a fundamentally *Western* discourse, privileging and canonising 'peripheral' architectural production within the confines of its epistemological realm, rooted in Western modernism. This has been alluded to in Part II by invoking Giamarelos's work to renovate a somewhat weathered critical regionalism into a landmark example for an architectural historiography in the twenty-first century.[481] Perhaps the blueprints for such an endeavour can be unearthed from within the AKAA's fertile soil of discourse.

While no stranger to criticism from multiple angles, including similar concerns of Islamic identity projection, the AKAA has been lauded as a 'space for freedom' generally inclusive of a multiplicity of positions and embodying a framework of cross-cultural exchange through the diversity of its writers, jurors, award winners, and contributors in ideology and origin. This engenders the AKAA with a distinguished position in being neither 'Islamic' or 'Western' and is

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[479] Ibid.

[480] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 16.

[481] Giamarelos, "Greece, the modern margin in the classical centre: seven points for critical regionalism as historiography," 1086.

exceptionally situated to engage with such complexities[482] accommodating multiple paradigms. It is in some sense, a kind of "insider voice" as articulated by Giamarelos.[483] This decentralised multi-faceted and pluralistic accumulation of diverse narratives affords the AKAA's discourse room to evolve[484] and self-revise with time, bringing to the fore a dialogic and deliberative nature to relevant architectural issues. One would be hard pressed to find a similar demeanour within critical regionalism, save for some attempts at constructive discourse that emerged from the 1989 Pomona College meeting. Even then however, the conference's preface by Marvin Malecha, dean of the Pomona College of Environmental Design, seemed to lack the vision for a "space for freedom" à la the AKAA. Malecha described critical regionalism not as the formation of a new paradigm, but the resurrection to the role of "social imperatives" in design. Yet, the goal of the conference was the formation of a "coherent philosophy" for future architecture.[485] This seems to imply the canonisation of an absolute doctrine, or maybe a unified school of thought. This risks falling into the trap of manufacturing another 'international style' applicable universally. Perhaps precedence dictates that one be wary of such universalisms, particularly given Frampton's citation of American architect Harwell Hamilton Harris's designation of regionalism as "a state of mind".[486] Interestingly, one can argue the AKAA was first established with a similar disposition, elucidated in the Aga Khan's preface to the first AKAA seminar:

> The process of review for nominations for the Award must have the capability of gathering many different solutions and the flexibility of recognizing bold, new and even contradictory solutions . . . It would be tempting to use the knowledge and expertise which is collected throughout this Award process to propagate a particular type of design solution, but this idea we have absolutely rejected. Similarly, it is not our intention to institute any chair of architecture or to found a particular school of architectural thought.[487]

The facilitation of the AKAA's discursive nature can be attributed to this initial stance, precisely in that it is merely a stance for open dialogue, leaving room for manoeuvre and an accommodation of divergent cultural, geographic, and ideological contexts. To this end, Giamarelos cites Murray Fraser's assertion that critical regionalism needs to abandon its reliance

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[482] Bartsch, *"Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter"*

[483] Ibid.

[484] Bartsch, *"Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter"*

[485] Popescu, "Critical Regionalism: A Not So Critical Theory," 211.

[486] Eggener "Placing resistance: A critique of critical regionalism," 228.

[487] See Aga Khan IV's opening remarks in Holod, editor, "Toward an Architecture in the Spirit of Islam."

on globalisation's "homogenisation fallacy" and make strides towards an analysis of intricate trans-cultural exchange networks. [488]

Giamarelos also scrutinises the specific criteria or 'points' Frampton presented, determining them to be closely tied to the very specific examples Frampton curated (and projected preconceived assumptions onto)[489] Here, one may suggest a comparative examination of such 'criteria' between Frampton's critical regionalism and the AKAA, aiding in identifying potential spheres of mutual benefit and cooperation. Intriguingly, there are no formal architectural criteria for the AKAA that parallel Frampton's points for regionalism. In a review of the AKAA's winning projects and critical output for its inaugural decade, Bozdogan notes how the award, reinforced by the Aga Khan's vision, seeks to "avoid formal criteria of excellence in favour of recognizing an ongoing and inevitably incomplete search."[490]This has endowed the AKAA with a versatility allowing it to maintain its relevance to architectural discourse over four decades later. However, the AKAA has seen trends influence its discourse and winning projects, influenced by wider trends in the field and the convictions of its master Jury, noted by Bozdogan for exhibiting conservative and postmodern tendencies early on in its second and third cycles respectively attributed to the participation of figures such as Titus Burckhardt and Robert Venturi[491] respectively. Ismail Serageldin in chronicling the AKAA's first decade hints at some of the questions prioritised by the master jury, mainly revolving around contextual harmony.[492]

 Over the cycles, the AKKA's built-in potential for evolution manifests. Studies have noted how the award has adopted an increasingly environmental focus, highlighting designs that exhibit a conspicuous engagement with nature, the environment, and issues of sustainability, particularly with the turn of the millennium[493] underscoring these issue's strong resonance with the AKAA's broad vision.[494] The thematic focus of the cyclical monographs coming out of the AKAA have also reflected this. While earlier volumes centred around issues of authenticity, community, and identity, such considerations, while no doubt still of considerable relevance to the AKAA's mission, have taken a back seat to explorations of pluralism, inclusivity, sustainability. Looking at the volume for the thirteenth cycle, "*Architecture in Dialogue*" (2019), AKAA director Farrokh

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[488] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 16.

[489] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture,* 16.

[490] Bozdogan, "The aga khan award for architecture: A philosophy of reconciliation." 182.

[491] Ibid.

[492] See Serageldin, *Space for freedom: The search for architectural excellence in Muslim societies.*

[493] Kuyrukçu et al. "Eleştirel Bölgeselcilik Kapsamında Ağa Han Mimarlık Ödülleri'nin Analizi." Translated from Turkish.

[494] Bartsch, *"Re-thinking Islamic architecture: a critique of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture through the paradigm of encounter"*

Derakhshani cites sustainability, social development, and plurality as integral facets of the AKAA's vision.[495]

Within this cycle, it is worth shedding light on a couple of the award recipients in the Arab region embodying this notion. The Wasit Wetland Centre in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (fig.12). Designed by local Emirati firm X-Architects, The project was honoured specifically for its exemplification of environmental stewardship, setting a precedent for conscientious, low-impact development in a region of the Arab world historically inclined toward contrasting practices (fig. 13).[496] all while demonstrating Frampton's topographic and contextual imperatives by seamlessly integrating with the natural topography, minimusing its visual impact by appearing submerged into the ground. In the jury's citation for the entry, there is little to be said for notions of 'identity', visual or otherwise, somewhat of a departure from earlier priorities and perhaps a sign of the development and maturation of the award's discourse, responsive to global architectural challenges.

Fig.12: Overview of the visitor centre building from the Eastern side, nestled into its topographic context and minimising its visual impact on the surrounding landscape. It is the first and only project in the UAE to be awarded the AKAA. Courtesy of Nelson Garrido / X-Architects.

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[495] See jury citations in: Lepik, editor. *Architecture in Dialogue: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.*
[496] Ibid.

Fig.13: The project embraces a kind of context-informed minimalism in its interior and exterior, inciting direct engagement with the surrounding natural landscape . Courtesy of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

The Palestinian Museum in Birzeit, Palestine, constitutes the other Arab recipient in the thirteenth cycle (Fig.14). The jury's motivations here are more varied, citing its embodiment as a symbol of an architecture of dialogue and tolerance, while also engaging with its surrounding site and topographic context through its mirroring of the surrounding agricultural terraces. Identity discourse is invoked in this context, as an exemplar of Palestinian cultural identity amid the adversity of occupation, "symbolising resistance" expressing an ancient architectural vernacular though modern geometry (fig. 15).[497] In this case, the work encapsulates Frampton's 'architecture of resistance' in both its metaphorical and literal meanings, bridging the architectural and the political. Notions of the building's sustainability are also mentioned, using local limestone in its facades and achieving LEED certification but do not seem to be the primary motive for the building's inclusion.

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[497] See jury citations in: Lepik, editor. *Architecture in Dialogue: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.*

Fig.14: The Palestinian Museum amidst the surrounding traditional terraced gardens, inspiring its 'zig-zag' motif and embodying its social and site specific contextual influences. Courtesy of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.
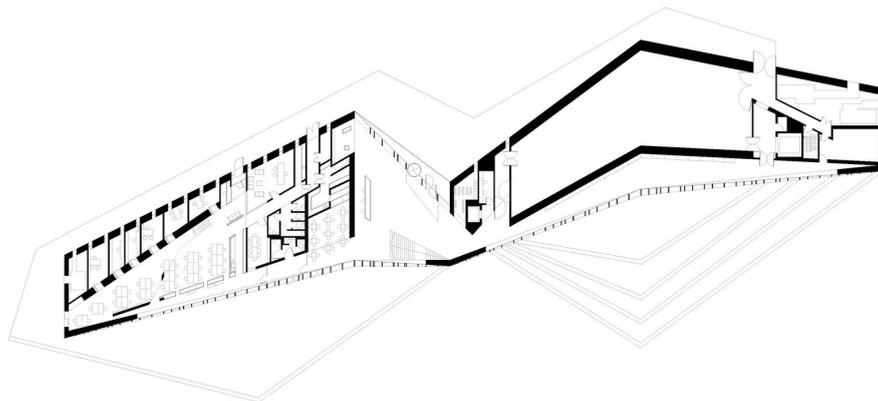

Fig.15: The museum's ground floor plan, The 'zig-zag' motif pervades all aspect of the design, from form to facade, "stressing the link with the land and symbolising resistance to the West Bank's military occupation"[498]. Courtesy of heneghan peng architects.

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[498] See jury citations in: Lepik, editor. *Architecture in Dialogue: Aga Khan Award for Architecture.*

Both these works demonstrate the evolution of the once identity-focused criteria of the award, and the maturation of its discourse. Through this expansion, the AKAA has been able to cast a wider net in terms of engaging in disparate discourses in divergent geographic and political contexts, allowing it to respond to the seminal architectural questions of our time,and underscoring perhaps its only clear criteria: pluralism and dialogue. Between such parallels, and the seven points articulated by Giamarelos for a historiographical project based on critical regionalism, one can identify a significant overlap, particularly in the common focus on hybridity, plurality, and expanding on sustainability discourse.[499]

4. Conclusion

In this part, the concept of the 'authentic', has been demonstrated to encapsulate a nuanced interplay of historical context, philosophical underpinnings, and cultural values, playing a protagonistic role in regional architectural discourse. Rooted in the pursuit of genuine representation, authenticity embodies first and foremost a quest for integrity, often intertwined with a desire to evoke a sense of rootedness within a specific cultural heritage. Authenticity is upheld by associated notions of 'tradition' and 'identity', contested terms adhered to by some and seen by others as implicit podcits of the modernity they eschew. In the context of Islamic architecture and architecture in the Arab region, such labels hold considerable sway in architectural culture and discourse, both from within and form without. However, as has been shown, they are seldom easy to pin down. Competing narratives pertaining to such labels also inform discourse on the viability of an *Islamic* architecture, and the implications of such, the discourse on which is often caught up in political narratives. In the midst of these polemical disputations, can a mediated response to architectural challenges, considering the utility of a multiplicity of viewpoints and epistemologies, be reached? Perhaps it can at least be attempted. This is the narrative through which the AKAA was conceived, and continues to evolve. Here, it presents itself as the harbinger of "a philosophy of reconciliation".[500] While the AKAA's harmonising tendency sets it apart from more revolutionary stances, it also diminishes its capacity for critique, embodying the disposition of its founder by elevating the virtues of diplomacy and liberal diversity over militancy and resistance.[501] Viewing critical regionalism from this vantage

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[499] See the seven points mentioned in Part II cited from Giamarelos, "Greece, the modern margin in the classical centre: seven points for critical regionalism as historiography," 1086.
[500] Bozdogan, "The aga khan award for architecture: A philosophy of reconciliation." 182.
[501] Ibid.

point, perhaps there is something to be gained from this 'space for freedom' fostering pluralistic dialogues, transcending binaries. The AKAA's resilience lies in its adaptability and openness to diverse narratives, facilitating a continuous evolution that responds to global architectural challenges. Contrarily, critical regionalism, while acknowledging the need for social imperatives in design, risks constricting itself to doctrinal approaches, potentially echoing the universalist tendencies it endeavoured to resist. As the AKAA navigates through its cycles, the expansion of its discourse from identity-centric considerations towards inclusivity, sustainability, and dialogue becomes evident. Therefore, a synergistic approach, amalgamating the pluralistic, evolving nature of the AKAA while developing critical regionalism's pioneering discourse presents a promising avenue.

Final Summary and Conclusions

This historiographical study has been an attempt at analysing prevailing narratives surrounding critical regionalism as it relates to the Arab world and the labels and narratives often entangled with such architectural discourse. In the preceding three parts, the concept of critical regionalism, initially conceived as a means to reconcile global influences with local specificities in architecture, was bestowed a revolutionary mission by Frampton, positioning it in a discourse of struggle and 'resistance'. This paradigm has encountered significant critique over its four-decade existence. Rooted in a reaction against the perceived failures of modernist imagination, it sought a revolutionary 'middle ground' between a global homogenisation and local characteristics. However, as its proponents grappled with its coherence and attempted to free it from the shackles of modern-post modern polemics, inherent paradoxes emerged. Its limitations became evident, particularly in addressing architectural production in non-Western contexts, such as the Arab world, where its tools often fell short in enabling culturally sensitive engagements, and failed to seriously consider some of the local attempts at navigating this 'middle ground'. As a decidedly Western and modernist idea in the epistemological sense, this is not surprising, held back by the weighty gravity of architecture's Western canon. Arab architects, navigating complex postcolonial milieus, have generated diverse responses, anchoring their discourse in regional histories while attempting to engage with Western modernity in unique and bespoke ways, creating what can be termed as hybrid or alternative modernities. Central to this discourse is addressing the quest for 'authenticity'. Authenticity in architectural expression, encapsulating integrity and rootedness within cultural heritage, remains a potent force yet ultimately elusive in discussions about Islamic and Arab architecture. Competing narratives surrounding labels like 'Islamic architecture' and 'identity' inform these debates. From within the intersection of these narratives the Aga Khan Award for Architecture (AKAA), presents itself as a platform for pluralistic dialogues and reconciliation, diverging from more revolutionary stances, emphasising diplomacy and diversity, and what this study has attempted to name a 'mediated resistance'. This disposition, in fostering openness to diverse narratives, enables discourse to evolve to address the seminal architectural challenges facing our societies. The AKAA through its unique model emanating from a 'space of freedom' has deftly managed to negotiate four decades of architectural discourse and critique, manoeuvring to avoid pitfalls of 'homogenisation', 'identity' and 'authenticity' through its agile mechanics.

From a comparative analysis of the trajectories of both critical regionalism and the AKAA as actors upon architectural discourse, the relative rigidity of critical regionalism becomes clear. The paradigm appears wed to the ideas of a single figure in a single moment, appearing frozen in time; a theoretical relic of a bygone era coloured by militant modernist and postmodernist polemics. Frampton himself appears to concede this reality, shelving the concept to focus on other theoretical pursuits, exposing its naivete.[502] Conversely, The AKAA's 'big-tent' party has shown its ability to respond to diverse challenges to its initial vision, showing relative resilience. When scrutinising the origin of the AKAA, we see a commitment from its nascent moments not necessarily to formulating a coordinated resistance towards universal modernism by means of a militant manifesto, but by inclusion, mediation, and negotiation through a 'space for freedom'. The fact that it is the latter pluralistic initiative that was established by divinely ordained royalty highlights this amusing, yet inescapable irony. Perhaps it is with him where critical regionalism's salvation lies. Even though the AKAA and its disposition does give rise to legitimate issues, mainly the "blunting of its critical edge",[503] Those interested in a revival of critical regionalism have something to learn from the AKAA's form of resistance, or perhaps, 'mediation'. This syncretic synergy of ideas from both paradigms could potentially forge a new 'state of mind', one capable of embracing the complexities of our diverse global architectural landscape and addressing the contemporary environmental and technological challenges, while including 'inner' and 'outer' voices in the conversation. Perhaps then, such a rejuvenated mindset focused on the environmental, social, and inclusive imperatives of the twenty first century, can a belligerent 'architecture of resistance' free itself from its own chains, embracing a 'mediated' response.

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[502] Giamarelos, *Resisting Postmodern Architecture.*
[503] Bozdogan, "The aga khan award for architecture: A philosophy of reconciliation." 182.

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