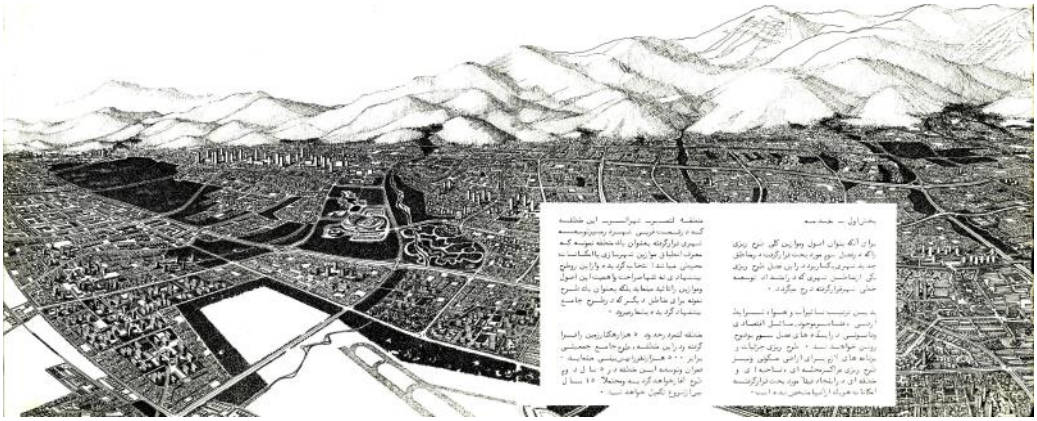
Transnational Planning Practices of the Cold War: Envisioning Tehran's urban Future (1960-1980)

Keywords: Transnational urbanism, the Cold War, Tehran, city centre

Department of Architecture

Area of Research: Design & History



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Research Summary

This dissertation places the concept of future city into a historical context, and seeks how the capital city of Tehran responded to the challenge of a new urban pattern against the economic and political backdrop of the Cold War. The dissertation therefore investigates the concept of future city in a series of visionary urban plans for the capital city of Tehran envisioned by a number of leading Western planners in the 1960s and 1970s. By focusing on local and international forces in the Cold War, this dissertation unravels how invited Western urban planners negotiated and anticipated the possible future for Tehran. And the extent to which the local and international interests affected their visionary ways of thinking, and also the adaptation and realization of those plans are examined. More importantly in those plans, the development of 'modern' city centre(s) became the main element to transform the existing structure of the city to a very new and resilient urban form which would sustain the future changes. Therefore, scrutinizing the concept of 'modern' city centre in these visionary plans is the main underlying core of the thesis.

Research Methodology

This thesis studies the four main urban projects for Tehran: the first Comprehensive Plan (1966-1969); the Action Plan (1972); the Central Business District project (1973-1978); and urban renewal of the old city centre (1978). The plans are analysed within two parallel theoretical frameworks. Firstly, the international discourse on future cities during the post-war period; and secondly, the transnational diffusion of these ideas into developing countries. This method allows an in-depth examination of Tehran's spatial evolution through the complex process of the localization of western ideas. The research is based on a combination of archival research and a flourishing literature of secondary sources. Findings from each proposal will be compared and contrasted with the planners' original urban models to allow for a wider conclusion in a sense that how local situations resulted in adaptation and revision of their principles and doctrines.

Main Question

How did local and international forces affect the formation of series of visionary plans for Tehran, and what role did the architects and planners perform therein?

Deliverables

The findings of this research contribute to the discourse on transnational planning practices and envisioning of future cities in the Cold War.

Updated: August 20, 2019