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## ASPECTS OF A UNIVERSITY PROJECT AND A NEW TOWN IN IRAN

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In developing countries, there is less local awareness of ecology than in the West, and a lack of individual and institutional support for relevant ideas and projects. Often, neither the desire nor sufficient investment to conserve or improve open or green spaces is present. In spite of such circumstances, I carried out a series of landscaped projects in pre-revolutionary Iran, at the time when interest in landscaping was absent and the profession of landscape architecture did not exist.

During the course of my practice, I have noted and confronted several basic problems of a cultural nature:

1. The concept of maintenance and conservation did not exist in traditional societies. These societies often take their physical and natural environment for granted and ignore it to their own detriment.
2. There is an overall absence of respect and care toward public property. As a consequence, a blind eye is often turned to vandalism and the abuse of both the natural and the urban environment.

I believe that, in most instances, nature is already landscaped and we have little business to intervene unless absolutely necessary. Intervention is only justified if we have water and human resources to maintain and we need to shelter green and animal life. I prefer to concentrate available resources to a limited, confined area within a larger arid landscape.

This attitude derives from the concept of the Persian garden. The principal design criterion is to enclose a wall in a limited acreage by means

SHUSHTAR NEW TOWN, KHUZESTAN,  
IRAN. PROVIDING SHADE TO THIS  
WORKING - CLASS COMMUNITY  
WAS ONE OF THE PRIMARY DESIGN  
SOLUTIONS WHICH WON THIS  
PROJECT THE AGA KHAN AWARD  
FOR ARCHITECTURE IN 1986.



JONDI-SHAPOUR UNIVERSITY,  
ASHWAZ, IRAN .  
LEFT: AN EXAMPLE OF ARCHITECTURE  
AS A COMPONENT OF LANDSCAPE  
DESIGN. THE EXISTING WATER  
CHANNEL DICTATED THE SITE PLAN.  
RIGHT: THE PEDESTRIAN WALK  
INTERLOCKS OPEN SPACES TO THE  
MOSQUE COURTYARD.

of constructing a wall within which there is sufficient water, often supplied by means of a *qanat*, a non-mechanical method of bringing water from mountains and foothills to arid areas. Human resources can be focused on the creation of a concentrated universe of plant and animal life while ignoring the many hectares of land outside the walled garden. If any architecture is deemed necessary, it happens within this green universe. In other words, architecture is subservient to landscaping and comes into play as a design component in making the garden. This attitude is methodologically opposed to the current practice of landscaping, which is an afterthought, or, let us say, is used as *maquillage*, as the “make-up” of an architectural work.

There needs to be a closer link, indeed a marriage, between architecture and landscaping. In my career as an architect, I have never separated the two disciplines and often tried to play one against the other in order to arrive at a synthesis. By means of architecture, one can define and emphasise open and green environments in a vivid, comprehensible, and impressive way, as seen in traditional Persian gardens.

I believe under adverse climatic and cultural environments one should concentrate and reduce physical and human resources to a manageable level and avoid spreading the landscaping effort too thinly. In the