



Sociology of life and building in company town.

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ABSTRACT: When oil was discovered in the south of Iran, there appeared a great need to establish a city to handle the requirements of oil system. Industry and urbanization were brought to south-west Iran when large quantities of oil were struck there in the early years of this century. Abadan, with a two thousand year history yet neglected was chosen to be the base of oil procedures in Iran. Setting a dwelling space with the British architecture created a paradise in desert. The uniform houses with little backyards and red inclined roofs, and streets with the unique method of naming in which everything could be identified with a number were the first experience of a class society in which the people used to adopt a new life style similar to that of British and behave differently to show their dependence on imposed culture. The structure and architecture of the neighbourhoods were based on the job status. The urban design could allow a nuclear family to form in order to support an elite society. Reduction of privacy was attained through planting tendrils as the wall between the houses. The entertaining structures were prepared in the highest degree to please the people living in the extreme hot. All social and life requirements were provided in the neighbourhood to decrease the interaction with local people. Most interestingly, the first co-ed schools were opened in this setting to propagate the English culture. The formation of this society with its own architecture influenced the life and culture of local people, too. In some non-oil dependent sections, people tried to experience the English culture to have prerequisite of later belonging. This paper analyses the formation of new architecture and its relationship with the culture in Abadan and its social consequences in different aspects of urban life.

Introduction

What can be learned from architecture and urbanism in the fast-developing oil cities such as Abadan in the south of Iran shows a cultural change and life style variation. The native inhabitants familiarized with an imposed culture were forced to cope with the effects of these rapid urban developments to survive which could change their thoughts and world views. The transformations in the built environment, job hierarchy, leisure activities, and interactions with foreign inhabitants in a city like Abadan created a different hierarchy in urbanization in Iran. The material culture that emerged in these environments as a result of rapid developments to satisfy oil system requirements brought about an oasis in desert. The dwellings of the Iranian oil industry workers had a great influence on the evolving class cultures of twentieth-century Iran. Furthermore, conceptions of urban planning such as the "garden city," "city beautiful," and boulevards were first introduced to Iranians through the work of British architects. While focused on Abadan, this study seeks to provide a rich context for interpreting the modern history of spatial and cultural aspects of rapid urban and architectural development for planning and construction from the beginnings to the 1990s, and particularly the housing and planning forms adopted by the Oil Company and the life style variation. This took about sixty years until the war with Iraq changed the city in to a front. The relative destruction of the city and migration of people from the city interrupted the order and architecture of the city. The transfer of villagers to the city after the war was concomitant with the transfer of urban low and middle income people to occupy the official positions in Oil Company and the remained houses in the city. As the new culture was of low quality, the setting and arrangement of the city especially in English section underwent great upheavals. Most of the new occupants added a new room to the house for their hens and roosters and even goats. The grass yard became a place to raise poultry. The plants in the street became the best foods for sheep and cows which were bred in the gardens. The free-plant fences now separated the houses. The great drums were scattered in the garden to collect fresh water in the winter just the same as villagers do in the rural areas. The music nights with barbecue

changed in to hukka party .Again, a new architecture and consequently, a new culture emerged in which a reversed trend is changing architecture in favour of culture. The houses with great halls became partitioned to accommodate the increasing numbers of the family. The dialect and behaviour changed greatly from standard English-Persian and semi-English, respectively, into Arabic

Archaeology of company town in Iran

From a historical standpoint , Abadan was the heart of the oil industry in Iran. In many ways the history and experience of its creation is unique and fascinating. In the first place, it was the first thoroughly modern city in Iran. After the discovery of oil in 1908, within four years the foundations of Abadan were laid in practically unpopulated regions of Khuzestan. Abadan was a large mud flat island, situated in the estuary of Tigris-Euphrates-Karun rivers, at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The population of some twenty four thousand Bani-Kaab Arab tribesmen, tended sheep and cultivated date palms, while dispersed throughout the island in a number of villages . The oil company authorities began building Abadan with the sole purpose of transport, refining, storage, and export of oil. Soon, this town became the focal center of a new geography that transformed the landscape of Khuzestan and became the site of the concentration of people and labor power .In a short time, the newly founded city of Abadan became the home of a mixture of different people.

Abadan was in effect a colonial company town whose early development combined spacious bungalow compounds for British expatriate workers, barrack-like lines of huts for labour recruited , and a rapidly overcrowded ‘native town’ under local municipal control. A map of 1910 shows that the refinery was quickly established and an area was laid out for bungalows (Fig. 1). The first building to be erected was an iron structure lined with wood.

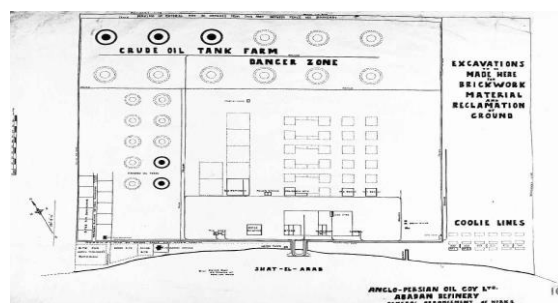


Figure 1. Abadan, the structure of houses

The ‘first pukka bungalow’ followed soon after: a brick building ‘constructed in the local style, and having a mat and “chandle” roof, that is, a roof constructed of poles of small diameter placed close together and overlaid with mats (made from date palm leaves) covered with earth’ . The upper part of this was used for senior staff, the lower for a general office and dispensary. After a few years this was replaced by ‘No. 1 Bungalow’, the

First building of any permanence in Abadan. Early maps show a simple distribution pattern (Fig. 2). The refinery – the main reason for making these maps – was represented as a grouping of tanks and other structures spreading out in regular formation from the side of the Shatt. The materials for the plant itself were shipped from Britain. Offices and other works buildings were positioned in the narrow strip between the refinery and the river.

Labourers lived in tents and mud huts in the barrack-like ‘coolie lines’ located to the southeast. The ‘bungalow area’, also known as Braim, bordered the refinery to its south-west. In the garden suburb of Bawarda (a neighbourhood in Abadan) a model solution was used to plan urbanization to represent ethnic and social harmony under the discreet paternal benevolence of the Company. As the key urban locus for the extraction of a valuable commodity from a dependent economy, Abadan had many of the characteristics of a European city . Demographically this involved the transformation of large numbers of rural people into an industrial proletariat. By 1910, the refinery had already been established on an area laid out for bungalows. The first building to be erected was an iron structure lined with wood. The first pukka bungalow followed soon after a brick building was constructed in the local style having a mat and chandle roof. Laborers lived in tents and mud hats in the barrack -like coolie –lines, located to the south – east. The British, bungalow area also known as Braim, bordered the refinery to its north-west. By the early 1970s Braim had become a subtropical Metro land, a prime suburban estate of low densities. From a sprinkling of buildings an extendable pattern of roads had developed, serving bachelor barracks (built in

1923) and large two-story dwellings for the more senior officials nearer the river. Typically these building countered the heat with thick walls, shutters and wide arcaded vernadachs. (Fig2)

For non-European labour Bahar and Farahabad were sited beside the Bahmanshir river; Ahmedabad and Bahmashir just east of the town; and Jamshidabad to the south-east. To the north-west an extension of Braim was laid out for European staff. All of these areas, apart from Jamshidabad and Ahmedabad, took a Garden Suburb form.

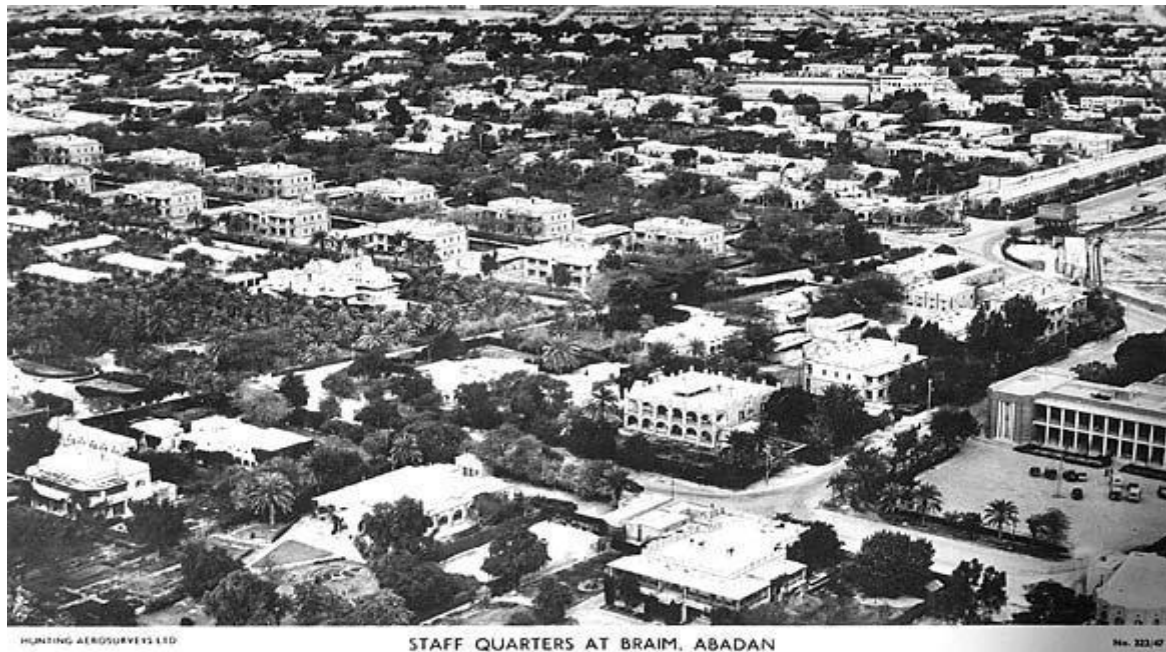


Figure 2. The layout of houses

It was part of the built environment of a colonial political economy: the planter's bungalow, part of a system of cash-crop production operated by representatives of a particular culture in which labour ('natives') lived in self-built huts and managers lived in an evolved culture-specific dwelling form known as a 'bungalow'. The planned new areas in Abadan were to be treated as dormitory estates effecting the dispersal and discipline of social pathologies. In origin and intention these estates go back to the late 1920s when the Company devised a scheme to answer the threat of social disorder posed by the overcrowded 'town'. This pressure-cooker effect, with the 'town' inhibited from expanding in most directions, inevitably calls to mind what happened both to the Indian areas of the old city of Delhi and the medinas in north African towns like Rabat and Casablanca . The planned solution in Abadan would take the form of 'nuclei of small townships in several (four or five) distinct areas, well separated from one another, and on Company leased in preference to State ground. A small township is more easily and efficiently controlled than a large one. . . Being far removed from the present town, activities within the latter will gradually wither'.

Contact between the main town and Braim was largely made via servant intermediaries. Housing was divided into three classes : fully furnished accommodation for British staff, and the few senior Persians; partly and unfurnished facilities for wage – earning labour, who lived in shanty towns like Kaghazabad. Racial segregation was exerted through zoning of residence. From the onset, Abadan was a frontier migrant town. Its initial population was mostly men who came from elsewhere, from diverse ethnic and regional backgrounds, in search of jobs and income. Their continued settlement there, their occupation, the organization of their material and cultural lives, and the socialization of their households in these new places in a sense created a new ethnicity, a new sense of social identity: that of being an Abadani . This new sense of identity took shape as this town was rapidly being constructed. For the new migrants settling in the radically new and alien places also meant a break from their previous social and spatial settings. As a result, in the two and a half decades from 1912 when Abadan had already taken its mature shape, its diverse and heterogeneous populations had undergone a generation of being subjected to and shaped by new modes of organizing and ordering of their cultural and material lives, profound changes in their collective private and family lifestyles.

The modernity that laid the foundations of the company towns distinguished Abadan, from the other historical Iranian cities. In Khuzestan, the Oil Company needed to attract its labor force to the

region from the very onset. Skilled personnel and managers came from Europe while simple laborers were recruited from local people with some specific training. The company had no choice but to house its workers. The choice of location for the founding of Abadan was dictated by the logistics of technical needs of the industry - meaning the extraction, transport, storage, refining, distribution, and export of oil and its derivatives - and not the social and environmental requirements of the staff and the workforce. Abadan was built in isolated and rugged locales, but eventually this geographic isolation itself became an important instrument for separating the workforce from their previous physical and social environments, and for moulding and shaping them. In the initial plans of Abadan, one can detect the traces of two different, but complementary influences, i.e., industrial urban design in Europe and America as well as in the colonies. This glaring contradiction within and between these spaces -between the formal and informal spaces, the legal and subversive, the ordered and disciplined and the chaotic and lively, rich and poor, modern and hybrid, controlled and repressed and anarchic and spontaneous - overtime came to define the character of the city. The formal space of Abadan consisted of several segregated neighborhoods, the residents of which were carefully assigned housing according to their job, rank in the company roster, and even race, nationality, and ethnicity. A rigid and inflexible hierarchy defined the neighborhood, street, alley, and social interaction. Senior European staff was housed in 'Braum' which consisted of large villas and bungalows set on green lawns, surrounded by parks and gardens and lined with English hedges, and built on lots averaging 1000 sqm, and 4.5 units per hectare. Workers' neighborhoods, such as Bahmanshir, Bahar, etc., were row houses with high walls and tiny courtyards, built in straight lines and wall to wall, averaging 120 sqm, with a density of 26 to 31 units per hectare. In between these extremes poles laid the middle and lower staff neighborhoods, such as Bawardeh, which were combinations of these two forms in terms of architecture, design, and scale. The Abadan Technical Institute, placed to the north-east and beyond the pipelines, was designed after Bawarda had been laid out. The Institute was established to train Iranians to fill graded posts. Its clocktower, an elegant monument to the new temporal disciplines, would have been visible for some distance, yet the Institute seems to have been deliberately not aligned with Bawarda's garden axis. Inevitably, this nearly-but not-quite alignment evokes those monuments of past Indian empires that New Delhi's axes pointed to but often, by virtue of geometric priorities, just missed.



Figure3. Abadan technical institute

The spatial discipline that laid out Abadan's urban design like a chessboard was a unique plan of urbanization. With the passage of time, the racial segregation that separated the spaces of routine interaction and daily life between Iranians and the English became less marked, in comparison to the occupational and class distinctions that served as the norms of segmenting city spaces. Despite all this, what truly set Abadan apart was the cities' glaring modernity, reflected in its unique architecture and design, but also in most other details of urban space and life. The city was the site of the first airport, motor vehicles, cinemas, technical schools, mixed schools (boys and girls, foreign and Iranian) leisure clubs, sports clubs, bus services, mass transports, luxury inns, well equipped hospitals, etc. in Iran and the region. At the same time, all these amenities were segregated for different social layers and classes. This system allowed the social position and status of each individual employed by the company to be public knowledge through his residential address, the means of transportation and the medical facilities he and his family were allowed to use, the country and sports clubs he was allowed to join, and the schools his children could attend. At the same time, because the company's internal organization was also to a large extent a meritocracy, and as each step up the career ladder translated into greater material privileges and social status, the workers were encouraged both to feel envious and to compete against each other, and to pursue individual and personal rather than collective benefits. Transforming urban amenities and city spaces into symbolic capital is one of the most effective instruments of controlling the population in these cities. The Company had to not only house its workers (initially there were no housing

available in these barren locales), but it also had to adapt this raw labor force to the rigorous and special demands of modern industry. It had to retain them, to keep them relatively satisfied or at least dependent on wage labor, but also docile. We can witness the reflection of all these goals in details of the urban design, in the different designed and organized spaces of entertainment and leisure, the types of walls surrounding the residences and their heights, the length and width of streets and alleys, the morphology of planned formal neighborhoods, the types of kitchens and bathrooms implemented in individual units. (Fig4) The walled-in row houses of the workers were designed to duplicate native architecture and a sense of privacy, rooted in 'Islamic values'. These neighbourhoods were replaced with modern apartment blocks, designed by French architects and urban planners, who also tried to incorporate 'native' and 'Islamic' values and norms in their constructions. In fact, far from reflecting the domestic architecture of the rural and tribal origins of the migrant laborers, these row houses were designed with two apparent purposes in mind: first, the mass production of a great number of cheap and durable houses and second, to directly intervene in the domestic space of the family and to modernize it. The tiny courtyards and high walls prevented air circulation, especially in the atrociously humid and hot summer months. The surprising fact was that non-dependent oil neighborhoods were trapped in the middle with the impenetrable walls established around. Differences of lifestyle were completely evident in the city. The streets of company-dependent neighbourhoods were cleaned and the workers cut the plants and trimmed the row of trees and flowers everyday while dirt and dust were observed in every alley of company-nondependent neighbourhoods.



Figure 4. the arrangement of a neighbourhood in oil company- dependent section

The monopoly ownership by the Company of the means of production, as well as reproduction is the main instrument of social control in company towns. In other words, both occupation and the source of income were in the monopoly of the company, as well as real estate, housing, and social services. The household unit, aside from being the smallest, collective social unit, plays a key role in many societies in shaping the 'individual', and in placing him/her within larger networks of social relations. The rigidly fixed residential architecture of Abadan, enforced by the Company who owned the real estate and housing stock, prevented the accommodation of large extended families, the basic unit of social life in the region. Nor did it allow the use of the domestic space for economic and productive activities, through the maintenance of livestock and chicken, the production of meat, dairy, and eggs, and vegetable garden plots. All these activities, quite widespread in the region up to this day, are crucial for making the household into an economic unit, despite their small scale, by providing income and food supplements. They also bestow status and a sense of identity upon the household, and provide it with relative economic autonomy and self-reliance. As importantly, these activities also happen to be the realm of the economic agency of children and especially women.

Overall, this domestic architecture promoted the nuclear family as its privileged unit, but it also altered gender roles within the household, as well as the other major division of labor between different generations. In this setting the adult male becomes the sole legitimate economic agent, in the sense of his productive activity being socially validated, through the labor market. The workplace is thus separated and set apart from the place of residence, and the result of his economic activity would return to the household in the form of a money wage or salary. The other consequence of this spatial division of labor is that the house becomes the exclusive domain of the wife/woman, but deprived of the economic and productive activities it previously allowed. At the same time, domestic space also becomes a boundary, between the private and the public domains, and thus a physical constraint for women who no longer can easily and routinely cross the porous boundaries of the household space. This spatial and gender division of labour, the new role assigned and imposed upon women which in many ways dramatically limited their social roles and, in short, this 'modernization' of the household which so characterized life in Abadan reflected directly the developments that were taking place in the capitalist West at about the same time. Contrary to the extended household, the 'modern' nuclear family, a form imposed by the domestic architecture of company towns (Fig 5), curtailed the number of children and other generations or relatives who could live under the same roof, primarily because of the shortage of space and the design of the house. Ordinarily, the only other generation who could reside in these houses were the children who, instead of participating in collective household productive activities, were sent out of the home to schools (vocational and regular) in order to replace their parents eventually at home, workshop, refinery, and oil field after several years of disciplined training and socialization. This modernization of the family, gender, and women has been a mainstay of 'modernity'. What distinguished Abadan was exponential growth, in spite and against the wishes of the Company, and their maturation into large and multifaceted cities which did come to produce diverse, autonomous, and cosmopolitan spaces and a vibrant urban culture and life.



Figure 5. The architecture of imposition for nuclear and isolated families

Public Space

Garden City ideals by Braim's clubby, vigorously outdoor life, and relaxed low densities were the foundations of a city for comfort which made 'a major conflict of philosophy existed between the garden city ideal of efficient, harmonious communal living and the segregation

Principles upon which colonial rule relied'. Bawarda's most curious feature, especially by comparison with New Delhi and Hampstead, was the absence of any climactic focus in the form of monumental buildings and, consequently, no overt public meaning to its processional routes, no visible authority. The wide boulevards and the grid pattern that characterized the formal space of Abadan distinguished it from other Iranian cities at the time. The formal public space of company towns differs from the historical model in several important respects: In Abadan, instead of long and narrow winding alleys forming a maze, the front doors of the row houses open onto either short, narrow, and straight alleys which abut onto large streets at both ends, or directly onto large avenues. In this way each house is set up as distinct from its neighbours, and separated from the neighbourhood, the intimate street life, and

ultimately from the workers' society. Any collective protest, or suspicious gatherings among neighborhood residents can be quickly detected, and each street, alley, and even neighborhood can be easily cordoned off from the others should the need arise. The assignment of housing by the Company, based on occupation and rank (and race, in the early days of British ownership), and the constant displacement of the personnel within the company hierarchy, made the forging and maintenance of lasting spatial solidarities difficult. Because the independent ability to choose one's residence is denied the workers seeking company housing, the formation of autonomous and spontaneous networks of solidarity in space by using common kinship, ethnic background, or geographic origins, are near impossible to form. In Abadan, the obsession to use urban space as an instrument of controlling the population can be readily detected in the details of the design neighbourhood and public spaces of the formal city. The motives followed in the urban design of Abadan, they argued, were not the conventions of urban planning, nor the price of land and economic calculation, but the separation and distinction of different areas of the city from one another by a central authority. It is self-evident that if different city neighbourhoods were constructed adjacent to each other the provision of common services and infrastructure would have been far cheaper due to the economies of scale. In fact, city neighbourhoods were built apart and separated by wide stretches of empty terrain, wide roads, pipelines, administrative and industrial facilities and, of course, the enormous bulk of the refinery itself. This imposed separation prevents easy intermingling and routine pedestrian interaction, as well as potentially dangerous collective congregation between separate city sections. Roads do not connect different city sections to traffic exchanges. Rather they end in several bottlenecks that allow the surveillance of all communication between different parts of the city. The boundaries of different neighbourhoods are marked by guard posts, and there are regular police stations near or at the entrance of workers' neighbourhoods. The Abadan Refinery was the monopoly owner of all land in the formal company town. It was responsible for organizing different sections of the city, as well as creating and maintaining the distinctions between its different parts. It was the force responsible for creating the segregated and hierarchic landscape of the city.

The distance and area between neighbourhoods was connected by narrow, company built roads, and rugged hills, left barren and undeveloped. Every action for building unauthorized hovels and houses was immediately confronted by the Company's bulldozers. Like Abadan, official Company areas were built separately from one another, and had only one narrow access road in and out. Neighbourhoods are designed either in circular pattern, or as parallel streets which are interconnected by perpendicular streets, but dead end on both sides cutting and isolating the neighbourhood with the world beyond, except thorough the single, easily guarded access road. Company neighbourhoods were segregated according to rank and status, set in separate places with different amenities and characteristics. The space of leisure and entertainment in Abadan was differentiated according to rank and class. Senior staff and managers had membership to the Central Club, and workers used Workers' Club. Only members and their guests had access to each club. The rest of the city's population, not employed by the Oil Company had no right to use company facilities. All these social clubs had more or less similar facilities, such as cinema, restaurant, cafeteria, swimming pool, ping pong, billiard, etc. The difference was not so much in the range of amenities as the quality and, more important, the prestige conferred by membership in each institution, which played an important role in bestowing symbolic status on individuals and their family. In Abadan even the company stores and types of 'ration' assigned to each member was distinguished by rank and social class.

Production of place as a contested process

Place is a social construct which both constitutes and is constituted by social relations. The production of place and the interpretation of its meanings are equally contested processes. People and institutions struggle over defining, using, and shaping space and place according to their individual and collective interests. The Company wanted to attract and maintain a labour force that would be at the same time competent, efficient, modern, and submissive. Company towns have been designed by using two contradictory as well as complimentary principles: The idea of general welfare and the assimilation of the labour force into the generic values of the 'middle class' and, on the other hand, the praxis of colonialism, both internal and external, in the form of a one sided domination over an alien and weaker region and people, for the main purpose of the extraction of their natural and human resources and abilities. The presence of both these principles can be detected in Abadan: The city was built in isolated region, away from any significant centers of population. Its designed physical and cultural space precipitated a break between the new and migrant population and its mostly tribal and rural background and surroundings. Various planned aspects of the city design and organization generated and maintained new norms, principles, and behaviours conforming to the needs of modern industry. In other words, even though the

Oil Company was not a 'colonial power' , nevertheless it both made free use of colonial practices and mechanisms, as well as relying on principles of corporate welfare policies. The standard of living, services, level of education and technical training, and the overall urban culture of Abadan exceeded the rest of the country for a long period. In Khuzestan the Oil Company created a wholly new and modern society.

Abadan soon witnessed the growth of a spontaneous city, with a 'native' architecture, bazaars, 'informal' residential and commercial neighbourhoods, illegal hovels and shanties, and especially forbidden places housing brothels, drug sellers, and smugglers who made the most of the location of the city on the international border. These subversive places grew across from the manicured lawns and hedges of fancy Company neighbourhoods such as Braim and Bawardeh. Workers' squatter neighbourhoods like Abolhassan, Ahmadabad, and Karun, were rapidly constructed next to formal Company compounds with fancier literary names such as Pirouz, Bahar, and Farahabad. The formal Company town's 'public' space was confined to clubs, sports fields, stores, and amenities that only employees of the Company had access to. In contradistinction, the informal Abadan city with its anarchic streets and constant and never stopping urban confusion and hubbub, its colourful stores, streets teeming with pedestrians and people until the wee hours of the dawn, presented a lively, adventurous, exciting, untamed and unsupervised public arena to all citizens, whether employed by the Company or not. The two cities confronted each other with striking contrasts: the formal city was affluent, comfortable, ordered, and staid. It was shaped by disciplinary powers of separation, distinction, ranking, and surveillance that kept its residents under constant control. The spontaneous and informal city was a public place, in the more accurate sense of the word. It was open, integrated, public and, at the same time, quite hectic and anarchic .

In these 'free zones' which did not belong to the refinery and laid outside its control and surveillance all strata of people inevitably worked, cohabited, and mixed together. A third of the population of the 'Bazaar' neighborhood and some 60% of residents of the notorious Ahmadabad were Company employees, who were forced to settle in these neighborhoods .In other words, the Company's efforts to mould and create an ideal society, fit to satisfy its needs was consistently subverted and ran into crisis as a result of the formation of these adjoining, visible, and accessible free zones. As a result of these tensions and the co-presence of alternative places the tight and controlled cast of the planned company town was continuously broken, making Abadan lively, a cosmopolitan place with a strong sense of identity and a sophisticated culture . Spontaneous civil institutions, informal networks of trade, guild, political, religious, and ethnic activities were always prominent and exceptionally active in Abadan until the Iran- Iraq war destroyed the city and turned it into a bride in black gown read for a life without partner.

War and post-war conflicts: architecture of chaos

The Iraqi invasion of September 1980 suddenly overshadowed other internal contradictions. More pertinent to our subject here, the Iraqi invasion led to the immediate physical destruction of Abadan , and the forced dispersal of the populations across the country as refugees. This forced and violent break in the history of these cities leads us to ask the legitimate question that if such a total destruction had not taken place in a major, strategic industrial city like Abadan would the course of Iran's history in the following two decades have taken another shape? The population of Abadan had a strong sense of identity rooted in a rich and somewhat unique history. Despite the repressive nature of the post 1953 non-archaic regime, this ability was manifested in the ability of Abadanis to form the nuclei of autonomous civil institutions, primarily trade unions, as soon as the opportunity presented itself again in late 1970s. Abadan and its citizens played a significant role in the revolution of 1979 and its victory. Its physical destruction during the Iran Iraq war and the forced dispersal of its population not only eradicated an important city but also severed a unique industrial and urban culture, a mature and advanced urbanity, and a human capital that had been accumulated over seven decades, from the physical space where it had been engendered. Today, after a decade of 'reconstruction', Abadan is only a shadow of its former self. Its population, which had reached 500 thousand on the eve of the Revolution, 8 years after the War (1997), was only 220 thousand. The war severely damaged urban infrastructure and , neighbourhoods, and palm groves around the city.

The process of post war reconstruction has been running into serious criticism by the residents . The activities of the refinery and oil industry are still limited and minimal. Many of the workers and staff are not native to the region. Many of the Abadanis who have returned because of their attachment to their city are dissatisfied and await retirement to settle elsewhere. The morphology and fabric of the city has been altered and its population, like the early years of its founding, contains many rural and tribal people, while the industrial labour market and the economic institutions no longer have the old ability and

resources to shape and influence the population, or to employ them. But the worst problem is that of the young generation of Abadanis who, for a significant part of their lives, have lived and grown up as refugees and migrants elsewhere and find contemporary Abadan both alien and alienating. The cultural continuity and the accumulation of place identity which gave such a unique character to this city, was violently severed at one point. The gradual metamorphosis of the city, from a migrant, industrial and class based space into an ethnic and tribal one can be easily detected in the dominant dress code on the streets, made of the distinctive tribal cloths, and in the proliferation of spontaneous housing constructions in hitherto forbidden and inaccessible areas. Reintroducing old customs and traditions in the city made a chaos form in the architecture and urbanization. The backyard garden of the houses became the grazing place of poultries which served to help family economy.

Conclusion

Life in Abadan led to undeniable and fundamental changes in the social life and the culture of its population. Consequently, Abadan had, on the one hand, a modern and authoritarian structure and organization, while on the other hand, thanks to the heterogeneity and energy of population, as well as the forbidding scale the city had reached despite the company's wishes and attempts, this modernity always remained conditional. This ongoing struggle meant that the geography of the city, as well as its identity, its culture, and the social and political aspirations and abilities of its component parts were continuously changing and being overhauled. The importance of Abadan in the history of modernization, contemporary urbanization, and modernity in Iran are undeniable. But, precisely for the same reason, the story of these cities cannot and should not be limited to the fate and the narrative of oil revenues alone. Instead, the crisis-ridden and troubled history and geography of these company towns must be rescued from oblivion, as every detail of their story holds precious lessons for the society's present dilemmas.

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