

# Introduction



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FOR AGGREGATE**

**H**OW does change happen? This question underlies the chapters collected in *Governing by Design*. From this basic query arise new accounts of the twentieth-century built environment that pursue a set of corollary questions: Who authors design? How does architecture participate in modernization? How does architecture govern?

Governing by design, this book suggests, is not simply a matter of monumental symbolism and space, state power and authority, imposed control and surveillance. This book instead sets architecture in relation to mundane matters: food, bodies, housing, markets, cities, and culture. How do we regulate basic aspects of our lives through design, such as the consumption of food and shelter? How do we manage the risks of modernization to our bodies and environments? How is culture produced by politics, planning, and architecture? How are we fashioned as citizens by our homes, cities, and heritage? Examining how issues of risk, regulation, consumption, and citizenship have played themselves out in architectural practices and projects from the 1880s up to the present in the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia, these chapters may help change the way we look at architecture and its history globally.

What links this book's contributions together is the idea of architecture governing conduct—mediating power—through networks and norms, frames of action and possibility that flow through all scales from the body to the home to the city to the globe, at the hands of not just the state but also individuals and institutions. The chapters are linked, in other words, by an engagement with “governmentality,” the concept that the philosopher Michel Foucault developed to describe the combination of protocols, rules, structures, and institutions through which our desire to be governed is cultivated and channeled. Rather than frame governance only through the activities of the state, Foucault and others have mapped an array of mechanisms that mediate power to regulate our conduct, encompassing everyday practices and mind-sets along with administrative protocols and organizational procedures.

Foucault developed his conception of governmentality through studies of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe, where states and nongovernmental institutions aggregated data to constitute knowledge frameworks and expertise profiles capable of managing populations by regulating their demographics, health, housing, environmental conditions, employment, social lives, and culture. This “administration of life” constituted a biopolitics that the sociologist Mitchell Dean has described as being “aimed at enhancing the lives of a population through the application of a norm.”<sup>1</sup> For Foucault, Dean, and others the goal of governmentality, and the *raison d’être* of the modern state, is to provide security to the processes of life—to tame risk, be it through social insurance schemes, food regulation, or housing norms.

Governmentality works less by the application of raw state power than through a multiplicity of heterogeneous public and private agencies, standards, forms of knowledge, effects, outcomes, and consequences that Dean has described as “mobile, changing, and contingent assemblages” continually “constructed, assembled, contested, and transformed.”<sup>2</sup> It operates not in the register of high culture, politics, and history, but rather in what the anthropologist Paul Rabinow, writing about French planning practices, has characterized as “a middle ground where social technicians were articulating a normative, or mid-dling modernism . . . pragmatic technicians seeking to find scientific and practical solutions to public problems in times of crisis.”<sup>3</sup>

For this book’s contributors, architecture is coextensive with the assemblage that is governmentality; we recognize it not only in the edifices that house and facilitate modern institutions but also in the organizational logics, processes, and systems that call them forth. This edited volume explores the complex and dynamic ways that forms of knowledge and regimes of practice emerge, are institutionalized, and are transformed. Take the concept of home. It can seem self-evident, something to be taken for granted. Conversely, it can be explained through totalizing theories of modernization and progress. Several of the chapters that follow address “home,” treating it instead as a multiple, mutable concept produced and reproduced in a range of contexts by specific agents, practices, ideas, and events.

For residents of the United States, citizenship and social standing have been intimately bound up with the forms of self-regulation built into norms of “home” shaped and contested by government policy, by the markets in credit, insurance, and other services as well as by the shelter press and other cultural media. For midcentury Iranians, domestic choices engaged in complex contestations among international Cold War politics, Western consumerism, traditional architectural morphologies, local leftist politicians, and the religious views of Shiite clerics. In Pakistan, meanwhile, “home” was conceived as a place where

the state's management of the built environment would be as ceaseless as the citizenry's transition to modernity.

An analytics of governmentality calls for methods of historical research and interpretation that often diverge from those that predominate in existing histories of twentieth-century architecture. The best recent compendiums on the subject are still today self-confessedly "largely a history of the masters" focused on famous "landmarks as emblematic of larger tendencies" in architectural culture.<sup>4</sup> In those accounts the goal of theorizing architectural modernism too often separates design from the process of modernization, treating modernity as a preexisting framework that design either exemplifies, confronts agonistically, or compensates for in the mode of a "coping mechanism."<sup>5</sup>

The chapters in this edited volume take a different tack. To reconstruct the ways architecture has participated in modern governmentality, they explore complex concepts of authorship and agency, focus on events and the contingency that characterizes them, and attend to the diverse projects and practices through which architecture has contributed to the formation of liberal power. To be sure, in reading through this book, you will encounter figures familiar from other accounts of twentieth-century architecture, including Louis Sullivan, José Luis Sert, and Buckminster Fuller. But you will also meet figures and subjects little discussed in previous architectural histories—from the Quincy Market Cold Storage Company, the American Public Health Association, and the Karachi Housing Authority to the economist John Maynard Keynes, the Ayatollah Khomeini, and the housing reformer Constance Bartlett Crane of Kalamazoo, Michigan. This reflects the authors' shared conviction that agency is complex; that authorship of the built environment is dispersed across multiple registers comprising not only architects and designers but also many other kinds of producers and consumers, along with a multitude of associations, institutions, and bureaucracies.

Complementing this expanded field of agents, or architectural subjects, is a revised conception of architectural objects. Rather than focus on singular buildings, monuments, and landmarks, these chapters develop close readings of architectural events—moments when architecture and design participated integrally in managing the changes associated with modernization. The salvage of Nile River Valley temples threatened by the Aswan Dam, the replanning of Havana, the relocation of food markets from central Paris to its suburbs—these and other events are moments of transition when architecture was called forth as the solution to a crisis induced by the process of modernization. By focusing on events, the book's chapters shift our attention from the avant-garde, and the many varieties of modernism that its members promoted, to the architectures that facilitated and emerged from broader social transformations.

Disaggregating architecture's subjects and objects in this way highlights not only the complexity of agency but also its fundamental contingency. Rather than affirming the continuity from architect's intention to realization in the completed building, or confirming master narratives of progress or conflict, these chapters emphasize the degree to which intention and outcome are separated by accidental confluences, redirected intentions, and unforeseen outcomes. Several contributions, in fact, address failures, points in the historical record when projects went unrealized. They suggest that plans, schemes, books, journals, objects, buildings, and technologies often emerge less from pure intentionality as out of negotiation with the radical indeterminacy of a given situation. These various designs are contingent assemblages through which the apparatuses of power take on architectural figure.

This edited volume, including the introduction, has been collaboratively developed by ten scholars trained in the history and theory of architecture. Although the ten chapters are individually authored, and by and large reflect research trajectories already under way at the collection's inception, they reflect a multiyear process of mutual interrogation and assistance. Coming together in intermittent symposia and working sessions, we helped one another to frame our subjects, present our findings, coordinate our questions, and rethink our results. Like the architectural events they analyze, each of the chapters that follow results from successive episodes of conversation and conceptualization, critique and revision. Collectively the chapters provide a view of the twentieth century from the perspective of architectural history—not an architectural history of static objects, individual designers, and disciplinary autonomy, but rather an account of how architecture participated in the political, economic, and cultural management of change.

What then can a collection of architectural histories spanning from the 1880s to the present teach us about modernization in general? Historical accounts of the past century identify certain unifying themes: great catastrophes along with intense, intermingled hopes and fears for the future; capitalism's confrontation with socialism, plus its golden age in the twentieth century's third quarter; increasing government control over economic life; the loss of cultural memory; and urbanization and globalization.<sup>6</sup> Tracing broad chronological and geographical arcs, the chapters in *Governing by Design* feature a diversity of material intersecting these themes.

In part one, "Food, Shelter, and the Body," four chapters, presenting material from the first four decades of the twentieth century, show how basic aspects of human life came under various regulatory practices and regimes, produced symbiotically between states and other social and economic groupings. Michael Osman gives us the pioneering cold storage facilities of turn-of-the-twentieth-

century Chicago and Boston, which helped produce new habits of buying and assessing the risks of modern, commodified food. Jonathan Massey presents a history of American domestic design through the lens of evolving mortgage practices, how architects and promoters since the 1920s have adapted plans, technology, styling, and financing to the expectations and limitations of mortgaged home ownership. Daniel M. Abramson's chapter on obsolescence traces the concept's development from 1920s office buildings to 1930s cities as a dominant public health and planning paradigm for comprehending and managing change in the built environment. The obsolescence paradigm resulted in postwar urban renewal projects like the infamous demolition of Boston's West End neighborhood. John Harwood's chapter shows how the 1930s invention of ergonomics designed the human body's relationship to modern machine environments—on the factory floor, in wartime, and in space. This resulted not only in today's commonplace architectural design standards but also in the governance of ourselves as always and everywhere in need of protection from environmental risk, or "man as target" in the industrial designer Ernst Neufert's apt, chilling phrase for our age of carpal tunnel and sick building syndromes.

In these chapters by Osman, Massey, Abramson, and Harwood, architecture's role was not to create monumental objects symbolizing order and stability but to research and design norms for food, shelter, community, and bodies. Design would help govern conduct not primarily through representation but by engaging a whole range of subjects—businessmen, architects, policy makers, and citizens—in forms of knowledge formation and lived practices whose ultimate goal was the mitigation of risk in a modernizing society. In other words, what takes place in the events revealed in these chapters was the recognition, assessment, and management of risk. In them we see various actors facing up to the fearful consequences of modernization and using design in attempts to control the future.

These techniques, norms, and practices of design, all adumbrated by 1940, were thus set to be implemented and expanded in post-World War II reconstruction efforts, creating a framework for the long period of stability and prosperity in the capitalist West that stretched roughly from midcentury into the 1970s. What this book's history of architecture from 1900 to 1950 shows us in detail—and thus how architecture teaches history—are the manifest ways that regulations of risk were complexly produced, selected, and adapted from the levels of state and economy down to the intimate scales of body and home, where history is directly lived. The regimes of risk regulation that emerged to propel and stabilize the postwar period emerged out of a whole range of contingent circumstances in the previous forty years. The implicit argument in these chapters is that you can't understand postwar stability without comprehending

the prewar history of governing by design, through the regulations of risk in cold storage food warehouses, mortgaged home ownership, urban obsolescence, and bodily ergonomics.

In part two, “Global States and Citizens,” chapters by Timothy Hyde, Pamela Karimi, and M. Ijlal Muzaffar explore how governance by design worked variously in the period between 1940 and 1960 outside of the leading capitalist nation-states. Hyde explains how links between midcentury Cuba’s constitution writing and cultural debates found expression in urban planning, so that a Harvard law professor’s proposal for Cuba of “an impermanent constitution” helps explicate the traditionalism of José Luis Sert’s modernist Plan for Havana. Within this plan, gridded streets and courtyard houses constituted a kind of built constitutional framework—urban planning tools for governing citizenship. In Karachi, Pakistan, as Muzaffar’s chapter explains, the state forcefully intertwined design and governance, producing with foreign expert assistance standardized housing schemes to acculturate refugees to modern urban living.

At the same time, the state projected these urban plans as deliberately open-ended so as to ensure the state’s own long-term role coordinating the population’s cultural identity conceived of as permanently in transition, permanently modernizing, and so in permanent need of active state planning and governance. The top-down governance through design of culture in transition also features in Karimi’s chapter on postwar Iranian domesticity. Here, significantly, a bottom-up history emerges of resistance and redirection by Iranian leftists, Shiite clerics, and everyday citizens toward officially sanctioned American modernization. This demonstrates that governing by design can be a two-way street, that local actors can within an overarching field of action still make choices and produce alternatives for the design and governance of their cultural identities and conduct.

In examining midcentury constitutional urbanism in Cuba, domestic design in Iran from the 1950s on, and refugee housing in Pakistan circa 1960, these chapters trace ways that European and American design norms interacted with local political, cultural, and social circumstances. From these close studies, what emerges is the agency and particularity of the local. Whether it is Cubans in the 1940s constructing their own intermingled cultural, urban, and political identities; or Iranians of various political and religious stripes producing complexly hybrid domestic paradigms; or the Pakistani state deploying Western planning tactics for immediate political purposes, the overarching impression is of local actors carving out distinctive options and solutions within and yet independent from the larger, international Cold War framework. What architectural history teaches here is the malleability of ostensibly universal norms, the contingency of local outcomes when it came to governing by design at the level of the city

and the home, and therefore the weakness of totalizing explanations of the Cold War period, seen from the high altitude of international superpower relations.

What also starts to emerge from these chapters on the midcentury is the primacy of culture as a category of governance by design, transmitted globally by European-American expertise, coming into contact with strongly defined local, national situations. In each instance—Cuba, Iran, and Pakistan—the historians’ theme of the twentieth century’s loss of cultural memory figures importantly. Design is called upon to mediate between past, present, and future, whether in the form of the Cuban *cuadra*, the Iranian living room, or the permanently transitional Pakistani housing estate. What these specific architectural histories teach history—that twentieth-century historiography perhaps overlooks—is that memory was never actually lost, but rather constantly and dynamically being reworked and rewoven, by various actors with conflicting agendas, into designed formations that strove to hold the present in symbolic and symbiotic relationships with the past and future. These contributions suggest that this intensive governance by design of culture may be both the result and the cause of broadly felt anxieties about cultural memory loss. The processes of reworking cultural memory, through various composite design strategies, in and of itself produced distance rather than proximity with the past.

The dynamic play mediated by design between culture, memory, and identity in the postwar period was not only localized in so-called developing nations like Cuba, Iran, and Pakistan. It also figured prominently at the international scale and within the Western metropole. These are the themes proposed in part three, “Engineering and Culture,” in chapters by Lucia Allais, Meredith TenHoor, and Arindam Dutta that carry the story into the 1960s and 1970s and toward the present. Allais’s account of UNESCO’s salvage operation of twenty-two ancient Nile Valley Nubian temples threatened by the Aswan High Dam shows how a multinational technocratic design operation internationalized local cultural memory into politically neutral museum spaces of decontextualized monumental objects. Allais’s chapter discusses universal heritage designed as antidote for global modernization and the sharp edge, it might be argued, of later United Nations–sanctioned interventions on nation-state sovereignty, from Serbia to Libya, in the name of universal human values and international community cohesion. TenHoor’s chapter returns to the theme of food in her account of the midcentury Paris market rebuilding campaign. She adds the extra ingredient of cultural memory, so the loss of the old monumental Les Halles wholesale market, exported to the imageless, hi-tech, network structures at suburban Rungis was felt as profound trauma on the city’s identity: food not merely as biological necessity or capitalized commodity but as cultural memory.

That the Les Halles neighborhood would be compensated with the Centre Pompidou cultural palace, designed as a spectacle of hi-tech infrastructural architecture, and the old market itself replaced by a shopping mall are ironies hardly lost on TenHoor.

Allais's and TenHoor's chapters use architectural history to teach history how the traumatic effects of modernization—be they urban or hydroelectric—could be ameliorated in design by compensatory monumental objects produced not crudely by brute, symbolic state power but more or less consensually through technocracy and culture. Thus by the 1970s, honed techniques of regulation and governance by design had achieved new levels of competence and conciliation, capable of using architecture to ameliorate at the levels of culture and consumerism the consequences of modernization and commodification. In this manner, “soft” governance by design arguably helped maintain stability and security, at local and international levels, as the world entered a period of economic crisis after 1973.

Arindam Dutta's chapter on the economist John Maynard Keynes, the engineer Ove Arup, and contemporary architectural spectacle brings the story up to the present. Dutta shows how the current neoliberal world order represents a fulfillment of Keynes's aesthetic-economic vision of the 1930s in which thrift and scarcity are superseded by pleasure, freedom, and risk. This is embodied architecturally by the consumerist Arup-engineered spectacles worldwide—from the Sydney Opera House to London's South Bank. The achievement of Dutta's far-ranging chapter is to show how design can be entangled within political economy, made to offer up culture in the service of capitalist urban redevelopment, and how such duties govern the professional identities of architects and engineers.

What does this collection of architectural histories say about the twenty-first century? Dutta's contribution implicitly argues that globalization in economics and architecture is not an inevitable stage of capitalist development but rather one produced in theory and practice across multiple disciplines. By showing us the historical construction—the design—of such basic architectures as food, home, culture, and the body, not to mention the broader built environment, *Governing by Design* points to the fundamental contingency not only of history but also of the present and future. Recognizing that modernization has not been the ironclad product of authorial intention or historical inevitability or totalizing theories of modernism but the contingent consequence of entangled agencies, we recognize the future, too, as not ironbound but rather like the past, open to accident, manipulation, and reconfiguration.



## Notes

1. Mitchell Dean, *Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society* (London: Sage, 1999), 99, 102.
2. Dean, *Governmentality*, 26.
3. Paul Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989; reprinted, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 13, 16. For architecture and governmentality, also see Stephen Legg, *Spaces of Colonialism: Delhi's Urban Governmentalities* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2007).
4. Alan Colquhoun, *Oxford History of Art: Modern Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9; and Elizabeth A. T. Smith, "Re-examining Architecture and Its History at the End of the Century," in *At the End of the Century: One Hundred Years of Architecture*, edited by Russell Ferguson (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), 23.
5. Sarah Williams Goldhagen, "Coda: Reconceptualizing the Modern," in *Anxious Modernisms*, edited by Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Réjean Legault (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 302.
6. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Extremes: A History of the World, 1914–1991* (New York: Pantheon, 1994); Michael Howard and Wm. Roger Louis, eds., *The Oxford History of the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Global History: Interactions between the Universal and the Local* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); and Jeremy Black, *The World in the Twentieth Century* (London: Longman, 2002).