



Road, Housing and Urban Development
Research Center

New Towns-Promises towards sustainable Urban form

Form 'Shushtar-No' to "Shahre javan Community"

Mohammad Reza Shirazi

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Mohammad Reza Shirazi**

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Mohammad Reza Shirazi

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In fall 2010, during my travel to study some works of Kamran Diba in Ahwaz and Shushtar, Iran, I visited the Shushtar New Town (Shushtar-No) complex. Designed and only partially implemented some 35 years ago, the future of Shushtar-No is vulnerable despite its progressive ideas and architecture, leading me to be curious about the reasons behind its current disastrous condition. There were some observable commonalities between this project and the Shahre Javan Community Pilot Project in Hashtgerd, part of a research project conducted at TU Berlin in a close cooperation with Iranian partners and different TU- or Berlin-based chairs and research institutes. Thus I decided to present my observations in a Jour Fixe meeting with the members of the project. The project members showed great interest and curiosity in internationally designed and realized residential complexes from around the world, and I was commissioned by Professor Pahl-Weber to develop my report into a research study. The results of this study are now presented as a separate volume in the Young Cities Research Paper Series.

For the publication of this book, I am grateful to Professor Pahl-Weber who provided me with suggestive and helpful comments and kindly agreed to write a preface for this book. I am also thankful to the Project Center and Professor Schäfer, as well as to the editorial of the Young Cities Research Paper Series, foremost Holger Ohlenburg whose support and comments helped me a great deal. A special thanks goes to Philip Wehage and Sebastian Seelig who both read the manuscript, giving me helpful suggestions and feedback. Last but not least, I am grateful to Kamran Diba for giving permission to reproduce pictures of his works in this book.

M. Reza Shirazi

Berlin, October 2012

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Preface

Can New Towns serve as a relief for megacities? This question has historical roots in urban development and has become very meaningful for the future development of megacities. The International New Towns Institute held a conference in December 2012 called 'New Towns | New Territories' which addressed new cities in a very literal way and discussed innovative models of urban development practice (INTI 2013). This question has also been addressed in research projects on future megacities in the region of Tehran and Karaj. Iran has a long history of New Town development. The actual question is: how to develop a New Town that is energy-efficient, affordable, and attractive? One of the main obstacles of New Town development is that people prefer living in the older, larger towns.

One way to deal with this question is to analyze the main elements of an existing New Town, examining both the planning strategies and urban design. This is the contribution of the BMBF funded research project "Young Cities—Developing Urban Energy Efficiency".

"The establishment of new towns in Iran goes back to the 1930s with sporadic examples, but it was institutionalized in the late 1980s with the establishment of the 'New Towns Development Corporation' [NTDC] by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. The NTDC has already built 20 new towns in a relatively short period" (Etessam 2005, p. 8). New Town development had been seen as an answer to the challenge of fast growing urban centers. A comparison between British and Iranian development of New Towns ends with the conclusion that "building new towns has been a historical trend, to colonize land, to develop an alternative and to manage growth. As we have also seen, there are successes and failures associated with this approach. It can create local social integration, it can be a vehicle for managing growth and social distinctions, while also generating wider social fragmentation. It can be a short-term solution, while

in the long term it can also become a problem itself if not given proper services and maintenance" (Madanipour 2005, p. 80).

It is a scientific challenge to compare two New Towns developed in very different contexts, with different political systems, urbanization patterns, resource efficiency challenges, and cultures. The criteria for the comparative analysis must be applicable, the context must be explored. In his post-doc work in the research team for urban planning and ar-