

Tabanlıoğlu Architects, Dogan Media Center, Ankara, Turkey, 2008
 Built to house both the TV channels and newspaper of one of Turkey's principal media groups, the architects aimed to express the openness of communication through a transparent mass, punctuated by perforated aluminum panels on the facade – an updated traditional latticework screen.



Tens of thousands of architectural students in Iran are looking for good models and sources of inspiration to be able to build a better tomorrow. Appropriate influences and built examples are already within their reach. They need only to understand the right balance between their own vision and the means of realizing it before starting to take responsibility for the future.

Iranian people, as clients and users of architecture, compare themselves to Turkey and the UAE, their two immediate neighbours (which they visit most), which are marked by two different approaches to architectural production. In Turkey, the economic boom, professional capacity in the construction sector and large number of universities has created a local knowledge that is exported internationally. In Dubai and other Gulf states the ambitious building boom is dominated by foreign designers and builders, and in some cases used mainly by foreigners. Foreign architects and construction companies do not build in Iran (except for a few recent exceptions) and the lack of vision and constraints on public projects rarely give architects the freedom to explore and express their creativity. The struggle between a search for a new imagined identity and ruthlessness market forces has made the urban scape characterless in most Iranian cities. One of the only areas in which high standards have been achieved in the last two decades is restoration and conservation. However, today there is new hope for a new architecture in Iran. A younger generation of Iranian architects are producing better designs, especially for the private sector. Established architects have been given the opportunity to build new diplomatic buildings in many capitals of the world as part of an ambitious governmental programme to change the image of Iran abroad. (See pp 86–7, for instance, for Hadi

quality of the work was questionable. Architects who remained in the country were confronted with new challenges and demands to create, mostly for public projects, an architecture that represented the 'true' Islamic identity of Iran. On one hand, Iran's politics in the last 30 years have isolated the country from the Western world, resulting in less commercial, academic and touristic exchange; on the other hand, for the first time in Iran's history, an important number of its population have migrated around the globe. The connection between this diaspora with their families and friends back home has created a widespread interaction with the world that did not exist in the country prior to the revolution. From a population of 50 million in 1979, only some 200,000 lived abroad at the time; today that number is more than 3 million. Although satellite TV and foreign media are forbidden in the country, thanks to the Internet and the growing number of media-savvy, educated youth Iranian society is aware of, and well versed in, global movements of ideas. While symbols of globalisation are not to be seen in Iranian cities – there are no international hotel chains, McDonald's or Starbucks, and most multinational corporations (IBM, Microsoft) are absent due to the US boycott – there are local versions of everything, even in the most remote small cities.