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Re: application by Ali Javid for The Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Institute of Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto, to undertake project– ‘ **Archaeology, heritage, and Architecture; ; cultural agents for the East-West dialogue The Cold war and the Italian cultural diplomacy in Iran, Egypt and Turkey (1947-1991)**’

Dear Scholarship Committee

I write on behalf of Mr. Ali Javid in support of his application for an Elahé Omidyar Mir-Djalali Postdoctoral Fellowship in Iranian Studies at the University of Toronto. Having been Ali's PhD supervisor for three years, I cannot recommend him highly enough.

Ali came into the PhD with about eight years of part and full-time teaching and research experience at the School of Architecture of the University of Mashhad. Since graduating, he had also a successful and rewarded career as an architectural practitioner-designer and university lecturer as well as convening an innovative architects' forum in Mashhad. Thus, he was far from the usual postgraduate researcher, but brought to his studies years of thinking deeply about the nature and history of his profession, and of architectural pedagogy which, for him, was impacted by the violent disruptions and social turmoil of the Islamic Revolution. His doctoral project, which will be submitted for examination this year, builds upon his reflection on this background, charting the innovations and transformations in architectural pedagogy in Iran before and after the revolution, drawing out the national and transnational links and networks that informed these changes, such as the desire of national and international actors to establish cultural connections, notably the exchanges between Iran and Italy in the 1970s, and links to revolutionary movements before and after the revolution. One persistent theme is the way competing interests drew upon the architectural legacy of the country in support of their differing agendas. Thus, for example, there was an emphasis upon culturally appropriate housing, not just among the religious conservatives, but also, ironically, among members of the radical left. Both groups drew upon the "village" as a cultural lodestone for new projections of cultural identity. Theoretically, his dissertation takes on an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing upon research in the fields of political science, social sciences and education pertaining to Iran, through which he is able to demonstrate the linkages and networks pertaining to the relationship between socio-political developments and architectural education in Iran. His approach is far from parochial. Instead, he is intent on revealing how local and global networks interconnect (and during periods of radical disruption disconnect). Through this perspective, his dissertation has been able to open up new ground in the relationship between pedagogy and politics, both In Iran, but also elsewhere, such as the situation in 1960s and 1970s Italy during struggles between Left and Right, and in America in schools such as Howard University, with its connections to the black rights movement, and its embrace of postcolonial movements in the Third World. The products of his research are already appearing in published research, such as two chapters from his thesis, “Melli University and the Dynamics of Architectural Education in 1960s Iran” (with Ali Mozaffari), and “'Pedagogy for all': Howard University and architecture pedagogy for the Third World in the 1970s” (in collaboration with myself). Both articles have been accepted for publication. The dissertation, in summary, opens up new ground in the role of architecture schools in social movements in the 1960s to 1980s, both in the reform of architectural curricula and in the projection of social utopias. Previously unpublished episodes in the collaboration of leading international architects and intellectuals and their Iranian counterparts will substantially add to the richness and complexity of Iranian architectural studies of this period. It is anticipated that the dissertation will be submitted for examination in early 2022.

Ali has discussed and developed his proposed topic for a post-doctoral research project with me: ‘From Archaeology to Architectural pedagogy: The Cold war and the Italian cultural diplomacy in three historical centers in Islamic cities: Cairo, Isfahan and Istanbul in the 1970s’, which compares three instances of collaboration in the period of the 1970s between the Italian cultural organization ISMEO (Associazione Internazionale di Studi sul Mediterraneo e l'Oriente) and cultural authorities in Iran, Egypt and Turkey, centring on the cities of Cairo, Isfahan and Istanbul. This collaboration, centring on the export of expertise in architecture, planning and heritage assessment and conservation, as well as cultural events such as exhibitions and visiting lecturers such as Ludovico Quaroni, building upon connections that had been established between Italian professionals and academics and Iranian graduates from leading Italian universities. Ali's proposed study will draw out these links and connections, and their consequences, while exploring how they gave rise to new, and productive forms and (utopian) imaginations. Ali is keen that one outcome of this project will be a traveling exhibition that reveals this dynamic and transforming network of cultural centres and peripheries.

I wholeheartedly endorse Ali and an extremely worthy candidate for one of your post-doctoral fellowships. I think his project is fascinating, and he has already connected with many actors from the period he is studying who have actively encouraged him to pursue it. I also think that it will make a significant contribution to Iranian architectural history studies at your university.

With Regards

Dr. Nigel Westbrook

