

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SHOPPING BEHAVIORS AND ITS SPATIAL CONFIGURATION IN AL-KHOBAR; MALLS VERSUS SOUQS

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**Abstract**— This paper intends to put forward the nature of the relationship between the shopping behaviors and shopping spaces with specific reference to the city of Al-Khobar in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia. It elucidates the relationship between differences of traditional shopping spaces from contemporary shopping places and differences of traditional behaviors of shopping from contemporary behaviors based on the methodological observation of the behavior of the shoppers within both types of shopping places. Starting with an overview of the evolution of the typology of shopping spaces in historical context, the paper investigates the social dimension of shopping activity and defines the shopping spaces as a reflection of social behaviors associated with the cultural context. The paper, then argues the impacts of global economy on the transformation of both the shopping behaviors of individuals and societies as well as those of shopping building typologies. The study develops a specific methodology to observe the behaviors and spaces, and analyze their correlations.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In this study, it is of prime interest to reveal the relationships between the morphological aspects of the traditional town centre and the social attributes of the civic life in the city with particular reference to the shopping malls in Al-Khobar. The history of communal life and of human settlements has always been associated with the history of shopping. Traditional shopping districts have continuously been vibrant public realms utilized by all the parties of city. Commercial districts set a stage for social interactions, and enhance civic communication. Nevertheless, social harmony and unity observed in traditional societies have been fragmented along with socio-economic changes particularly following the Western impacts such as; capitalization, modernization, globalization. Consequently, today's shopping places are dislocated towards the outskirts of traditional town centers in majority of cities. Hence, old town centers are neglected causing them not only to lose their value as

traditional spaces enhancing public interactions, but also to dilapidate. Therefore, morphological characteristics that maintain the unity between shopping activity and social fabric in traditional shopping space needs to be clarified. Accordingly, strategies and policies could be developed to acquire authenticity and deserved grandeur of this heritage. Along this purpose, morphological characteristics required for revitalizing traditional shopping spaces of Al-Khobar will be analyzed in this research. Besides, it is aimed to develop contemporary restoration, urban conservation and renewal proposals for rehabilitating the impairment of the unity among *urban space-shopping place-social fabric*.

Al-Khobar, an important town of Saudi Arabia due to the establishment of Aramco Headquarters as the largest oil producing company, which has been the flagship of regional economic development, is deliberately chosen for this case study because it is gradually dissociated from the traditional qualities of 'shopping places with social attributes' along with the latest movement of globalization. Moreover, shopping activity and daily life in town centre, displays a chaotic state, which is a typical indicator of both the physical deterioration in urban form and that of the negative change in public life. Today, however, new shopping spaces (*malls*) have the tendency to move outside the city leaving the traditional shopping spaces (*souqs*) in the town centre with their own destiny to be occupied and used by migrants and minorities only. This development usually ends up with the dilapidation of shopping spaces in traditional town centers. These spaces gradually lose their social attributes under the pressure of *vehicular traffic* and *dense urbanization*. Briefly, one cannot fail to notice that shopping spaces in the town centre of Al-Khobar have been gradually deviating from spatial characteristics and social attributes of traditional shopping places, and thus shopping capacity has been profoundly declining in these areas. However, one must also note that it is plausible to conserve and revitalize the public realm in the town while creating profitable shopping spaces at the same time. This can be achieved simply by the rehabilitation of the break in the *unity of urban space – shopping space*. Squares and streets as the components of the urban image of the

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district still seem to sustain the potential for being a “shopping place with social attributes” with their morphological characteristics, no matter how much their function and forms in the traditional tissue have become nearly unperceivable.

The main problem area defined in this paper is the major decline of the shopping capacity in downtown city centre as well as a significant loss of traditional taste of “shopping as a social ritual” in the contemporary shopping malls rapidly surrounding the city. The objectives of this study can be listed as follows;

1) To identify the salient morphological features of traditional shopping areas (*souqs*) that enable and enhance civic life of the urban realm in Al-Khobar.

2) To identify the unique morphological characteristics of contemporary shopping areas (*malls*).

3) To observe the human behaviors regarding shopping activities in both traditional shopping areas (*souqs*) and contemporary shopping areas (*malls*).

4) To compare the morphological aspects as well as observed behaviors in both types of shopping areas, and thus, to derive conclusions regarding associations between consumer behaviors and spatial configuration in the city of Al-Khobar.

#### **Theoretical Background of the Relationships between Shopping and City Center**

The history of communal life and of human settlements has always been associated with the history of shopping. Despite the gender segregation as a cultural characteristic in societies like Saudi Arabia, traditional shopping districts have continuously been vibrant public realms utilized by all the parties of city. Commercial districts set a stage for social interactions, and enhance civic communication. Nevertheless, social harmony and unity observed in traditional societies have been fragmented along with socio-economic changes particularly following the Western impacts such as; capitalization, modernization, globalization. Consequently, old town centers have become neglected with new shopping places being moved outside the centers.

This paper is an attempt to conduct a comparative analysis regarding the shopping behavior and associated spatial formations both in traditional (*Souq*) and contemporary shopping areas (*Malls*) with reference to the specific case of Al-Khobar. It is intended to unveil the relationships between the morphological aspects of the traditional town centre and the social attributes of the civic life in the contemporary city with particular reference to the shopping districts in Al-Khobar. As the existing literature puts forward, commercial districts set a stage for social interactions, and enhance civic communication. However, social harmony and unity of traditional societies have been lost to a great extent along with socio-economic changes particularly with aforementioned global impacts. Consequently, traditional shopping spaces (*souqs*) are becoming unfavoured because

they are accommodated by migrants giving raise to social issues such as; increase in crime, unemployment, immoral conduct of daily life in public (urban) realm. Al-Khobar exhibits a good example for such transformations with rapidly spreading construction of major shopping centers and deteriorating downtowns. Moreover, shopping activity and daily life in town centre, displays a fragmented state, which is a typical indicator of both the physical deterioration in urban form and that of the negative change in public life. Consequently, it is aimed to develop a new methodological basis for formulating cultural and spatial transformation of shopping spaces through time. The research is conducted in four successive stages; firstly survey, secondly questionnaire, thirdly cognitive mapping, and then finally analysis and evaluation. Furthermore, the results of this study are intended to constitute the principles of future urban-architectural interventions which can bring vivacity back to the civic life in the urban context. Therefore, it is important to analyze the transformation of traditional shopping spaces, and derive coherent principles about spatial and morphological characteristics in order to assert a civilized identity of the 21st century city.

At this point, it is of interest to briefly review the existing corpus of knowledge on shopping and its relation to human behavior. The relationships between the morphological aspects of the traditional town centre and the social attributes of the civic life in the city have always been of major concern for scholars in architecture, urban planning and conservation {[1], [2], [3], [4]}. Indeed, shopping spaces have always been the very hub of the public realm throughout the ages since the history of shopping has been the history of human settlements and of communal life. Therefore, traditional shopping places have usually been vibrant places, and been utilized by all the parties of city. Shopping places of traditional town centers not only set a stage for social interactions, but also support and enhance communication amongst the citizens of the city. Nevertheless, conditions and context of the current age displays a totally different character. This state is particularly crucial for traditional societies because they have neither fully appropriated nor benefited from the material conditions of this era yet [5]. Despite, they have to cope with its outcomes at the peril of their traditional values and humane assets. In fact, social harmony and unity once observed in these societies have been transformed with socio-economic changes particularly after the Western influences [6,7]. Consequently, today’s shopping places have become quite dislocated towards the outskirts of cities, and thus, town centers have become extremely neglected {[8], [9], [10]}. Such a level of neglect has inevitably caused these traditional spaces to lose their value as spaces enhancing public interactions and to dilapidate {[11], [12]}.

#### **Theoretical Background of the Relationships between Shopping and Life Processes**

Contrary to E. Said's [13] sharp division of the phenomena as Occidental and Oriental, de Landa [14] argues contemporary western philosophy and history as being influenced, and even, shaped by Asia, China in particular, and Islamic countries. He further emphasizes the economy and the *market* as the major actors in shaping the cities and thus cultural geography throughout history. In this light shed by de Landa, the ongoing transformation in Middle Eastern countries, with particular reference to Saudi Arabia, and their reflection on shopping types, behaviours as well as corresponding socio-physical and spatial layouts is of interest so as to understand the dual and concurrent processes of commercial & social activity performing upon the urban realm. In this context, he explains urban history as a history of flow of organic materials that support urban life. He comprehends urban-architectural morphology of cities as mineralisation or crystallizations of all materials and energy flows (including societies) at a critical stage of concentration. Thus, cities can be conceived as markets in which aforementioned flow is organized, controlled and materialized. De Landa's view of cities paves the grounds of the context to examine the role of shopping (behaviour and spaces) in the (trans)formation of urban settings. Particularly, the cases selected in this study from the city of Al-Khobar in Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia clearly illustrate this argument. Study of shopping studies in the city reveals the links between different processes operating on the city. The next section establishes a framework for understanding the relation of these flows with architectural setting, and provides a series of perspectives to evaluate different shopping (*material flow*) types and their architectural settings (*crystallized shells*). The paper examines the interaction between human behaviour and physical environment as a means to understand and to interpret each component via its counterpart. It also evaluates shopping spaces as the places of everyday life which shapes the urban morphology at micro-scale.

Regarding the relation between human behaviour and physical environment, it is very well known today that both reciprocally influence each other. Massey [15] asserts this point as "space is socially constructed while the social is spatially constructed". Therefore, behavioural aspects of architectural or spatial typologies should be carefully examined particularly when architecture is seen as a reflection of society and vice versa. In this regard, shopping spaces are inevitably real places of change and exchange [16]. Yet, this capacity for intensity suggests further ramifications when conceived from behavioural and perceptual viewpoints. Various cases prove shopping activity to be one of the typical indicators of the local environment-behaviour relationships [17]. Systematic study of shopping spaces shows that shopping and social life is highly integrated [18]. These places are not only functional formations where needs are met and relevant economic transactions are realised but also

are the public realm itself [19]. Regarding the social production of urban space, shopping spaces presents a resourceful medium to observe the engagement with real life rather than abstract formal aspects of architecture and urban space. Shopping spaces can be a tool to understand the unique assets of local culture and practices of everyday life [20]. Therefore, the following sections will focus on the differences between the traditional shopping places and the contemporary ones as an embodiment of democratic culture of lay people against wealth and power [21], particularly in a context where major socio-economic shifts are occurring in the structure of Arab countries [22] accompanied by shifts between public and private domains [23]. Traditional forms of shopping support our deeply rooted mental connections with space. They incite visual legibility, permeability, connectivity, flexible and temporary definition of dynamic space, organic circulation, intimacy with other people, other species and nature, simple and immediate solutions regarding climatic conditions, all of which serve to address the mental space once constructed to survive in an environment that was sustainable, and humane when compared to the technologically, globally and corporately shaped spatial intelligence we all acquired recently.

However, post modernity has radically altered the nature of shopping and its spatial layout {[24], [25], [26]}. While the shopping was transformed into an addictive activity and experience [27] with focus on excessive consumption as well as consumption of image and status [28],[29],[30], the layout was being altered into closed, colossal and controlled containers [31]. Thus, shopping spaces have been converted from public arenas to privately owned, managed, conditioned and controlled territories [32],[33]. Also in parallel with capitalist economic strategies of growth and laws of physics regarding the nature of energy and flows, mass consumption through global brands, franchises was promoted and dispersed at the peril of markets, individual retailers and local flavours [34].

These two types of shopping spaces which refer to modern and pre-modern eras also represent *organised* and *self-organizing* components of the urban realm. Thus, these *organised* and *self-organizing* components coexist in urban space, in a very similar way to the *planned* and *unplanned* parts in cities [35]. Therefore, the diversity of shopping spaces that co-exist, as illustrated below, is crucial for sustaining the local assets in Middle East. Therefore, at this point, the paper introduces two contrary types of shopping observed in the case study area. Examples selected from Al-Khobar in Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, exhibit two basic types of shopping activity each of which have distinctive behaviours of their own can be observed in the downtown center of Al-Khobar. These are; *Souq* and *Mall*.

**Background on the Context of Al-Khobar and Shopping in the City**

Al-Khobar is a coastal city in eastern Saudi Arabia 14 kilometers south of Dammam which is the administrative capital of the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, population of which half are under 20 years old, and the Kingdom's major commercial port along the Arabian Gulf. It is relatively better developed mainly due to its proximity to Dhahran which is the capital of oil production. The ambient temperature is hot in summer extending from May to September, with official temperatures of 49°C being registered. Humidity all year is quite high, especially on the coast. Winter daytime temperatures rarely drop below 20°C. Sand storms occasionally occur though they tend to blow out quickly here. Rain is slight and comes in short bursts and amounts to some four inches a year. The social gatherings that do exist are segregated into "families" and "bachelors" since segregation of the sexes is a fact of life. Al-Khobar is a favorite shopping destination for visitors to the area. Al Khobar is home to two large shopping malls (Al Rashid Mall and Dhahran Mall) and hundreds of shops, parks and restaurants. Here, some items typical of the region, e.g., handicraft and gold can be found. Also there are items imported from India, Pakistan, the Far East and Europe. On the other hand, the souqs are where fabrics, clothing, shoes, spices and household items can be found. The traditional souqs still expect the customer to haggle over the price as bargaining is a social event. Food shopping is diverse in Al-Khobar from Bakalas to supermarkets. Shop hours are changeable but core hours are definitely 9.00 till 12.00 and 4.30 till 10.00 Saturday till Thursday. Shopping in Friday is generally possible only in the evenings. The larger food stores stay open 24 hours (except for prayer times) and Dhahran Mall appears to stay open all day on Thursdays. Government departments work in the region of 7:30 till 2:30. The Dammam-Dhahran-Khobar tri-city area is linked to the island nation Kingdom of Bahrain by an impressive 26 kilometer long causeway. This makes Al-Khobar a very significant node and shopping destination.

#### Description of the Shopping Spaces Selected for Analysis from Al-Khobar

As mentioned above, there are two basic types of shopping spaces in Al-Khobar; *Souqs* and *Malls*.

##### 1. Souq

The Al-Khobar (Figure 1) and Al-Sweiket (Figure 2) Souqs is located within the downtown Al-Khobar along the major traffic artery named Dhahran Road. It is accessed through a wide pedestrian pavement from the main street and a much narrower sidewalk from the back street where there are parking facilities along the minor streets forming the urban grid around the souq. Obviously it is a built structure and not a temporary marketplace. Hence, it is a much more organized and architectonically defined space particularly when compared to aforementioned types of shopping. Yet is still maintains an informal and therefore sociable character. Medium degree of connectivity, which is due to the tectonic structure (*i.e. mineralization*) determining the spatial

configuration of the souq, is compensated with relatively smaller scale. Although, it is defined within an architectural



Fig. 1. Al Khobar Souq



Fig. 2. Sweiket Souq

shell, interior shopping streets are exposed to climatic conditions (such as sun and wind) as well as the effects of passage of time such as changing light. In addition to natural factors, the diversity of shops next to each other provides high sensory stimuli. The mineralized shell of this shopping activity type, establishes a fine balance between object and field [36] creation. The Al-Rahmania Souq emerges as one of the first typological examples of crystallization or mineralization of human flows into built form in case of Al-Khobar. Although it is a solidified form of shopping, it still supports operation of an effective field of social encounters among shoppers and retailers.

##### Mall

Two most popular and widely used shopping malls in Al-Khobar are Mall of Dhahran (Figure 3) & Al-Rashid Mall (Figure 4). They are located on main arteries. Obviously, malls, like souqs, are constant places of shopping and therefore solid forms of the mineralization of human flows. Al-Rashid Mall is closer and thus more integrated to the

networks of downtown whereas Mall of Dhahran is slightly off the main downtown area but still not totally isolated from



Fig. 3. Mall of Dhahran



Fig. 4. Al Rashid Mall

the city. It is further supported by other shopping facilities (like *IKEA* and another shopping complex called *Jarir*) opposite side of the main road. Although their plans differ from each other, they represent typical mall plans with their underlying dumb-bell diagram [37]. Al-Rashid Mall has a grid plan with two wings opening with 45 degree angle to the main axis of the building. Mall of Dhahran, on the other hand, displays the characteristic of a continuous curvilinear

loop to complete the underlying diagram. Both shopping centres have a populist and consumerist outlook; with glittering and shiny effects dominating the design from materials to the scale of detailing. This outlook is further enhanced by effects of projectors, neon lights, and LED animations and search-lights. Malls provide relatively formal environment for shopping, thus less interaction while shopping. In that sense, shopping in malls is a more functional and mechanical way of meeting needs in a faster and compact manner by providing megastores hypermarkets and all sorts of shopping beneath one gigantic roof. They provide low degree of connectivity also due to large scale plus the linear organization as suggested by dumb-bell diagram. One of its major differences from other shopping spaces is that sense of time is eliminated through means of technological advances such as artificial lighting. Also, other senses are homogenized artificially through other technological means such as artificial air conditioning. Moreover, the spatial dimensions of malls are immense and their morphology delineates the sense of non-space. Rather, senses or sensation is linked here with the notion of *desire* that is instigated by global instruments of; fashion, advertising, media and technology. Thus, shopping malls show how global powers (economic, political and professional) operate on spatial layout [38] and how drastically distort our spatial perception in these spaces, that is to say, from communal, immediate and intimate relationship with physical and natural environment, into uniformity and universal monotony of corporate realms. Dovey [39] suggests that malls are based on dumb-bell diagram which is an abstract machine with two large attractors connected by pedestrian flow to produce impulse consumption. When compared to the former types of shopping, malls appear to be much more rigidly solidified as objects than being organized as fields [40] to exert power mechanisms on urban realm. In that sense, they can be considered as the latest phase and form of crystallization or mineralization of human flows into built form.

#### Comparison of the General Characteristics of Souqs and Malls

Evolution of shopping spaces appears to have followed a path towards better conditions of shopping as much as better quality goods. Nonetheless, this process is accompanied by a parallel one which adds another meaning to shopping that incorporates not only consumption of images but also construction of status [41]. Thus, shopping has gained a role of identity [42] purchasing as well as providing needs and social interaction [43]. Along this evolution, shopping environments have gradually moved from everyday world of social practice which is eidetically acquired, constructed and learned in early childhood [44] to the isolated and artificially decorated settings which are defined by exquisite forms and surfaces, fine-finished and polished artificial materials, mechanical circulation devices, electronic and interactive

surfaces, monitors, audio-visual effects, artificially lit and ventilated environments of massive scale, presumptuous and controversial designs, etc. altogether passivize and alienate the individual in an unfamiliar territory of modern commercial space.

Among these two distinct types of shopping, first typology emerges as complex socio-physical assemblages [45], [46],[47] no matter how seemingly chaotic and haphazard in terms of socio-spatial order, highly sophisticated and efficient and uniquely beautiful. It represents an urban morphology that is created primarily through processes of rhizomatic assemblage [48], [49]. Here, multitudes of interactions with spatial, kinetic, aural, visual, tactile [50] sensations are accomplished in the former two types. In that sense, referring to Vesely [51], they certainly delineate the harmony with communal mental space [52]. Besides, the active involvement of child [53, 54] in the first type, in contrast to their isolation in kid zones, particularly in malls, refers to the engagement of the *toy instinct* [55] in traditional spaces and its negligence in contemporary public realms. By a similar token, gender segregation also seems to be reconciled in traditional forms of shopping by whereas, in practice, malls do not seem to facilitate a social cohesion in that sense although it is a contemporary spatial format. Women usually seem to occupy malls in Al-Khobar in different time cycles mostly matching with the prayer times generally attended by the male section of the society, while men and women are always in almost equal balance and conditions in the souqs. Souq shopping rises as a very unique form reflecting the local character as well as climatic concerns. The mall, on the other hand, portrays a more orderly regulated, controlled manner of shopping organization. Geometry and tectonics are more dominant here and restrictive than souqs. Yet souqs still maintain the social, humane and urbane aspects of shopping particularly when compared to the malls. Clearly, malls appear as being the most consumption based, technology oriented and globalized typology. So, the apparent grouping and differentiation between first and the last types epitomize the distinction between smooth and striated spaces [56] in terms of control of urban space, execution of power on urban realm and common usage by real people [57].

## II. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE BEHAVIOURAL ASPECTS OF SPATIAL CONFIGURATION IN SHOPPING PLACES

The project aims to compare traditional and contemporary shopping spaces in terms of their capability to accommodate civic aspects of shopping and identify the changes in the shopping patterns as well as shopping spaces of the society. The outcomes of the research are intended to bring a critical insight into the ongoing transformation of Saudi Arabian cities, rather than accepting new typologies and welcoming as they are since they may destroy the social coherence of the public realm in urban settings. Along the purpose of revealing the relationships between behavioral and spatial dimensions of

shopping and their differentiation from traditional to contemporary typologies, it is aimed to develop a new methodological basis, and therefore, a research project is conducted in two phases. In the first stage, the survey of existing physical fabric is made through drawings and photographs. A survey of human behavior is also conducted by recording the three components of customer behavior; *movement speed, density of customer concentration* and *duration of stay*. In addition, a questionnaire is applied both to the shoppers and retailers, who use the study area, to reveal the impacts of physical transformation of these shopping spaces over their users with particular reference to their shopping preferences/habits and their social interactions throughout their shopping. This questionnaire is completed in combination with studies of cognitive mapping and interviews to confirm the results of the questionnaire. At the second stage, various townscape and morphological analyses are performed on the visual and written materials obtained from survey, questionnaire and mapping phase of the study.

The study is quite significant in the sense that a broad gap in the literature about the commercial centers of Arabian Peninsula is filled with the survey and documentation of spatial characteristics in Al-Khobar. Moreover, this study aims to reveal the urban-architectural problems that are determined to be the reasons for the ongoing decline of the shopping activity in downtowns, and resulting social deterioration in the city centers as well as the suggestions regarding the potential solutions of these problems. Therefore, it is important to analyze the transformation of traditional shopping spaces, and derive coherent spatial and morphological characteristics in order to assert civilized character and identity of the 21st century city. It is also significant to direct economic initiatives into appropriate channels as well as to increase public awareness about urban conservation in Al-Khobar.

### Methodology of Analysis

Literature survey and theoretical background for such a comparative study about the observation of human behavior in (traditional & contemporary) shopping spaces are studied and summarized. In the light of these studies the methodology is improved. A detailed work plan is prepared indicating the labor division, working schedule, types, dates and times of surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. This work flow is implemented as planned and it is monitored rigorously.

As mentioned above, the customer behavior is defined as consisting of three major identifiable components; speed, duration and density. Therefore, the surveys were based on the observation and recording of these components in different parts of the different types of shopping spaces. Layout of survey sheets is designed in a matrix format to be able to record aforementioned three components of behavior. Graduate students are given a draft of this sheet to convert it into a digital form (Figure 5). They used this format in the field to record their observations. Best locations in two

different case study fields are selected to conduct the surveys. These four cases were observed through this given format in the selected favorable locations at different days and times to provide sufficient variety of data. Field observations and documentations are conducted on these locations. Moreover, open-ended interviews with retailers are also conducted so as to support the observations that are recorded. Furthermore, cognitive mapping studies have also been applied in the field.

The results of the analyses and comparisons will be based on

the re-integration of these fragmented components into an interrelated set of information regarding customer behavior. In other words, the variations of speed, duration and density in different places of shopping will be interpreted by inter-relating the input from these three sources. The Fluctuations of human behavior will also be interpreted by considering the time of the day, day of the week and month within the year.

### Results of Analysis

As it is discussed at the very beginning, traditional shopping places used to be vibrant places utilized by all the parties of city, setting a stage for social interactions and public communication. However, social harmony and unity observed in traditional societies have been transformed with socio-economic changes causing town centers to be neglected and to be dilapidated. In Al-Khobar, morphological characteristics that maintain the unity between shopping activity and social fabric in traditional shopping space seem to have gradually dissociated from the traditional qualities of 'shopping places with social attributes'. Questionnaires and mapping have clearly put forward that shopping activity and daily life in Al-Khobar town centre, displays a chaotic state, which is a typical indicator of both the physical deterioration in urban form and that of the change in public life. As a matter of fact, the series of surveys conducted in this study, as explained above, seem to be coherent and consistent with each other. While interviews complete the views expressed in the questionnaires, the cognitive maps serve to visualize what has been said or written both by customers and by retailers. This type of cross-evaluation also enable to illustrate whether or not there is any inconsistency in one (or more) of the three types of surveys. As it is already mentioned, the results of the surveys (questionnaire, interview, and map) support and enhance each other. All surveys seem to focus on the following points;

- Souqs, as traditional shopping places, display more density, longer duration and slower speed of customer behavior in contrast to the less density, shorter duration and faster speed of customer behavior in malls.
- Souqs, as traditional shopping places, display more integration to the surrounding when compared to the feeling of isolation observed in the malls.
- Souqs appear to support more the social interaction amongst people, including retailers and customers, in comparison to malls.
- Souqs seem to encourage the involvement of both children and women within the whole shopping environment rather than the isolated zones as can be observed in malls.

### III. CONCLUSION

As In this study, it is intended to reveal the relationships between the morphological aspects of the traditional town

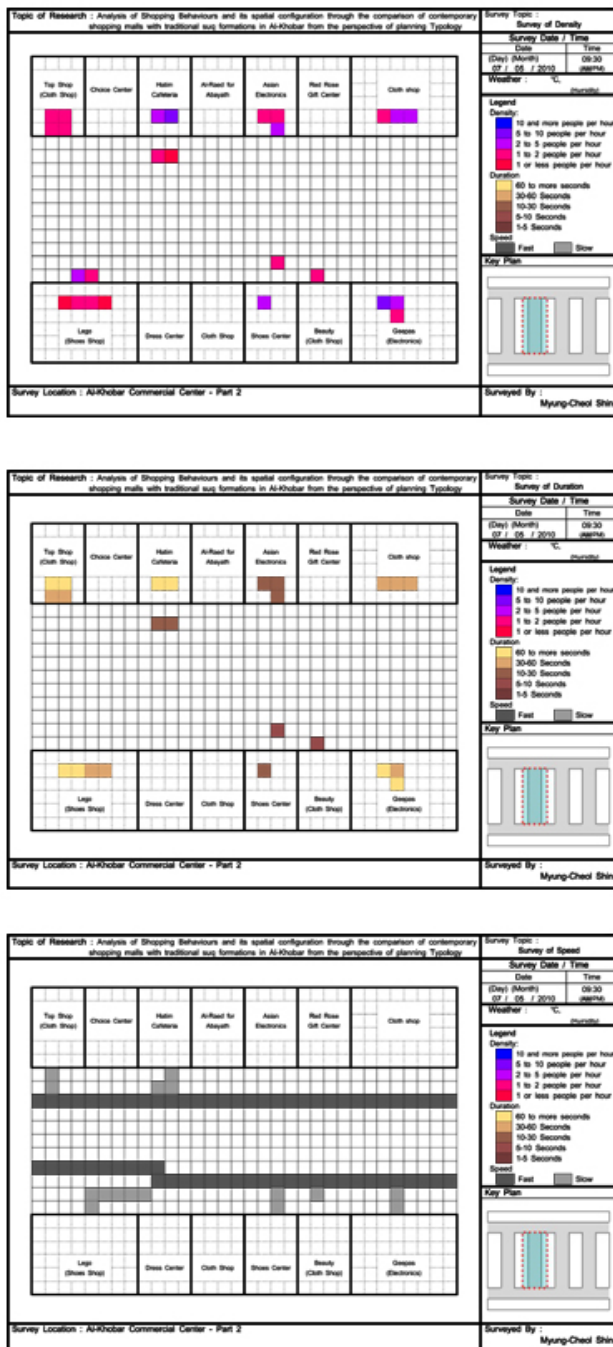


Fig. 5. A sample of survey charts showing; density, duration and speed of movements of the customers in a unit of time (1 hour) at a specific location

centre and the social attributes of the civic life in the city with particular reference to the shopping district in Al-Khobar. Results of the analyses conducted through surveys, questionnaires and mapping clearly reveal a major decline of the shopping capacity as well as a significant loss of traditional taste of "shopping as a social ritual". Al-Khobar represents the multiplicity of shopping types and spaces in urban realm. Particularly, the traditional forms of shopping, as discussed above, helps to maintain local heterogeneity and balance global controls over local markets by enabling local flows of material and energy. So, the formal characteristics of these shopping spaces are primarily non-linear and amorphous. Moreover, they happen to co-exist with linear and regular forms of spatial configuration that evolved much later, thus, transformation is not linear either. Slippages of place [58] by the fluidity of forms, practices and meanings guarantee the sustenance of local identity. Its transitional and instable character gives urban realm a great flexibility to continuously mediate between polarities of traditional and contemporary and to successfully resolve the tension. Consequently, Al-Khobar represents cities - of Middle Eastern region - that resist such global forces of transformation by applying synchronous object & field, regular & irregular, linear & nonlinear organizational strategies in both formal and behavioural terms.

It is concluded that co-existence of both traditional and contemporary modes of living is what constitutes the inherent capacity which the cities of Middle Eastern region have for accommodating the coexistence of multiple forms of shopping types and spaces as different human behaviours and their spatial manifestations in their urban environments. The paper further argues that dual processes of globalization and local resistance simultaneously operate establishing a delicate balance whereby dynamics of global economics are implanted without disturbing the senses of everyday life practices of local public realm. Moreover the issue of multiplicity of shopping types and spaces is discussed with reference to the reversal of prevailing shifts in 'human spatial intelligence' which constitutes one of the major motives behind the alienation of humanity to architecture, its immediate environment and to urban public realm. In other words, changes in the architectural character of the spaces are quite parallel with changes in the way we shop. The principles of the future interventions should be established in regard to qualities and characteristics of traditional shopping spaces in Al-Khobar. Therefore, following measures could be suggested;

### Recommendations

As a result of the analysis and evaluations summarized above, it is suggested that morphological characteristics that maintain the unity between shopping activity and social fabric in traditional shopping space should be identified. Accordingly, strategies and policies could be developed to acquire authenticity and deserved grandeur of this heritage. Besides, contemporary restoration, urban conservation and renewal proposals could be developed for rehabilitating the

impairment of the unity among *urban space-shopping place-social fabric*. Furthermore, the results of this study are intended to constitute the principles of future urban-architectural interventions which can bring vivacity back to the civic life in the urban context. Therefore, it is important to analyze the transformation of traditional shopping spaces, and derive coherent principles about spatial and morphological characteristics in order to assert a civilized identity of the future city. It is also significant to direct economic initiatives into appropriate channels as well as to increase public awareness about urban conservation in Al-Khobar.

In sum, injection of modern shopping complexes and implantation of modern urban planning principles onto the traditional fabric of historic town centers appear to have resulted in an inhumane environment that is devoid of the traditional civic attributes of shopping. Even though these new and modern settings seem to meet a series of contemporary criteria such as; sanitary, functional, economical and technical requirements, they also continue not only to negatively influence the shopping capacity but also to severely harm the unity between the physical aspects of the architectural context and social aspects of public realm. Above discussed deficiencies of contemporary shopping spaces should be eliminated for shopping activity to serve as a social cohesive as it always has been throughout urban history. Consequently, it could be suggested that, this civic coherence in traditional town centers could be recovered by means of the re-establishment of the organic links between urban-architectural assets and their own unique and genuine socio-cultural attributes as given above.

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