

Emergent “Double Identity” Of Historic Cities; Problems of Urban-Architectural Heritage in Islamic Domain

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Abstract

The paper draws attention to rapid transformation of urban environment in major cities of Islamic countries, with particular reference to Saudi Arabia. It also intends to emphasize danger of emerging “double identity” due to misinterpretation of urbanization. This study builds arguments on foundations of paradigm shift from ‘heritage as drawback’ to ‘heritage as opportunity’. Therefore, the study takes ominous stance towards imposition of alien spatial instruments, at the peril of treasures of local identity particularly on a land once has cradled the establishment and continuity of successive civilizations. Therefore, heritage conservation should further include genuine, physical and spatial traces of civic fabric of the Islamic society. However, it should avoid urban-architectural forgery that is reduced to skin-deep façade mimicry of oriental Islamic and arabesque features which are made of contemporary materials that results in distorted eclecticism of Disney Architecture, background, sources, roots and whose aims are different from socio-cultural context of Islamic cities. Emerging urban scene fails in mirroring current transformation of the society. Particularly, solo performances of glossy buildings and abrupt dichotomy of street fronts between main arteries and back streets; seem to portrait wrong impressions of fragmentation and segregation. Whereas the Islamic society is characterized by a unified, integrated and synchronized public realm. However, in tourism industry, unique architectural characteristics of locality are certainly preferred to their contemporary counterparts. Here, the emerging sensory urban-scape in the current urban building boom that can be associated with the cultural and economic leap in Islamic regions (Arab Renaissance) today, is critically evaluated by means of examples selected from Saudi Arabia, and cross-analyzed under the light shed by precedents of urban conservation against the well-disguised trickery of rapid urbanization as the (secret) agent of globalism. Thus, the paper proposes judicious planning policy which integrates urban conservation into its own body and further proffers an alternative strategy for the “hybridization of new and old”, instead of the current tendency of the “polarization between them”.

1. Introduction:

The ongoing rapid transformation of urban environment in major cities of Islamic countries is analyzed here with particular reference to Saudi Arabia. The emerging “double identity” due to misinterpretation of contemporary urbanization is discussed as a major danger facing the cities of Saudi Arabia. Economic crisis in the west seems to have major ramifications in Arabian Peninsula in the sense that capital has shifted to Middle East. The problem is that the ongoing economic rivalry in the region reveals its manifestations on the fast and thus, inevitably imprudent development in urban transformation activities. Moreover, regional politics change the roles of Middle Eastern countries whereby Arabic cities emerge as new markets. Consequently, those cities are gradually restructuring themselves for western firms to be easily mobilized. The fact that social and physical body of the problematic organism, named here with the general term “Islamic City-Scape”, seems to be easily subject to mutation under the pressure of these winds of globalization and appears as a major problem. This mutation is mainly realized by intensive injection of mostly (though not always) foreign aspects into this delicate well-rooted traditional body. As a result, this organism displays a character that can be almost defined as “Double-Identity”, while maintaining its authentic & iconographic imagery. This paper questions the amazing capacity of this well-rooted conventional structure of society to adapt to contemporary conditions so quickly and easily.

Conservation of Islamic urban-architectural heritage plays a key role in the arguments developed in this paper. In fact, the paradigm shift from ‘heritage as a drawback’ to ‘heritage as an opportunity’ has long been established. Therefore, this paper takes an ominous stance towards imposition of alien spatial instruments, at the peril of the treasures of local identity particularly on a land once has cradled the establishment and continuity of successive civilizations. This understanding should obviously not only focus on monumental and institutional heritage but also embrace civic heritage that forms the basis of urban fabric. Therefore, heritage conservation should further include genuine, authentic, physical and spatial traces of civic fabric of the Islamic society. Meanwhile, however, the clear and present danger of urban-architectural forgery reduced to skin-deep façade mimicry of oriental, Islamic and arabesque features made of contemporary materials should also be avoided. Because such a tendency, in the name of reproducing traditional architectural features and icons out of context, appears to result in an Arabic version of distorted eclecticism that can be observed in Disneyland Architecture or in Las Vegas Strip Architecture. Needless to say, the background, sources, roots and aims of this type of architecture are obviously totally different from socio-cultural context of Islamic cities. Therefore, the proposed strategy of conservation will be based on the notion of Critical & Interpretive Synthesis.

Furthermore, the newly emerging urban scene seems to fail in reflecting the current transformation of the Islamic society. Or rather, it is mis-reflecting its evolution. The emerging urban context, particularly via its fragmented morphology, portrays a wrong impression of a disintegrated and discordant society. Particularly, solo performances of glossy buildings and abrupt dichotomy of street fronts between main arteries and back streets - almost next to each other; seem to portray very misleading impressions of fragmentation and social segregation in the society. However, Islamic society is characterized by a unified, integrated, harmonized

and synchronized public realm. Thus, the true urban-architectural language that reflects this harmony is very attractive. As a matter of fact, especially in tourism industry, genuine and unique architectural characteristics of locality are certainly preferred when compared to their contemporary counterparts. Disneyworld or Las Vegas Strip Architecture, too, might attract tourists in specific context since they are the genuine products of the context they are formed within. However, other cities (like Arab cities) should avoid replicating this type of populist products. They rather should keep them in a distance to highlight their own assets. Considering the fact that tourism is recently arising as a new and promising economic sector for the whole Arabian Peninsula, and land of Saudi Arabia in particular, the significance of maintaining this genuine heritage gains further and vital significance.

In this paper, the emerging sensory urban-scape in the current urban building boom that can be associated with the cultural and economic leap in Islamic regions (i.e. Arab Renaissance as defined by a number of scholars) today, is critically evaluated by means of examples selected from Saudi Arabia. These examples are also cross-analyzed under the light shed by precedents and experiences of urban conservation against the well-disguised trickery of rapid urbanization as the (secret) agent of globalism. Hence, this study proposes judicious planning policy which integrates urban conservation into its own body. The paper tackles the issue on two fronts simply because an alternative strategy for the “hybridization of new and old” is suggested instead of the current tendency of the “polarization between new and old”. Therefore, the following chapters will be elucidated under the respective headings. Along this path, the first part will address two interrelated issues: namely; the problem of “Double-Identity” formed under the bipolar pressure and then the issue of “(Secret) Agent of Globalism” as well-disguised devices of the trickery of rapid urbanization.

2. Polarization between New and Old:

Having exposed to substantial change in a relatively short period of time in terms of progressing from one stage to the other by successive generations, Arabian Peninsula and its culture is also suffering from the problem of loss of identity. Middle Eastern countries, in general, had to go through a sudden and destructive process rather than a gradual transformation whereby old and new values are reciprocally balanced and digested. Therefore, various complications have naturally occurred in the appropriation and synthesis of the new with the existing. Here, the matter is exemplified with specific references taken from Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia where there are clashes between financial progresses. Thus, urban development and traditional culture of urbane living can clearly be observed (Parssinen & Talip, 1982). The study addresses mechanisms of such conflict through the analysis of the aspects of urban morphology in this area.

Before analyzing these aspects, a brief summary of the transformation of morphology of Islamic cities in Saudi Arabia, with particular emphasis on Eastern Province, will be given. Traditional urban context is assumed as a physical container of people (Lefebvre, 1992) welcoming the nature and culture in sustainable way of life in places (Raymond, 2005) where people are concentrated in contrast to modernist cities where concentration of people works against the

natural dynamics of existence on earth, in harmony with culture. Traditional Arab cities have been developed over a large course of time and various transformations have occurred in their historical formation and characteristics (Eben Saleh, et. al.). The morphological as well as visual characteristics of Arabic cities are well examined in order to define their salient features (Morris, 1996). This section starts with a brief overview into the historical development of Arabic cities in order to explore the existing urban patterns which later were shaped into the contemporary cities of our time. This historical evolution will be tackled as parallel procedures between the formal aspects of urbanism & architecture and socio-cultural aspects of Islamic urban living (Niblock, 2005). Three major successive stages can be identified in the urban history of Arab cities that contributed to the traditional and vernacular morphology: Islamic Period, Colonial Period and Modern Period.

During the Islamic Period, in addition to medieval features of their counterpart cities, the following characteristics have been developed throughout the urban settlements in the areas dominated by Islamic culture. As Islam spread from central Arabia to Morocco and Spain in the west and India and Indonesia in the east, buildings are blended into the basic forms and spaces with an emphasis on continuity of space in all directions, even though the buildings had adopted a quite number of features from the local architecture. In parallel with formal harmony, a sense of unity, equilibrium and peace have also started to emerge in the urban culture of Islamic cities(1). Moreover, city formation was coming into terms with the basic principles of the Islamic way of communal order (Khan, 1978). In addition to the religious mosque architecture as the leading figure in urban form, houses and clusters of houses were also the determining components of the traditional urban fabric in Muslim cities(2). One of the salient forces in the formation of the urban fabric was the concept of family privacy and the role of women in the family as well as in the society(3). The notion of (social as well as ontological) unity manifests itself directly throughout the morphology of Islamic city (Slyomovics, 2001). Formal uniformity prevailed throughout the architecture of the city simply because there is no distinction in Islam between the sacred and profane. The all-embracing nature of the religion also made the integration of all forms of social activity and thus, all types of architectural forms possible (4). On the other hand, during the

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- (1) The community characteristics from the beginning of the seventh century to the end of the eighteenth century are established, on the grounds of not only adapting local materials and the local scenery, but also responding to local climate.
 - (2) As a matter of fact, due to the particular attitude of Islam towards formal civic institutions (like waqf organizations etc.) and its subtlety regarding the expression of power in form of monumental public buildings with the exception of grand mosques, civic architecture has always been a significant aspect of the urban tissue.
 - (3) Therefore, a very unique network of spatial configuration has emerged. This configuration was based on a special way of juxtaposition of the public, semi-private and private spaces. In this society, men and women did not socialize together outside the immediate family environment. Therefore, the buildings utilized outer courts dedicated to various levels of social interaction among men. On the other hand, there were other inner environments which are designed as separate and distinct from the former courtyards. These isolated inner courtyards and surrounding spaces were dedicated to women only or to the entire inner family. The inward-looking courts of such buildings were invariably designed to create a sense of serenity, peace and beauty with delicate play of water flowing throughout the court, evoking a sense of paradise on earth. These courts not only provided the intimacy of space in these building complexes, but also served as a mechanism of climate control (Khan, 1978). These semi-private and private inward-looking courts in the same building are rarely similar. The spaces differ from one another with regard to shape and proportion; each assumes its own identity and functional justification.
 - (4) In the morphology of the Islamic city, spaces of worship became interrelated with spaces of education as well as

Colonial Period, the process of natural and humane evolution has changed its character. With the injection of Westernization into the Arabian Peninsula, which manifested itself in two phases namely; Ottoman Era and Colonialism after WW I, Western way of urban planning have spread with an (sometimes clear and sometimes hidden) agenda of implementing its own philosophy and thus, its own culture on the formal and social structure of the existing Arab city. The duality of material and spiritual realms which was intrinsically embedded in the philosophy of Western civilization has started to assert itself on the city and administration(1). This was a turning point in diversion from the traditional way of living in cities. Thus, injection of Westernization to this geography was its first break up with urban culture of traditional Islamic city. Afterwards, industrial revolution and the resulting capitalist economy replaced former nobles with new bourgeoisie, and pushed rural immigrants to move into booming urban centers. This significant socio-economic transformation process has definitely caused century-old patterns of local identity and human solidarity to be loosened and destroyed(2). The second stage followed the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire after World War I and Western intervention into Middle East. In this stage, the physical development in most Arab traditional cities was based on the Western model of “new towns”. The urban interventions were either superimposing the new city on the old historic fabric or setting up completely new colonial cities on virgin land, without any interaction with existing urban structures. This process damaged the genuine urban culture which envisaged a humane way of living in cities. Later, in the Modern Period, which refers to the era after WW II, the final wave of westernization was influential(3). Traditional processes have started to be replaced by the import of expensive building materials and industrial construction techniques(4). Furthermore, along with the pumping of western technological advances into the markets of the third world and increasing demographic pressures on these cities, high rise buildings also became a necessity for Arab city rather than a choice. Along another path, other urban morphological instruments are also in charge for altering the outlook of these cities. Al-Hathloul (1981) analyzed how the orthogonal grid system as a street pattern and the villa as a housing type were introduced into the country as well as modernist zoning regulations, which guaranteed the continuity of envisaged physical

those for private living and cultural activity (Nasr, 1978).

- (1) Despite the humanist ideals of the Renaissance and Western enlightenment, political leadership on Arab city during Colonial Period, became deviated from humane and spiritual objectives, as did arts and science, and concentrated on managing the citizens' welfare rather than addressing social and cultural matters. Furthermore, with the scientific advances in the West, human intellect was focused on creating rational instruments for increasing man's control over the earth.
- (2) During the Ottoman period, particularly between the 16th and the 19th centuries, the Arab cities resisted the Western influence and, to a great extent, managed to preserve the above defined authentic urban morphology. However, the Ottoman Empire, during the late-Ottoman period, acted as a filter and transmitter of Western influences, into Muslim countries through imperial architecture with Byzantine components, decorative elements of Classical, Baroque and Rococo styles. This trend also started to influence other major capitals of the Arabian Peninsula.
- (3) This period can be characterized, in summary, with the appearance of the United States of America as the new Western superpower in the scene of world politics as well as the political struggles for independence everywhere in the Third World (Stevens, 2005). In the Arab region, the new independent nations were already established towards the end of 1950s with their pre-planned governance structures, procedures and the artificially created national borders and economic patterns, which had become dependent on international trade systems of capitalism (Sennett, 2005).
- (4) Moreover, a speculative construction market and a rigid public administration provided the full control over the housing sector. Thus, such a mechanism made Arab cities to be dependent on Western real-estate and construction companies in the name of solving the housing problem of working masses.

environment for the transformation of Saudi Arabian cities. They were implemented over the existing organic structure of the harmonious traditional city with its continuous, homogenous and integrated configuration of masses and voids, connected with shaded pathways, and articulated with wind towers etc.

Thus, in summary, the character of traditional cities was determined by the organic growth of houses that are defined by courtyards and walls, integrated with other urban functions such as; shops and other business buildings, organized around the community mosques as the focal landmarks. In addition to wind towers, the minarets as the vertical articulations (Hakim, 2008) and also a few domes, appear as the primary contrasting elements distinguished within the continuity of the horizontal roof-scape lying over the accumulated masses & volumes. Khan (1978) associates this characteristic to the salient feature of these cities having a clear unity between the sky and the earth. Therefore, traditional Arab city was characterized by; not only a coherent urban fabric with the sequential hierarchy of space from the public, semi-private and private spaces serving the maximization of family privacy, but also by a dense townscape built on a pedestrian scale (King, 1998). When moving through this highly articulated complex, the visitor experiences a distinct feeling of spatial continuity transcending the limits of individual buildings and connecting the various realms of public life integrated with nature and cosmos (Bianca, 2000, p.198-211). Consequently, an urban fabric at human scale is unified and integrated, when urban morphology directly reflects a humane way of living once this territory dominated.

As a result of the analysis of traditional urban texture, two interrelated issues can be identified: pedestrian scale and formal homogeneity of the physical environment. These two salient features are representations or physical manifestations of a social order based on total harmony and integration. Therefore, this paper suggests that such social awareness and its architectural container form the cultural identity of the traditional Arab (or Islamic) city which seems to have started blurring with the recent urban developments. Therefore, the next step is to examine a sudden leap that cities went through from the line of natural evolution. They hitherto, had followed and analyzed the acceleration in the implementation of modern urbanism which diverted the direction of such natural evolution of the traditional urban culture all around the Arabian Peninsula, particularly in cities of the Eastern Province.

Following the three successive waves of Westernization, the Arab city is now facing the latest, and probably a post-modern phase of global development which significantly alters the underlying structure of the urban morphology (Elshestawy, 2008). Traditional urban culture is seriously threatened by this massive urbanization process (Tafari, 1976). Patterns of daily life and ways of perceiving the immediate urban environment is being irreversibly altered causing urban-architectural heritage to be totally destroyed. However, this process is implemented so gradually and discretely that it is almost unnoticed and even welcomed by the native and local people (Sennett, 1977), at the peril of their culture. Particularly with the instruments that are raised by Al-Hathloul (1981) namely; grid and urban villa, the coherence of social unity is broken. Besides, dependence on car has not only crippled daily social interaction but also fragmented the urban structure. Moreover, the increasing passion (of administrators and developers) for new technologies (Kultermann, 1999) and new materials leads alien building typologies and

architectural forms to jut out of the harmony of existing urban context. In other words, the ongoing rapid urbanization under the pressure of the dynamics of global economy seems to create immense contrasts regarding; human & monumental scale, horizontal & vertical forms, walled & open settlements, luxurious & dilapidated buildings right next to each other in the morphology of Arab cities. These abrupt contrasts are inevitably causing segregation and alienation of social classes from each other (Lubeck & Britts, 2002) whereas the traditional society was based on uniting all members of the society no matter which class they belong to. Surprisingly, it can be observed that this fragmented structure can only be perceived as a continuum in vehicular speed which creates a further fragmentation and segregation between the segments of the society. This duality of perception of the same city (Cohen, 2002) generates an illusion of cultural continuity (via walls recalling the streets of traditional city) (Figure 3) for upper classes (Baudrillard, 1995) who perceive the city in high speed, whereas there is a feeling of isolation for lower classes that live in between gated communitie

As a result of the analysis of contemporary urban fabric of the traditional Arab city, two interrelated issues can be identified: vehicular scale and formal fragmentation of the physical environment. These two emerging features appear to represent the physical manifestations of a new social order based on economical & technological dominance and social segregation & disintegration. Therefore, this paper suggests that such a social negligence and its architectural container threatens the cultural identity of Islamic city.

As a result, morphological structure of the conventional Islamic or Middle Eastern city (Morris, 1996) displays organic character with integrated spatial organization. Within this spatial structure, wall emerges as a dominant and binding feature of traditional Islamic city with regard to privacy and religious order. On the other hand, road appears as a new feature of contemporary city. The polarization among these two features will constitute the basis of our reading of the city. Following this brief morphological overview, a consummative overview of sociological structure reveals that the society is on a transitory phase from a homogenously conservative society to heterogeneous and liberal society. Hence, the rapid expositon to this comprehensive transition usually causes economic polarization and cultural clashes between two value sets which can also be observed in the physical morphology. In most of the cases, the society develops various types of split personality, oscillating between bipolar ends of the range of cultural value sets. In other words, conception of behaviour both in public and private realms vary with regard to different time and context.

2.1. Emerging Problem of “Double-Identity”:

The current unnamed policy of ‘polarization’ appropriated in integrating traditional with contemporary values seems to damage the intended integrity on the long run. This rapid process seems to be threatening the established values of Islamic culture and its artistic artefacts although this process is welcomed by public as well as administrators since it symbolizes progress and integration to what is called the First World. Nevertheless, the argument here is that an essential alteration under the disguise of this rapid transformation is being implemented so evanescently and surreptitiously, it is barely spotted and almost saluted.

It is of particular interest of this paper to make sense of the apparent capability of Islamic cities to adapt to new conditions. Along this purpose, state of the art urban design theories and their methodologies based on discourse analysis will be adapted in addition to, conventional urban analysis methods. Therefore, this section will start by visiting up to date urban theories that explain city as a self-organizing organism rather than a static design product controllable by the single hand of the planning authority. Considering the current paradigm shift from stabilized places to becoming places (Dovey, 2010; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), the need for a new viewpoint towards cities arises call a shift in methodologies in the direction of dynamic evaluation methods. The examination of cities under the impact of global urbanization requires the use of similar lenses to those used in analysis of contemporary global metropolitan areas. Because the dynamics shaping both types of urban environments share a common ground on which existing assets are commodified and spatial configuration is reorganized to allow easy & efficient access and operation of global mechanisms. Therefore, this study will apply the critical discourses developed for contemporary city to those cities at stake.

While rapidly disintegrating in terms of urban spatial configuration, Arab cities are rapidly integrating to the global system with the seemingly contrary rhetorical claim of maintaining the traditionalist structure. An alternative reading with regard to the multiple personalities of cities (Massey, 1994) is necessary to give meaning to this intriguing evolution of Islamic city today. One must also note that modern society and science totally restructure our spatial intelligence (van Schaik, 2008) via reshaping not only the spatial structure but also our spatial conception through interactive procedures of the two. Therefore, the aspects that are expected to intrigue us gain a totally new function and meaning. In that context, in Arab cities, with specific reference to Eastern Province, the relation between wall and road appears to have been reconfigured in a totally different way by being detached from their genuine, conventional uses and meanings.

The current state of Arab city exhibits the following dichotomies in the urban context: abrupt contrasts between main streets that are surrounded by luxurious stores, hotels, offices and showrooms and side streets that are poorly treated although they are located right next to each other; remarkable disparities between big high-rise buildings and small scale low-rise buildings built next to eachother; disturbing contrapositions between shiny, glossy, high-class buildings and old, low-quality and dilapidated buildings laid next to eachother; besides, huge contradiction between the well-maintained, well-protected, rich housing compounds that are reminiscents of oasis next to deserted lands; the severe distinction between a diamond-like chain of small palaces and poor neighborhoods laid out next to it; the though provoking discrepancy of the fancy neighborhood next to immigrant quarters where basic facilities and services are not provided, etc. Doubtlessly, vague yet enigmatic character of the current Arab city lies in these contradictions. The element of wall can be seen repeating every now and then within these alternating order of physical dilemmas throughout the city. Also, very wide highways dividing the city in various directions is also a recurrent figure in the formal structure of the city. Thus, the morphology of the current city can be summarized with scale, texture and formal (horizontal/vertical) contrasts.

This type of dichotomous urban morphology usually points out the physical symptoms of segregation and conflict. Nonetheless, these major symptoms in urban environment of transforming Islamic cities seem to be ignored if not being unnoticed. As a matter of fact, it is

very interesting to observe how easily traditional fabric is destroyed and even erased in such a traditional society. On the contrary, alien features are absorbed into this body at the expense of destroying itself(1). Various scholars (Massey, Dovey, Guattari) have already pointed out the possibility of parallelisms between the changes in the identities & personalities of citizens and those in the physical environment in regard to current postmodern status of contemporary western city. They also consider these multiplicity of identities as a typical globalist instrument. If this is the case, which connotes an even more serious and vital problem in terms of culture at stake, urbanization policies have to be reviewed. Faced with the dichotomy of preserving a deep and stratified cultural heritage of Islam on the one hand, and creating a new glamorous (yet superficial) physical stage set for the new way of contemporary living, planning bodies on the other hand, seem to have (deliberately or subconsciously) developed a strategy of masking the ills of this transformation from the public gaze in order to prevent reaction. This possibility matches quite well with Baudrillard (1995)'s notion of "Hyper-reality" in creating a sort of simulation whereby ills of this new way of transformation are disguised.

So contemporary post-structuralist philosophy helps us to explain the complex and ambiguous state of the process ongoing in Islamic cities. The discursive methods of their philosophy unveil the underlying motives behind the vague, formless, and dual structure, or double-identity(2) of newly emerging cities. Thus, they allow us to become aware of the mechanisms that temporarily blind or rather hypnotize us during this massive transformation.

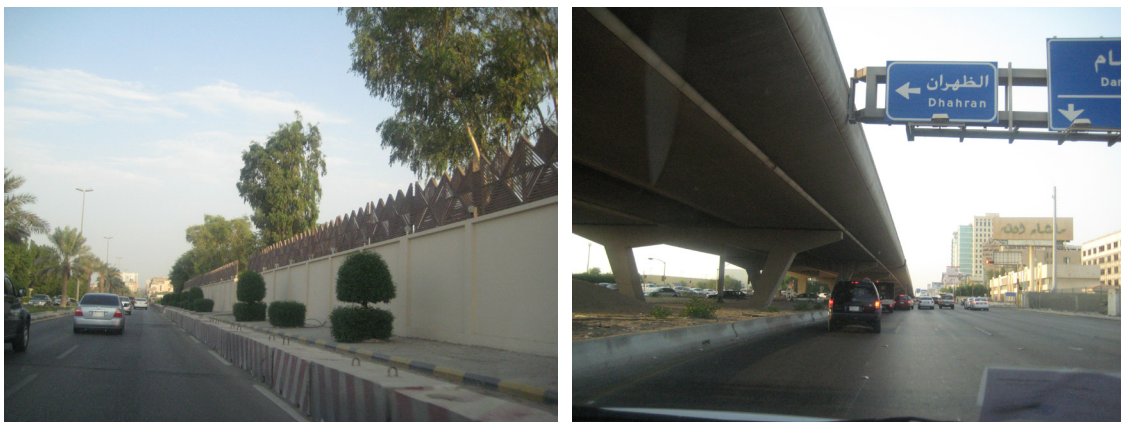


Figure 1. Wall and road as dominant and clashing features of old & new city

As pointed out above, wall emerges as the expression of the notion of "privacy" that determines the traditional way of living, whereas road appears as the manifestation of the concept of "speed" that determines the contemporary way of living (Figure 1). If one intends to read the city over the conflict of these two concepts, Virilio (2007)'s accentuation on the notion of speed in the perception of modern city, raises the issue of the difference between the "static perception"

- (1) It is notable that American cities which our current cities take as model for development have gone through the very same phases. See. Jacobs (1965).
- (2) Theories that explain both spaces and structural systems of cities with simultaneous and conflicting conceptual couples such as, Tree (Alexander, 1965) – Rhizome (Deleuze, 1987) Striated / Smooth Spaces (Deleuze, 1987) or Two Fold (Dovey, 2010), explain the issue of polarization (Bateson, 2000) emerging in the globalizing cities.

and “dynamic perception” of the city. Doubtlessly, different social groups have different speeds within the Islamic city. Thus, upper social classes and urban elite seem to utilize, and hence, perceive the city by jumps and leaps between certain locations. Their high speed travel visually and thus cognitively connects the actually fragmented parts of the wall, creating a ‘simulation’ of a continuous walled (traditional) city whereby all values of Islamic culture are conserved at micro scale (Figure 2). Yet in micro scale, the cracks in between these fragmented parts of the wall have the capacity to grow larger and destroy the integrity of the overall structure of the fast-spreading city. This virtual continuity of the wall seemingly covers social differences whereas, the traditional city used to actually perform this function in reality, not by covering but healing social problems. Thus, the conflict with the old and the new, or in other words, between wall and the road is tackled in such a way that the conflict is disguised by contemporary means of urban perception, i.e. by speed.



Figure 2. Map showing the fragmented walls creating different perceptions of the city at different speeds

Hence, in this paper, it can be claimed that sustainability of traditional Islamic urban culture is significantly threatened by the massive urbanization process undergoing around the globe. It is intended to demonstrate that many patterns of daily life as well as ways of perceiving the immediate urban environment is being irreversibly altered for humans to the extent that urban-architectural heritage is almost destroyed. However, this process is being implemented so gradually and discretely that it is almost unnoticed and even welcomed by the native and local people. At this point the following section will focus on the instruments of this disguise in terms of architectural and urban features.

2.2. (Secret) Agents of Urbanization:

Globalization deploys a legitimized process that is well designed to control the existing and (plausibly) resisting organism by paralyzing it with well-dressed instruments that can be seen as symbols of progress. This process is basically a type of urban spyware with the target of a new form of establishment that can also be named as Neo-Capitulation or Neo-Colonization. As introduced at the beginning, Middle East is going through a political process by which the roles of countries in the region change whereby, Arabic cities emerge as new markets. Under

the light shed by this view, those cities had to be gradually restructured for global corporations to be freely mobilized. Naturally, this intervention had to be accomplished smoothly. This soft intervention can be defined as a Post-Fordist socio-economic operation to which cities not only willingly but also overenthusiastically surrender. Obviously, such an operation requires very well-disguised (secret) agents of global urbanization. Among them; high speed transportation systems consisting of constructing highways and importing automobiles, high and glamorous buildings equipped with latest technology and material, all of which are again imported from the Western countries. Needless to say, all these products and materials, which are marketed in Islamic cities, are branded in the West and manufactured in the East with the cheapest labor costs possible.

Eventually, as discussed above, the Arab city has been transformed from a humane fabric which was pedestrian in scale, harmonious and integrated in terms of urban space, into a new and inhumane fabric that can be defined as vehicular and monumental in scale and spatially fragmented as a result of global urbanization processes. Like many metropolitan cities all over the world, Arab cities will soon start feeling the failings of being modernized via mechanisms of; alienation, depression, and increasing health problems of citizens, growing traffic congestion on the motorways, increasing environmental pollution, isolation in the suburbs, agglomeration of certain socio-economic classes (i.e. poor, migrants, etc.) on downtown, dilapidation of the city centre, increasing crime rate, etc. (Al-Naim & Mahmud, 2007). Despite the various comforts that such processes provide for particular strata of the social strata, urbanization by such means clearly brings up a diversity of disadvantages especially for the lower levels of this stratification□. The roots of such deformation can easily be searched through the recently injected urban ingredients into the once unified, integrated harmonious body of urban community. It is clearly observed in the urban scene of Arab cities that rapid urbanization via alien architectural instruments definitely causes the loss of public realm which is very crucial in maintaining a communal culture. There is an urgent need for an emphasis on the issues of preservation and conservation of urban heritage as well as vernacular architecture, in urban planning, for reconstructing the broken ties with past which spiritual and social values regarding community were essential aspects of urban living. Along this purpose, local administrators as well as scholars and professionals must not only immediately understand the role of urban design as much as literature, movies, TV, internet in the invasion and destruction of local culture for current rebuilding of traditional Arab city in a manner, and also reverse the process without any further delay.

3. Hybridization of New and Old; A Defense Strategy:

The question is whether it is possible to restructure and develop the urban spatial configuration without being imprisoned or entrapped by the deadlocks of the modern transformation in such a geography overwhelmed by the rich and strong heritage of Islamic tradition. Clearly, achieving this target is not impossible at all despite all drawbacks of contemporary urbanization. How this synthesis could be achieved without polarization is another question to be answered. It seems that mere gathering of items - in the sense that adding new right next to the old as it is - with the expectation of them to naturally synthesize does not work as intended in the context of Arab cities. A deliberate attempt should be developed to implement a strategy with short and long term objectives in transforming these cities. Nonetheless, such a strategy should also avoid the pitfalls

of copying artefacts of former centuries. Neither it should intend creating a new physical order looking like old which is a falsification of history and authenticity within a new era; cultural, technical, social and economical aspects of which are totally different.

Towards healing a plausible problem of emergent double identity, hybridization is proposed as a healthy long term defense strategy for conserving the social identity as well as the corresponding urban identity. Such a strategy allows forms and types of spaces to evolve naturally in time with constant interaction between new and old. It neither foresees preset prescriptions nor accepts assumptions that are independent from intrinsic dynamics or socio-cultural factors. Nevertheless, this relatively flexible approach is based on much more established and scientific body of knowledge and information on both old & new. Although hybridization by itself is a very comprehensive issue, it is briefly introduced here as a counter-argument to the problems of double-identity analysed above regarding those cities.

This strategy consists of two complementary components. One of these components focuses on the existing stock of heritage via conservation. The second, meanwhile, concentrates on the gradual evolution of existing urban-architectural typology via critical and interpretive hybridization of the conventional and vernacular building and space types with new building and space types. Therefore, the following sections will respectively address these two issues and discuss the framework and the basic principles in the context of Islamic cities, with specific reference to Arabian cities.

3.1. Conservation of Heritage:

Importance of sustaining a culture became so clear today that the amount of fundings and budgets allocated for conservation throughout the world is a remarkable indicator of this shift. Particularly, having seen the immediate outcomes of current rapid transformation without any (or with devious) concern for historical and cultural heritage, the issue of sustainability also started to embrace the notion of urban and architectural conservation. As a matter of fact, since 1970s, scholars and scientists, particularly from environmental disciplines are struggling to force decision makers and administrators to lead the way towards an escape from inevitable disastrous outcomes of the ongoing process of unsustainable development (Barton, et. al., 1995). However, the collateral and subsequent impacts of such devastation on culture and tradition have not been yet thoroughly explored. Loss of contextual characteristics and local identity can also be considered as a matter of sustainability, particularly in terms of sustainability of a culture, and Islamic culture in particular. Cultural dimensions of such disastrous process should be investigated by social scientists in disciplines of humanities. This section accentuates the significance of the close ties between material culture and the sustainability of immaterial culture. In other words, intangible assets of Saudi Arabian culture, its folklore, the dances, wedding ceremonies, cuisine, coffee and coffee-houses, formal and informal gatherings, shopping and recreation habits are the issues which cannot be separately tackled from its urban-architectural envelope.

Islamic heritage, regardless of whether or not its artefacts are directly intended to express faith, is a cultural entity with an identity of its own. In other words, civic architecture as well as institutional, mainly religious architecture, should be included in the preservation programs before

even more representative samples of architectural heritage are destroyed and lost. Moreover, such a conservation program should not only focus individually on single buildings, but also on context. Particularly, in the light shed by above-analyzed problem of fragmented city and its role in the disintegration of culture, emphasis must be put on the totality of context and accumulation values rather than fragments which can only give the illusion of a preserved culture.

Along this line of thought, adaptation of well-established UN heritage listing and preservation standards and processes could be utilized in terms of the methodology of preserving Islamic culture in Arabian Peninsula however, avoiding the danger of falling into traps of well-disguised (secret) agents of global urbanization. In other words, all types of architectural forgery reduced to skin-deep façade mimicry of oriental, Islamic and arabesque features made of contemporary materials that result in distorted eclecticism, as discussed above, are dangerous instruments within sensitive historical organism. Therefore, a judicious approach is required to the synthesis of the new with the old. The next chapter will pave the foundations regarding principles of such an approach.

3.2. Critical & Interpretive Synthesis; “Hybridization”:

Throughout this article, (intentional or unintentional) mis-use of heritage is argued. Therefore, a critical stance and interpretive approach is suggested for synthesising old and new. Obviously, it requires a sound basis of knowledge on which this criticism and interpretation can be performed. It includes complex processes regarding decisions about; what to use, what (or not) to eliminate, what to abstract, what (and more not) to copy, as well as discussions of how to adopt, abstract, graft, inject new and how to distill essences of the old. Furthermore, it involves developing methods of which contemporary instruments to use, as well as establishing limitations, rules and standards. In that context, hybridization can be considered as the equivalent of an implant surgery into a sensitive organism. This type of surgery is essential in resuscitating the cultural roots and creating an added value particularly for tourism industry. As mentioned above, studies and observations so far well proved that, particularly in tourism industry, genuine and unique architectural characteristics of locality are certainly preferred when compared to contemporary urban or architectural elements which can be seen anywhere on the world. Therefore, genuine Islamic culture should be rethought for purposes of both social stability and economic sustainability. The notion of hybridization, which is mentioned here as a remedy to the problem of double-identity, as a problem diagnosed in this paper for Arabian cities, is argued for its relevance to this particular problem. Although it has a deeper theoretical background, due to the limitations of this paper, the basic principles that are considered to be relevant to the matter here can be summarized as follows. Initially, the new should respect the old in such a way that the balance is on the old in the final hybrid product. Moreover, hybridization is never a fragmented procedure, on the contrary, it should address the totality of the cultural entity. Hybridization is a process (of transformation) and the final product cannot be designed at once and particularly at the initial stage. Thus, the area under study seems to have been faced with the problem of emerging double identity mainly due to the clear lack of hybridization approach under the sudden, intense and rapid exposure to global transformation.

4. Conclusion:

As discussed in above chapters, the Arab city has been transformed from a humane fabric which is pedestrian in scale, harmonious and integrated in terms of urban space, into a new and inhumane fabric that can be defined as vehicular and monumental in scale and spatially fragmented as a result of global urbanization processes. This paper unveiled the global transformation process of double-coding in urban morphology by means of differences in speed and its associated perceptions by different parties of the society. This process suggests a cultural distortion which has to be reversed by sophisticated strategies. It is of interest for how long the duality and polar pressures can be concealed by devious global urban planning instruments that are based on multiple readings of the city at different speeds. Nonetheless, as argued above, the morphological cracks emerging in the actual (dis)continuity of the wall may have already started an underlying process outcomes of which are yet to be seen. It is important to address this problematic issue from different perspectives such as social stability and economic sustainability. Therefore, it is once again shown that, particularly in tourism industry, genuine and unique architectural characteristics of the specific locality are certainly preferred to various contemporary urban or architectural elements which can be seen anywhere in the world. In conclusion, the emerging sensory urban-scape in the current urban building boom that can be associated with the cultural and economic leap in Islamic regions (Arab Renaissance) today is critically evaluated with references to Saudi Arabia. The well-disguised trickery of rapid urbanization as the (secret) agent of globalism is argued against the notion of hybridization through conservation of both urban morphology and intangible cultural aspects. Thus, the paper proposes judicious planning policy which integrates urban conservation into its own body, and further proffers an alternative strategy for the “hybridization of new and old”, instead of the current tendency of the “polarization between new and old”.

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