

The Dialectical Dimensions of Architectural Identity in Heritage Conservation (The Case of Amman)

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Abstract

In conventional areas of architectural design, heritage conservation, history and literature, architectural identity is often conceived and represented as a timeless and historically stable entity. This is reflected in particular practices of building design and heritage conservation that view and portray architectural identity in terms of aesthetics or built form, these representations and ideas of architecture portray identity as an immutable and historically continuous subject of knowledge. This paper first offers theoretical framework to maintain the identification of identity, architectural identity, and national identity. It also raises the issue of identity in general and in architecture as a multi- disciplinary concept. This paper deals with the impact of local culture on shaping the architectural identity. Furthermore investigate the transformative nature of architecture and the identity, drawing on cultural, historical concepts of meaning as a theoretical framework which discussed by theorists such as Bourdieu, Foucault and Barthesto. And also shed light on the architectural identity in the city of Amman reading and analyzing previous studies about Amman's identity to deduct the main features of architectural styles in Amman and the reason of difficult finding a unified architectural identity.

Keywords: Identity, Architectural identity, Heritage conservation, Culture.

Introduction

Identity conservation (moral, physical, cultural) one of the most prominent Arab issues raised for research and study, and that its importance and seriousness of the Arab nation, especially because we live in the era of "globalization" new world order characterized by the information revolution in the various means of communication (Internet, techniques, Electronic.... and others), which targets different dimensions of our life (political, economic, social and especially cultural).

This threatens our Arab nation, which has long characterized by its cultural and religious personality and distinctive intellectual wealth, manifested itself throughout the ages, and met with respect and appreciation of different cultures for their world. And the **imposition of American cultural** (as a source of globalization) with its global, economic, military and technical influence, furthermore the encouragement of it as the chief of cultures) and the extension of cultural hegemony able substitute for our Arab culture.

The framework of the Arab identity depends on the following:

- Religion: It is well known that the idea of debt associated with human beings since its existence is also an integral component of the mouthpiece of the community identity.
- Custom: The custom frame the reference for any society, because it determines the privacy and identity
 and sets it apart from other communities, also varies from one community to the other by its nature and
 its values.
- Language: is the title for any nation to determine her personality and identity, it is a tool for expression, to translate thoughts, ideas and feelings, it is a way of understanding, learning, development, transfer of experiences, cultures and civilizations.
- Geographic: determine the natural territorial border of any nation, including the Provisions of ethnicities, nationalities and peoples, so that brought together by circumstances, fate and single goals.

Every city holds its story within informal features that can be read on its walls. It can reveal its countenance from the patterns on its facades, its graffiti, its furniture, and misty neighborhoods.

Thus the process of cultural expression throughout architecture reflecting on urbanized form requires the condensation of an array of its historic/human/ecological/climatic ethos into signified phenomena without any reduction or subjugation of narrative.

Literature Review:

Through this part some previous studies that addressed this subject was reviewed in order to be a reference utilized during this research and built upon it new knowledge and information, to integrated a holistic view of the topic.

1. Jennifer Tran, 2009. Static Illusions: Architectural Identity, Meaning and History. Curtin University.



- 2. **James D. Fearon.** November 3, 1999. What is identity (as we now use the word?).
- 3. Department of Political Science. Stanford University.
- 4. Huzam Kaddoura. Siham Malkawi.Ontology of Amman: Soul and Body: study of the development of the Arab modern city.
- 5. Dr.Mamdouh Al-Abadi.1996. Amman :Realities and expectations.issue on cultural, environment and construction.conference held at the royal Cultural Center, Amman,27-29 June 1995.
- 6. الجامعة عمان أستاذ/دكتور في قسم الهندسة المعمارية البيئة العمرانية في مدينة عمان أستاذ/دكتور في قسم الهندسة المعمارية الجامعة الاردنية.
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Research objectives

- Find the reasons that led the absence of a unified architectural identity in Amman city.
- Attempt to extrapolate the main features of the architecture in the city of Amman.
- Find the suitable definition of Identity in a multidisciplinary approach.
- Identify the meaning of the architectural identity and the controversy over this concept.

Research Methodology

The research philosophy that guided this study employed descriptive and deductive approach to cover the study aspects and to implement the objectives of this study by reviewing the theoretical background of term identity within multidisciplinary approaches.

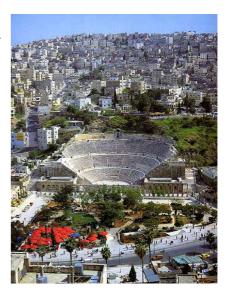
Within this approach this research shed light on how the approaches of conservation and advancement for appropriate part of the local history and culture play a significant role in defining the extant attribute of identity for any region) by discussed the relationship between heritage, conservation and architectural identity. Then the main features of architectural styles in Amman was introduced. Reading and analyzing previous studies about Amman's identity to deduct the reason of difficult finding a unified architectural identity, in addition to photographic documentation. As a result of this study conclusion are presented suggested that further studies on the cultural, contextual and historically transformative aspects of architectural identity are necessary in order to obtain a more critical understanding of the built environment.

Amman

Historical background

The history of the city of Amman to about 9000 years which are considered to be a modern city in configuration). Amman became the capital of Jordan in 1922 and the development process in the city of Amman over time affected the by several external factors including: migration of Palestinian refugees who have settled in on 1948, and 1967.in 1991 after the Gulf War many of Jordanian workers returning from Kuwait and Iraq. All these factors led to the sudden and rapid increase in population so that resulting in Amman Municipality to develop a comprehensive plan. In 1956 the first comprehensive plan was introduced, 1978 another comprehensive plan introduced and at that time, began to emerge Al Abdali district. In 1988 the metropolitan comprehensive plan for greater Amman was developed, which characterized to allow the establishment of high-rise buildings and allowed to a maximum of 100 meters within the capital, Amman.

It is a city of a more recent origin whose population developed through different waves of immigration. Amman's multiethnic and heterogeneous beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century were very inclusive. This city was considered a refuge place, and welcomed visitors of diverse origins.



All of these factors increasing diversity of the Amman's citizens and found different social/geographic/economic/ethnic/historic layers, which have a significant influence for how the local citizens (immigrants and non-immigrants), delineate their culture and also extricate the whole city identity formation composed through several aspects including: acculturation strategies, ethnic identity, individualist (through individual differences e.g. their homes) and communal cultural orientation, and autonomous and reciprocative self-construe.

The political tenets which are presently taking place in Amman plays an crucial role in the globalization mechanism. Urban development in Amman is affirmed to attract foreign investment and reduced restrictions to



free enterprise according to the planning vision which related to both the state control and economic liberalism which form the situation in Amman.

The site in Amman is presented in its mountain environment that is described with its height variances of sea level and enjoys a moderate breeze most of the year. Amman abides by the rule that states that cities are constructed on the edges of rivers and lakes, since it is the city of streams in reference to the novelist Abed Rahman Muneef. The water used to flow from various places and meet in the river, the first stream evolved from Ras Al-Eeen in the west of the old city. The river initiates its first step breaching the city from west to east, and after a long pace meets with the River of Zarqaa as both pour in the River of Jordan. Between the high mountains Amman was a giving farm and basket of wheat for Roma then for Ottomans. Height means supervision, from this point the castle was founded, since the old ages when the beautiful Tyche the daughter of Zeus who brought luck and protected Amman.

It has a unique essence, derived from each civilization, its castle is a symbol for loftiness, pride and solidity; its theater with the massive stadium is a symbol for civilization, sophistication and literature; whereas The Mermaid Spa' stores several religious and cultural symbols. It is the beautiful corona and the queen of secrets, the Romans were right when symbolized its essence by addressing the place with the names of love and beauty (Philadelphia).

Among the ancient city and the modern one, the soul of Amman has a certain theme. It is the rooted mountain along with its unlimited heights that breaches the space in each direction. It is the narrow valley that reminds all mountains that it has sprouted from the same origin that is capable of embracing and uniting residents.

Every city holds its story within informal features that can be read on its walls. It can reveal its countenance from the patterns on its facades, its graffiti, its furniture, and misty neighborhoods. Thus the process of cultural expression throughout architecture reflecting on urbanized form requires the condensation of an array of its historic/human/ecological/climatic ethos into signified phenomena without any reduction or subjugation of narrative. What is astonishing about our city is that it has been able to digest all divergent layers and structures of ethnic/religious/national/ economic/ architectural ethos. The intertwined social structure of our city has brought its simmering homogeneity. It is through the multiplicity of individual life projects and collective life forms that this community could ascend its evolving form of culture.

The attributes of a community structure lie beyond space and time, yet the processes of our daily lives lay foundation for a definite enclosure to our individual existance. Architecture acts as the key player in translating our local needs into spaces, forms and typologies. Architecture acts as a form of expression. Architecture resolves the formula between cultural science and human needs and the inherent intuition of the artistic and aesthetic sense.

The genesis of modern Amman was outlined by the strategic connection of the Hejaz railroad linking together major cities of the Fertile Crescent with the Arabian Peninsula. But the British mandate laid grounds for the newborn city, their kinship crystallized in a grand residence for the Ambassador, a palace for the Prince overlooking the valley, a military base, a mosque and a church, and ceremonial street to celebrate national days. Dispersed around a strong Archeological historical background of the Roman Amphitheatre. The prime visual exemplar to the urbanizing growth of Amman was the Roman Amphitheatre. Then people settling on a mountain, building houses on the slope, what called for the articulation of stairways and the sloping neighborhoods growing around these vertical streams of flow. This buildup provided the vitality of the movement from the houses residing on the slope to the flat lands of the commercial areas and institutional centers like the court of justice.

Architecture began in the city of Amman with the immigration of Circassians , they established buildings and then established the emirate of Amman to be its capital, which has seen its impact migrations of technical manpower ,skilled builders and industrialists (from Palestine Lebanon and Syria), the architecture was simple formed the layering of gradual social, natural, urban, interplay which resolved into a simple juxtaposition of a single life form and the slogan of(A HOUSE: simple façade (confirm the principles of aesthetic interact with the natural environment and meet their needs), courtyard mediates rooms and links them) , building materials were taken from those found on the outskirts of the torrent of stones and trees . Even though the use of local stone and the art of masonry have managed to hold together a somewhat coherent image.

Architecture between twenties and forties of the twentieth century:

The architect and the builders coming from Beirut, Damascus, Jerusalem and Nablus. This period was marked by the emergence of merchant class who built their homes near the shops, this homes taken special forms and it was known" the villa", this type of construction characterize of being rectangular stone building consists of one or two floors surrounded by garden and bordered by wall (the design was commensurate with the environmental and climatic conditions of the area. In this period the front facades design taken the most attention compared with back and side facades, which popularized by using triple arches in the front facades of Amman's houses



and most of the windows in the form of arches such as: segmental arch, pointed arch, and round arch. The basic building material was stone because of availability and ability to build this material. This period was also marked by "sense of community". The buildings were similar in terms of materials, and in the method of formation which almost taken the cluster form. The houses clustered around the street, the schools and shops built adjacent to these houses to form an integrated urban environment.

During the British Mandate period the buildings designed by British architects, which characterized by rationality and simple shapes with the use of stone, examples of those buildings: building management company Petroleum Refinery) (IPC) (in Jebel Amman, Rainbow Street. Refinery Company Office Building (IPC) (in Jabal Amman, and is now known King Hussein Club)

With the independence of Jordan and the emergence of Amman as the capital city, well established citizens had directed their efforts towards naissance of the city consensus through providing loans, real estate, and capital. These efforts were adjoined by migrating families from across the country expanding the city's infrastructure, building the University and an airport. Further planning of the city improved land use raising the value of real estate and incorporating existing structures to adapt government and public institutions.

our city Amman like other cities in the third world countries have moved from modernity to post modernity, and from internationalism to globalism with considerable effects on cities today.

During the fifties

Through this period Jordan Exposure to a large numbers of immigrants because of the Israeli war on Palestine. The streets Opened and built sidewalks. This period was also marked by rejecting traditional forms of stone buildings in an attempt to give a new image using reinforced concrete in different ways. The design characterized by strip window , balconies and an emphasis sense on horizontal open spaces despite the fact that this pattern does not in proportion to the mountainous nature of the city of Amman. Even though the stone was still to be the essential building material. Example of building related to this period; Zahran Palace by engineers Deran and Escarcian.

Because of the migrations and increase number of population this led to the emergence of unregulated slums and many Refugees camps appeared, where the population resorted to use construction techniques which most rapid and least cost by using concrete space (style column, the bridge) and hollow bricks in walls which led to the deterioration of Jordan's urban environments.

During the sixties

The prevailing architectural style is the international style, in addition to the emergence of new construction materials such as glass where the buildings appeared as a large glass aperture, the cantilever concrete elements and huge construction. New material appeared in construction such as Aljmiston with multiple colors, ceramics, Aljlaustr ornate bricks, glass brick and sloping tiled roofs, the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and Villa Flora by engineer Zuhair AL-Sha'ar are examples of building related to this period.

This period was marked by western style and erosion of authenticity, and the focus was on highlighting the exterior of the buildings which affected by the cubic theory or cubic form and accompanied by a great diversity in the type of stone and the use of colored stone (red and black), which was used contrary to the traditional style of coloring stone on Madamik (AL-Hahajr AL ablaq) in addition to the use of marble and granite in the exterior façade. It was also characterized by the beginning of transformation in the use of stone from Structural element to cladding element for facades as a finishing layer superficial cosmetic.

During The seventies

The architecture in this period influenced by modern architecture style, and move away from traditional or local architecture which was helped by the economic boom experienced by Jordan by remittances from expatriates working in the Gulf and the activity of investment and reconstruction movement in the kingdom.

In the mid-seventies a group of architects appeared who have called for linking culture and architecture of the local environment, which showed the traditional local architecture, but in the beginning it was a cosmetic treatment works to borrow vocabulary and incorporated in the composition, formal architecture have no substance. Examples of architects who have called for a return to traditional architecture: Rasim Badran, and Jafar Toukan This period was characterized by converting architecture toward local identity with great emotion, but it was influenced with Western touch such as tiled sloping surfaces, such as the parliament building to Rasim Badran.

The surrounding political situation of the region had been in a state of flux. Its sporadic pattern of change was evidently traced on the urban development of the city, until it reached a seasonal tide of growth and decline.

The lack of coherence revealed itself in a contamination of the city with competing typologies imported from western societies devoid of cultural reference. The appropriated models of post modern architecture were not established on a theoretical base of departure, which creating a disparity between the true meaning of



Semiotics and a dysfunctional articulation of facades and so on the identity had been lacking even in the post modern approach towards our local architecture.

During the eighties alien architectural phenotypes threatening the morphology of Amman and its urban tissue, it also characterized by urban momentum which influenced by modern architecture such as housing projects , residential buildings and independent villas and determining Capitalism through the monumental facades and applying steel and glass deformations to our buildings. The repulsive battle of styles became hardly unnoticeable in Amman, harassing the civic environment in an audacious use of western styles. But also this period was characterized by back to the stone as a formal building material to cover the exterior (cladding element).

During the nineties even more globalized and cosmopolitan institutions such as banks, Hotels, and Cafe are dictating invalid behavior through franchised Protocols. Such institutions are not only imposing their spatial conditions, they are also inviting patterns of social interaction and behavior adequate to these conditions. Even hospitals have transformed into health to commercial centre, reinforced by their capitalistic image. Coffee shops carry foreign names; follow appropriate etiquette to their foreign lifestyle conduit. Even food chains have rendered our streets, penetrating local schemata becoming famous landmarks of our city. This period characterized by diversified in the architectural styles and increasing in the housing projects that used stone as finishing material and appeared buildings in strange forms for the local environment. Adham (2005) noted that circulating images of such neoliberal urban restructuring mimic developments in the West and represent as such an 'Oriental vision of the Occident'.

The latest invasion of Iraq, knocking down the last attempts to preserve the Ammani identity, by placing the modern pillars of capitalism and globalization. Such projects are financed by the same countries that are now faced with the social and climatic drawbacks of high rise buildings.

It is worth mentioning that the concept of "contemporary" does not mean subordination and commitment the other, it means to contribute the contemporary thought submit creations authentic not replicated. Remains intent, increase inventory creativity world and not repeat it. The Heritage is stock philanthropy, which is not determined in time that has passed, but in time continuous, from one to the other.

Main features of architectural styles in Amman:

- <u>Use of white limestone for the construction of dwellings</u>, (most probably in the east of Amman). The built form seems to be a cluster type arrangement of several dwellings into one giving an impression of a much larger Scale to each building. The characteristic of the architecture has an almost organic sense to it, as if it has grown from the stony earth inadvertently forming dwellings for people to inhabit.
- The controverter in the use of stone as building material. At the beginning the stone was used as a construction and functional material such as bearing walls, and its thickness of up to 80 cm and there openings was a rectangular form with arch at top, the midmac height of 20-30 cm and there was one type of stone and the same quality and tapping on the entire building. But then turning in the used of stone as external layer superficial final aesthetic.
- The large masonry arches used in the construction of contemporary buildings forms another strong characteristic of the city at the beginning, the formation of the arch has a logical functional usage to create a large opening using the local limestone but modern construction uses the column and beam to transfer structural loads through the building therefore in modern buildings the arch loses its structural importance but continues to carry its characteristic quality.
- The house design: The house reverses the individual differences, the social categorizations, the personal identity, preferences, attitudes beliefs, and how he or she wants to emerge themselves to be oneness and discriminating, autonomous and free from all determinants or restrictions. It also reflect the variation of houses design which related to many variables such as the economic level,, social, political, and cultural aspects which admitted on the









residents lifestyle. Homes emulate the dialectic reciprocity of community and individuality meaning alike.

As mentioned above the house delineate the oneness and personality of its denizen such as their individual's identity and at the same time their relations as a family, likewise their links, their attachment, their inherent lifestyles and their integrity with society and local culture of which they are a part. Even though the houses designs are varied but also they limited by the convenient restriction of local culture .Each neighborhood has its own theme and uniqueness which form its identity according to the similarity features in houses design.

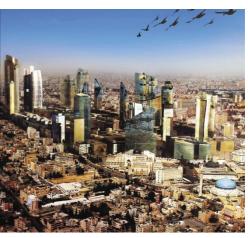
- <u>Skyscrapers buildings</u> :which composed in unrestrained aspect at any place or site. Amman has three major dominate skyscrapers which will effect and influence on the skyline of the city:
- Jordan Gate twin towers, under construction, after accomplishment it will be the highest building in Amman at 150 meters height. Situated in the western Amman adjacent to the Amman airport road.
- Al Abdali site, under construction, situated in western Amman ,which will Consists of seven skyscrapers differ in height form 100m to 220 m.
- <u>Commercial buildings</u> (commercial streets) with huge and wide glass fronts, shiny metal surfaces (alcabond). Western models away from the local environment.

<u>Difficulty of finding a unified architectural identity due to</u> the following reasons:

- The spread of the idea of progress in modern lifestyles which do not fit with its past, cultural and environmental realities, but tracking material gain financial and so lost the significance of architectural and cultural heritage.
- Technological advances in different domain of science and civilization, especially in architectural domain and the advanced uses of modern building materials, or a valuable application of sophisticated construction systems set up depending on the
- economic data, income, administrative organization and planning theory.
- Raise the level of business investment to provide income.
- Contributed laws and legislation that Conversion the annex land adjacent to the archeological sites into areas for housing and giving licenses to set up housing to solve the problems of housing at the expense of development and the preservation of heritage buildings and archaeological historical, which led to the infringement of those buildings and a change in the features and landmarks, as occurred in the cities of Amman and Jerash.
- Multiplicity of architectural styles in design (loss the unified soul or style according to different schools and approaches, which often western style) because each architect seeking to put his own imprint (personal identity), which distinguish it from others and ignore the relationship between Amman's nature and the surrounding environment.
- The modern trend towards tourist Architecture, where the individuality formula is the prevailing patterns, overlapped construction and commercial offices, restaurants and cafes be within residential buildings, according to a purely Western trend.
- Visual pollution on the rooftops and in particular in the downtown, which attack the buildings facades which turned into billboards in random situations of disturbing and offensive.









- Tendency to show and highlight the self, bragging and showing off the use of architectural elements or ornamental materials lend inconsistent character with the local urban environment, by spending money in luxury building, luxury homes and the establishment of sophisticated construction. In while other areas showed a large variation in social and cultural organization, and in architectural style which characterized by indiscriminate and organic design, for example:
- High-tech and sophisticated buildings emerged (mostly imported from abroad).
- Buildings of a local style.
- Imitation in design style (cut and paste), which led to weakness in appearance and the low level of architectural and artistic taste.

Even so the collective social memory which connected with city of Amman, within its streets, inputs and the inclusion of small backyard is the living heritage which is difficult to break him, including emotions and it represents the belonging feelings to whom living in. Given this city its legality and form its identity.

As architect, planners and conservators we should create identity plan for our city to preserve and promote the uniqueness character of each zone, this plan including areas of conservation and redevelopment of the node points of mnemonic value particular to our community by identifying the social, commercial and recreational activity patterns. To formulate territorial identity, we should consolidate an identity map for several zones, in this map shows figures, bustle node, principal pieces, main roads, open spaces and assemblage stations, which are considered as monumental features in our social landscape by these procedures we can reinforce the distinctive identity to our city.

Conclusion

This research insight into the term of identity which becomes a remarkable phenomena in the recent years, which become a contemporary conception of solemnity, **nobility**, respect or boast which inherently lies these to social classes. it is possessed taken an enthusiasm in many field which questions Issues relating to identity, we can summarize its definition in conventional notions; it means either" (a) a social category, defined by membership rules and allegedly characteristic attributes or expected behaviors, or (b) a socially distinguishing feature that a person takes a special pride in or views as unchangeable but socially consequential (or, both (a) and (b) at once".

Identity is narrative constructed in an ongoing dialogue with culture, heritage and history. They are related to each other. Many buildings, landscapes and pieces of art are seen as heritage because they refer to certain historic periods, persons or events, and at the same time these constructs as aspects of identity formation, Heritage may performance as a denotation and indicate to narrative history. A number of objects that are preserved as heritage, date from specific epochs are also defines the contemporary character of the town identity. This terminology is utilized in a vast substance related to 'conventional' substances and on the other hand refer to 'traditional' ways of life (such as dance, drama, music, and the visual and plastic arts), which are usually brought into association with the material evidence of the past. Heritage is a stock that inspired generations and also proposes ideas for future solutions. So heritage is almost portrait and formulate identities.

This research shed light on how the approaches of conservation and advancement for appropriate part of the local history and culture play a significant role in defining the extant attribute of identity for any region, even so architectural identity discussed to be understood as an unstable construct that forms and alters according to historically specific socio-cultural, perceptual and contextual conditions across time, familiarized by individuals and their particular encounters of the built environment. Additionally, the role of people's past experiences, memories and ideas in shaping architectural meaning (how people's memories, past experiences or ideas, and their socio-cultural association with the built environment, play a pivotal role in the construction and transformation of architectural identity. substantially, architecture must studied for its meanings and inspecting its varied conversions.

City of Amman has different social/ geographic/economic/ethnic/historic layers which added something different to its identity. So we should -people as individuals and places as communities- seek to safeguard a sense of place and loyalty through concentrated use of land. Identity is no longer confined to the built environment and physical characteristics alone, but also historical significance, community life, distinctive lifestyle and cultural traits, and even the soft aspect as social activities. Identity is more than just conservation we should identify the magic of our country, and the things which make them attractive to us and give us a sense of belonging rootedness and identity.

There seems to be a strong gap between the theoretical realm of education and the harsh world of practitioners that hinders a uniform scientific inquiry about the future of our city identity. We have been swayed against the real purpose of architecture on both the individual and urban level. It is truly a brilliant architect that can provide a comfortable living. If the purpose of education were to broaden our architectural perception and to emit an authentic cultural view, then we have as architects failed. We have only succeeded in extending our egocentric madness to the whole city. As architects and planners we need to transmit an honest narrative of our



culture and digest the multicultural implications without causing a distortion of identity. As architects we should able for once to cleanse our eyes from western aesthetics and to hush our blinding ambition, and faced the scattered ideologies that they need to derive a stable identity from it. Let it be wise enough to build upon with science and technology that serves humanity and not destroys it at the same time preserve our cultural. This suggests that further studies on the cultural, contextual and historically transformative aspects of architectural identity are necessary in order to obtain a more critical understanding of the built environment.

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