

Architectural Identity in an Era of Change

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Abstract

This paper attempts to enhance knowledge about architectural heritage of large number of ignored human cultures. Different global geopolitical changes since collapsing the Eastern Block and the recent political changes in the Middle East have revealed the need to reconsider the architectural identity in the new development process. The recent street demonstrations that toppled the existing power systems in Middle East are revealing national demands and realities that suffered suppression for several decades. One of the areas that has suffered from the previous control systems is neglecting and deconstructing architectural identity of the different cultural groups.

The local architectural identity of any particular society is an important life container which reflects among other its cultural values and meanings that evolve over time. Emerging the new democratic systems in Arabic Spring countries rise an important global phenomenon that I call it liberalizing architectural identity. Our present architectural knowledge and practice should seize this historical change in order to liberate itself from practices that have influenced or guided by the previous control systems.

The paper is based on case study and observations. I have used an inductive method in observing the development of the whole architectural identity situation of the two cases in order to define what aspects are central in constituting architectural identity in a multi ethnic country.

The paper is using Iraq as a case study of a country with different cultures where each culture has its own architectural tradition. The study shows how the architectural diversity of the country has been damaged by ignoring the multi cultural reality of the country. The study will also show role of the architects, architecture schools, authority, and users in this phenomena. The case study will show Iraq's historical architectural development since 1921 till the present to develop evidences that are used in analysing the present architectural identity as a product and a process. The two case studies are, first case of Baghdad (capital town of Iraq and centre of Iraqi government since establishing of Iraq in 1921) and second is case of Erbil (main city of Kurdistan Region north Iraq).

Keywords: identity, multi-cultural groups, The Arabic Spring, Iraqi Architecture, Kurdistan, Kurdish architectural heritage, liberal architecture

1. Introduction

Most of world's countries are composed of multi ethnical cultural groups where each cultural group has its particular architectural heritage and identity. During the history, several architectural heritages emerged and flourished due to natural changes while other heritages stagnated or disappeared as a result of destructions or imposing new architecture. In both cases, architectural identity is used as the safe domain to continue and grow.

During history, diversity and level of the architectural identity of cities are influenced by the type of ruling power in the city. Emerging democracy and socialism have shifted the elite control and made the identity part of its ideological meanings.

Since the early of the 20th century, most of the countries in Middle East have applied modern architecture with little attention to local architectural identity. Since the 1960's more efforts have been applied to apply regional and local architecture. Yet they ignored the multi ethnic reality of these countries. The major factor behind this situation is because creating modern local architectural identity in these countries is decided by the dominating cultural groups. This trend has been applied in architectural education, research, practice, rules, planning, and policies.

During the last decades, several studies and researches have been done to show the diversity of human's

architectural cultures and the damaging consequences of ignoring that¹. The Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World edited by Paul Oliver contains large number of evidences showing that almost each country is composed of several national groups where each group has its own traditional architectural identity.

But on the other hand, large numbers of what we read and hear about architectural identity in the present have contradicted meanings that are raising several questions such as: Who identifies the architectural identity? What is the architectural identity? In reality, architectural identity of any nation is a direct product and reflection of the applied political system in the country and how democratic is the decision making in the country. Absent of the democracy in large number of countries such as in the Middle East, Africa and several countries in Asia has reflected in creating a situation where architectural identity is decided by particular groups.

2. Architectural Identity

Architectural identity can be identified by different ways. For example, it can be the identity of a particular architectural movement which is for example reflected in its particular way of forming buildings, spaces and the social life it creates. Architectural identity of a particular local culture represents a living landscape with common sense of place that is produced by the community's accumulated efforts over time to contain meanings and way of life that form the national architectural identity.²

Each particular nation has applied different methods and process to produce its modern particular national architectural identity. This process has been influenced by the applied system of decision making. Nations with open and democratic decision making tradition have managed to give users larger influence in its architectural development process. This open process has played a vital role to decide the national architectural identity. Although, there are different critiques about how open is the process. But having the democratic system can give the society different possibilities to influence the decision making through media, education, organizations and free speech. while in other nations with not democratic systems, producing the national architectural identity has been produced largely by small number of decision maker.

The modern national architectural identity in non Western countries reflects a direct influence by the Western architecture. Applying this architecture in these countries was done basically by top down decision making process with little or no local participation. Therefore, the national architectural identity in large number of these countries has been influenced by the applied decision making system that has enabled the elite groups to decide architectural identity of the entire country.³

In 2002 BBC had broadcasted a topic about architecture and power and its main question was: Have architects concerned themselves mainly with the masses, or restricted their designs to the demands and aspirations of the elite?

In multi ethnic countries, demands and aspirations of the dominating elite group have formed the main source to decide the national architectural identity. It also has reflected in the types of empowering agencies, social orders and laws which have supported the type of the applied architecture⁴.

Changing the elite groups has also associated with changing the city architecture. This phenomena has existed during history with different consequences including demolishing and transformation of the original city shape and its architecture and building totally new cities and applying new architecture of the elite. Some old examples are transformation of the planned street layout of Aleppo and Damascus during the Greek age to irregular shapes during Islamic period and building the city of Baghdad in the 8th Century⁵.

Plans of building Washington submitted in 1791 and had reflected the radical changes of Western society that had

¹ Paul Oliver (editor), Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997), vol.1, 2, 3.

² Vale, Lawrence J, Architecture, power, and national identity (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1992)

³ Elleh, Nnamdi, Architecture and Power in Africa, (New York, Praeger Publishers, 2002)

⁴ Kostof, Spiro, The City Shaped (London, Thames & Huson Ltd, 1991) . Pp. 29-110

⁵ Nooraddin, Hoshiar, *AlFina: A Study of In-between Spaces Along Streets as an Urban Design Concept In Islamic Cities of the Middle East with a case study in Cairo* (Trondheim, NTNU, 1996) Pp. 52-59

been shaken to its foundations by three major revolutions, the English, the American, and the French⁶. The architect of Washington plan L'Enfant's was largely dictated by centralized coercion and control. Another example is Haussmann's Plan of Paris (1850-1870) which was influenced by Napoleon III's desire to reform Paris by cutting streets through it. These are examples of large cities where the elite's dominance on decision makings had changed their architectural identities and develop new realities⁷.

Many social and political ideological movements have played as the major source of creating elite groups that have decided, influenced, or changed the architectural identity in order to achieve ideological goals such as the architectural development in Soviet Union and Eastern Europe after 2nd World War till 1980es⁸.

On the other hand, modern architectural movements have created new elite groups which are the famous architects, where each group tries to create the architectural identity in accordance with movement's style and principles. Establishing architectural education during 19th century the major role to institutionalize this tradition and contribute to its global application. The architectural identity had shifted its meaning from being a reflection of the local milieu to abstract reflections of distinct movements using lines, colours, materials, shapes, forms and masses as elements to achieve their particular architectural identity. As a consequence, a large number of cities in the world have been transformed to scenes of crowded architectural identities such as London, Paris, Istanbul, Cairo, Dubai, and Hong Kong.

The challenging issue is how to apply a particular architectural style at the same time consider the local identity within its particular milieu composed of its local natural and cultural realities. The underlying logic of this method is to prevent architectural identity from being only a product but also a living process.

It is known that classifying architectural spaces can rely on form or use and not both. The reason is that a particular function can be realized by different types of architectural forms and vice versa. In the traditional architecture, it is the local culture that identifies type of the architectural space that can contain particular function and why. This relationship gives the identity of architectural space its local cultural meanings and makes its architecture identical. This require understanding the total relationships of the architecture within its local milieu. Therefore, considering selective elements of local identity by different movements in developing architectural and urban design cannot meet this goal because their principles have no relation the milieu⁹ and the result is a shell.

3. Multi Cultural Groups and Architectural Identity in Scandinavia

Scandinavia is composed of four European countries Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Iceland. Since Second World War all four countries have developed an open social democratic system which allows an open and horizontal participation in decision making. Urban growth, urban design, urban quality and architectural identity are among issues where authorities, professionals and users have been actively involved in developing policies, guidelines, and design proposals.

The open process has established a rich environment to grow and flourish the architectural identity. For example, regenerating the old down town area of Oslo including Grønland, Kjølnberggate, Aker Brygge and Bjørnviika has applied an open process where the users and different professional sectors have been involved in the decision making during the whole process. The process has also accompanied with developing comprehensive studies and analysis in order to involve most relevant issues in the process such as building materials, elevations, indoor and outdoor spaces, formal and informal rules, traditions, activities, environment, sustainability and so forth¹⁰. As a consequence, the architectural designs and urban design solutions have used large efforts to involve these issues in accordance with their local interests to create a local new and interesting identity for the city.

⁶ Mumford, Lewis, *The City in History* (Orlando, FL, A Harvest Book Harcourt Inc, 1989). P. 403

⁷ Saalman, Howard, *Haussmann: Paris Transformed* (New York, George Braziller, New York, 1971). P. 14

⁸ Kostof, Spiro, *The City Assembled* (London, Thames Hudson, London, 1999) Pp. 80-81

⁹ Chadirji, Rifat, *Concepts and Influence: Towards a Regionalized International Architecture*, (London, KPI Ltd, 1986)

¹⁰ Nooraddin, Hoshiar, *How to Study and Shape Liveable Main Streets*, (Oslo, Statens Vegvesen, 2006)(In Norwegian with English Summary)



Figure 1: Old fabric redeveloped and reused



Figure 2: The Old Oslo Harbour

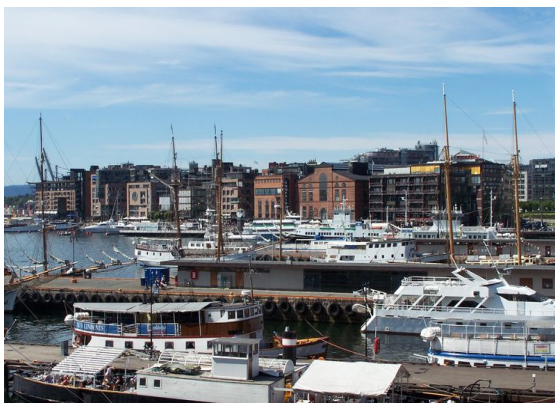


Figure 3: Urban Development, Aker Brygge, Oslo



Figure 4: The new Opera House in Bjorvika, by Snohetta

On the other hand, the cultural diversity is well accepted and supported in all levels of decision making including architecture, planning and urban design . When the state decided building the new Finnmark Court (Finnmark tinghuset) in Tana north Norway, the arkitekt considered the Sami culture (who are different ethnical and cultural group than the Norwegian) in developing the design concept and details.



Figure 5: Finmark Court, Tana, Norway, by Architect Stein Halvorsen

On the other hand, the last national uprisings in several countries in the Middle East (the Arabic Spring) have contributed to uncover the multi cultural reality in these countries where these ethnical groups have raised the demands to provide fare and democratic conditions which can support reviving their neglected cultures. In many cases, these ethnical groups have their particular architectural heritages which have either being neglected or in some cases are demolished. The new democratic era will require applying democratic decision making systems that allows and encourages applying and developing architectural identity of the distinct cultural groups in each particular country.



Figure 6: A Street Demonstration in Cairo 2011

This problem requires more research about how architecture is practiced and researched in multiethnic and multicultural countries and how democratic systems can improve the general knowledge about this issue and bring about better architectural development in these countries.

4. Case of Iraq:

Until the end of the nineteenth century, it was common that local craftsmen and those using buildings to function as designers. The local architecture of Iraq was often based on vernacular architecture inherited from one generation to the next. Since the Iraqi society was composed of multicultural social groups with different

architectural heritage, therefore, old Iraqi cities had several types architecture and urban forms.¹¹

The Ottoman Empire collapse in 1918 had contributed the British colonization of large areas of the Ottoman Empire's territories including the present Iraq. The boundaries of present Iraq had been established in 1921. This new established country was composed of several ethnics basically Arabs, Kurds and Turkmens. Each ethnic group has its own particular, culture, history, and language. The power system was established and developed in a way that the decision making was concentrated only in small group without any real participation of the population. The Kurds and Turkmens were gradually ignored in the decision making system that had contributed into ignoring their architectural heritages. Since the decision making system was not open or democratic, all aspects of the society have reflected the consequences of practicing this system.

One of the important decisions by the central authority since 1930's was reforming and developing the local architecture by adopting international architecture. Yet, the applied plans and architectural solutions had ignored several important issues including that Iraq is composed of different ethnics with different architectural heritages and local needs. The new architecture was applied first in Baghdad and then copied slowly into other cities. Changes in local architecture and the urban fabric of Iraqi cities has increased dramatically after Second World War. Earlier transformations of the built environment had always consisted of additions to existing built-up areas. This trend changed early in the twentieth century when, as part of the modernization process, new streets which cut through the existing fabric were introduced. During 1950s more comprehensive town plans were adopted such as Doxiadis plan of Baghdad, Erbil, Kerkuk and Basra¹². The government also had invited many famous architects to participate in designing key projects particularly in Baghdad among them were , Robert Venturi, Walter Gropius, Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Write, Alvar Aalto, Gio Ponti, Ricardo Bofill. But what their design really evokes are the progressive values associated with Cold War-era They are shaped by the belief that the language of International Style Modernism — and the universal ideals it embodied — could be made to fit any context.



Figure 7: Baghdad's Rail Station

¹¹ Bianca, Stefano, *Urban Form in the Arab World*. (London, Thames and Hudson, 2000)

¹² Doxiadis, Constantinos, *Ekistics: An Introduction to the Science of human Settlements*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press , 1968)

4.1. Emergence of the Modern Local Iraqi Architectural Identity

In 1958, the royal system of Iraq has been replaced by a republic system. The new system was controlled by nationalist groups. The decision making process and the central national ideology have influenced all sectors of the Iraqi society including architecture. Iraqi architectural heritage is presented as Arabic heritage architecture and ignored the multi ethnical reality of the modern Iraq. As a consequence architectural heritages of all other cultural groups in the country are ignored both in education and development projects.

By 1950s few Iraqi architects started coming home after being educated in the West¹³. This was the start of the new era in the history of Iraqi architecture because since then the international architecture had been applied in Iraq by Iraqi architects themselves¹⁴. Among these young local architects were Rifa'at Chadirji and Mohammed Makiyyah who played important role in establishing the new era of the modern local architecture in Iraq. The common issue between them was to reform and change the applied architecture in Iraq in order to develop the built environment that can facilitate creating the new modern Iraqi society. This goal was almost all young movements in Iraq during that period. But Chaditji and Makiya had influenced by different social, economic and political ideologies. But the common issue between them was creating the local Iraqi architecture.

Although, Chadirji and Makiya tried later establish modern local architecture yet their works were only based on Arabic traditional architecture in Iraq although Makiya considered architecture of the whole Islamic world an open source for learning and adoption into his works¹⁵. They ignored the reality of Iraqi nation which is composed of several cultural groups. They also ignored that through history almost each Iraqi city had developed its own architectural identity which was the result of cultural productions through several centuries. During this process almost each Iraqi city had developed its own unique architectural identity.

This phenomenon is the reality of all Iraqi cities during starting from its old and Islamic civilizations such as Babylon, Nineva, Kufa, Baghdad, Samara, and Erbil. Analysing town planning and architectural characters of these cities show large difference in all aspects. The following images of architectural heritages of two Iraqi cities Basra in south and Erbil north which clearly reflects the differences in typologies and characters.



Figure 8: Traditional House in Basra



Figure 9: Traditional House in Erbil

13 Kultermann, Udo. The architects of Iraq. (Singapore, Concept Media, 1982) Mimar Journal, No. 5, p. 55

14 Chadirji, Rifat, 1985, Taha Street and Hammersmith (Beirut: Muassassat Alibhath Alarabiyah, 1985)

15 Makiya, Kanan, Post Islamic Classicism (London: Saqi Books, 1990)

Yet the young Iraqi architects failed to see this reality of Iraq's multi architectural cultural reality.

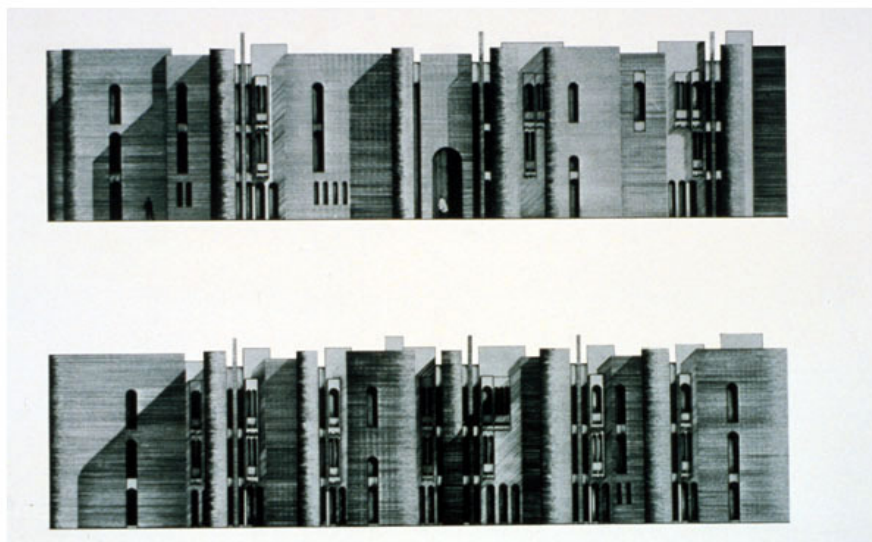


Figure 10: Tobacco Warehouses, Baghdad, Rifat Chadirji

Therefore, applying these projects in Iraqi cities such Baghdad can be described as efforts to create local Iraqi national architectural identity. Yet, applying same architecture in other ethnical areas was an effort to manipulate local architectural identity in these areas.

This trend has been applied the education systems of all local Architectural schools in Iraq including Baghdad University, University of Technology, and Mosul University.

Since the 1960's the architectural education was totally influenced and guided by the central authority. The central authority was ruled by one political party with restricted Arabic national ideology. This political system and the central decision making had also ignored the multicultural reality of the Iraqi nation and how to deal with it.

As a consequence, architectural heritage of all non Arabic groups ignored and humiliated. In many cases old cities and built up areas were systematically demolished in order to change its identity. Among these examples are demolishing the old citadel of Kirkuk and relocating hundreds of villages in Kurdistan.

5. Kurdistan and Kurdish Architectural Identity

Kurdistan is a large plateau and mountain region, located in the Middle East divided between north Iraq, south east Turkey, north west Iran, and north east Syria. The area is mainly populated by over 30 million Kurds, their language is Kurdish, and Islam is the basic religion. Kurdistan has large number of historical sites that have witnessed human settlement and developed different types of architectural heritages. Among these are Erbil, Mashad, Diyarbakir and Urfa.

In the present the Kurds are one of the major ethnical cultural groups of North Iraq or Kurdistan Region. During the whole 20th century, this region hadn't experienced any effort to develop studies about the local Kurdish traditional architecture and how to develop modern local architecture. The schools of architecture and official development plans were all influenced by or based on the Iraqi architectural style which was developed by the new young architects in Baghdad. As a consequence Kurdistan has lost the opportunity to develop the required knowledge about the local Kurdish architectural heritage and how to bring this heritage into the development projects in Kurdistan.

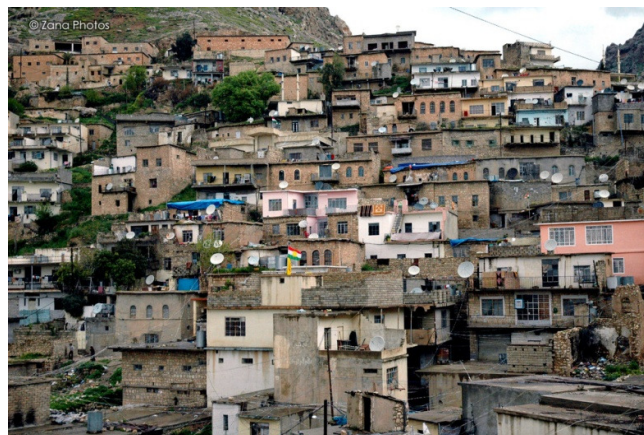
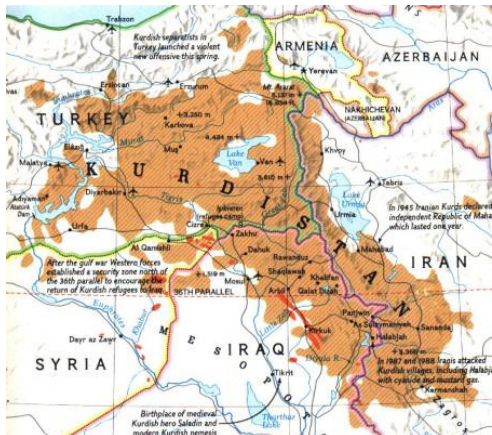


Figure 11: Kurdistan Area in the Middle East Figure 12: City of Akre, Kurdistan, North Iraq

5.1. Kurdish Traditional Architecture

Kurdish traditional architecture can be classified into three basic categories according to their location, towns (shar), village (gund), and nomadic. Citadel of Erbil (Arbil) is a good example of this old and unique architectural heritage in Kurdistan. Erbil (ancient Arbela) is located in southern Kurdistan, about 360 kilometres north of Baghdad, in Iraq. It is one of the oldest urban sites in the world continuously settled for some 6000 years and has been witness to the rise and fall of major ancient and Islamic cultures¹⁶. An important stage of Erbil's history was in the 12th century it became part of the Ayyubids Empire which was a Kurdish empire that dominated the Middle East and Egypt for two centuries.

Old descriptions of the city done by Yaqut al-Hamawi¹⁷ describes the city during the 12th century as a strong and large city built on the top of a hill and containing houses, markets, and mosques.

Another settlement was built down in the valley beside the hill.

The settlement on the hill was divided into three residential areas, Saray at the east, Top Khanah at the south, and Takiyyah at the north. The rich people settled around the edge of the city forming a ring.

¹⁶ Morris, AEJ, 1994, History of Urban Form, Before the Industrialization, Longman Scientific and Technical, Burnt Mill, Harlow, p.9.

¹⁷ Al-Baghdadi, Shihabaddin, Mujam al Buldan (History of the countries), Dar Bairut, Bairut, Lebanon, vol.1 p. 173



Figure 13: Erbil Citadel in 1950

Figure 14: Erbil Citadel in the present

This position was popular because it provided views towards the surrounding valley and better ventilation possibilities. The middle and poor social class quarters were located in the interior of this settlement. The streets were narrow, about 0.7-3 meters and irregular. The main streets were branched out from one major gate at the south. These streets again branched out to smaller streets and dead-end streets forming a tree form.

Today the city forms a vast complex of buildings and narrow streets enclosed by town walls. All houses are in 1 or two floors. The houses can be classified into small, medium and few large houses of rich families.

The old commercial area (bazaar) located outside the residential Citadel area. It contains a covered area like arcades, called qaysari. The qaysari was introduced to the city by the ottomans from Turkey and composes 2-3 meters wide, irregular, and straight streets. Along the streets, small shops are built on the ground floor with storage on the upper floor. The streets are covered by arcades to prevent rain in winter, hinder sun light and reduce the temperature in summer. The shops are small, often 2 meters wide and 2 to 3 meters deep. The ground level of the shops was 0.5 meter higher than the streets and extended 0.5 meter into the street space forming a bench called setchu. The Shopkeepers sat on this bench along the street. Most of these benches have been gradually removed in the last decades but the space street space is still used for sitting and displaying goods. The shops of the bazaar grew up around trade in one product¹⁸.

¹⁸ Nooraddin, Hoshiar, Kurdish Vernacular in Encyclopaedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World, edited by Paul Oliver (Cambridge University Press, 1997), vol.3.



Figure 15: A dwelling Intrace



Figure 16: The Public Bath of Erbil Citadel (*hamam*)



Figure 17: A Typical window



Figur 18: Citadel of Erbil

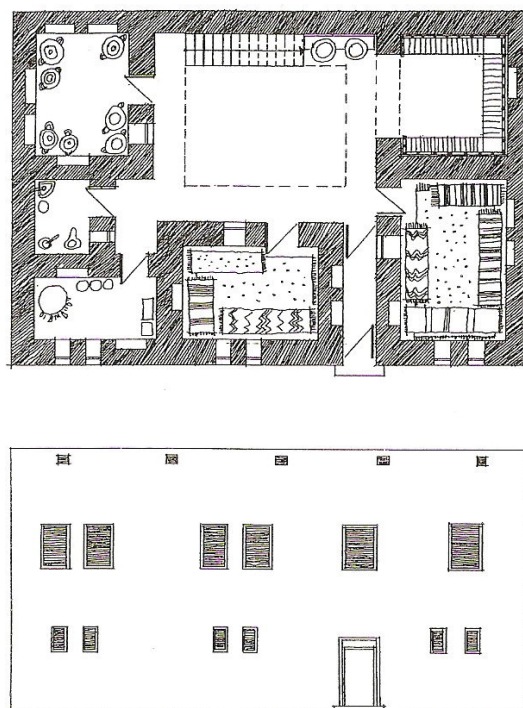


Figure 19: Plan and elevation of typical house in the citadel of Erbil

After the First World War, Erbil became part of the new established kingdom of Iraq and since then the city's urban growth has been directly influenced by the economic, social and political process. The transformation of the urban fabric started after the 2nd World War. This involved:

1. Constructing new diagonal straight street in the citadel by removing buildings cross the settlement from the southern gate to the northern side. The same trend had been applied in the other old districts including the bazaar by introducing grid streets, removing old buildings and constructing new buildings along the new streets.
2. Planning new areas around the old district that had totally based on the new town planning, codes and legislations

Parallel with the authority's intervention and change, inhabitants of the Citadel had started moving outside the Citadel and built houses with new architectural design and construction copied from Baghdad by local builders and engineers.

With these new design patterns, most of the local traditional architecture has been neglected which contributed to emergence of a new architectural character, city form and social life. Yet the local users have modified the applied design character during using the buildings and outdoor spaces. Among these modifications are occupying the sidewalks and transferring them to gardens, changing function of some rooms to shops, neglecting the balconies as sitting area,

This model of copy based architecture has being practiced since the 1950's till the present..

Parallel with ignoring local architectural identity, Architectural heritage was also suffered from neglecting, demolishing and replacement. Kerkuk Citadel was totally demolished by the authority and gate of Erbil Citadel was demolished and replaced with a new gate design based on architectural patterns imported from old gate designs of Babylon.



Figure 20: The new gate of Erbil Citadel build in 1980 after demolishing the old gate

5.2. *The Present Kurdish Architectural Identity: Identity in Identity*

Large territories of Kurdish area have gained local control since 1991 following the Gulf war. Since then, large reconstruction projects have started in rural and urban areas. Till 2003, the projects were administrated by UN under the agreement of oil for food.

After collapsing Sadam Husain in 2003, A total and fundamental change has introduced in all aspects of the country including social, political, economic, decision making, and educational sectors. As a consequence, the social diversity of the Iraqi nation has been raised as a fundamental urgent topic that has required developing new system of national decentralized decision making. As a consequence areas of Kurdistan has got autonomous identity where the local population has achieved large control over the their territory. Yet architects and schools of architecture in this area couldn't manage till now to benefit from this historical change in Iraq that can support building modern local national architectural identity.



Figure 21: Neshman Mall 2009



Figure 22 Majidi Mall 2010



Figure 23: New Commercial Tower Figure 24: The American Village

One century of ignoring Kurdish architecture in schools of architecture and the government's policies has created a gap about identifying Kurdish traditional architectural style and how to regenerate and apply it in the present built environment.

In the present we can identify several types of architectural applications in the region. First is rehabilitation of old historical sites such as Citadel of Erbil, second is demolishing some of the buildings in the cities to build new buildings and spaces using traditional architectural design patterns and building materials an example of this is demolishing old buildings in centre of Erbil and building a new urban development using traditional style and material in the new constructed buildings and cover elevations of the other older buildings with brick..



Figure 25: The commercial area beside the Bazar during 1980's

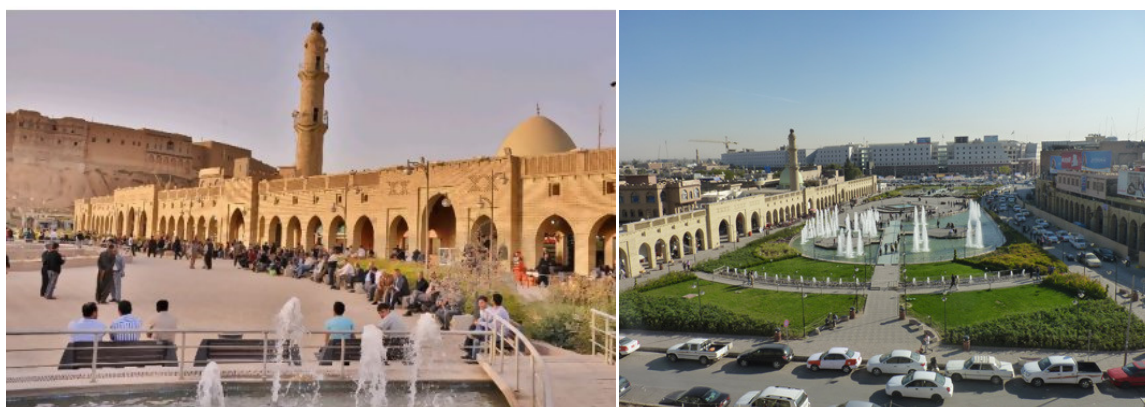


Figure 26: The same area in the present where parts of the buildings are demolished to make the square and covering the remaining buildings by the brick wall in 2012.

Another reason behind this problem is the lack of authority's awareness about the importance of this issue for the society and how to benefit from the new democracy to support the process of building modern local Kurdish architecture and how integrate this with developing a sustainable urban growth. As a consequence the city of Erbil which is witnessing rapid development growth the projects are applying different types of architectural styles, qualities, and identities. The common character in many cases is using Western names to justify the new projects such as Italian village, American village, and English village which have mainly a marketing purpose.

6. Conclusions

Studying architectural identity of different nations through history can provide us with important lessons that can be useful to develop the general knowledge of architecture and practice that make architectural identity a free human right for all nations on this planet.

Historical events show that changing the traditional architecture to the modern architecture has been influenced directly by the elites and less by the common majorities.

During this process, present architectural identity has shifted its meaning from being a reflection of the local milieu to abstract reflections of distinct movements using lines, colours, materials, shapes, forms and masses as elements to achieve their particular architectural identity. As a consequence, a large number of cities in the world have been transformed to scenes of crowded architectural identities.

Some contemporary cases such as Development of some central districts of Oslo can provide us with important lessons about how to consider architectural identity in present development projects by considering the local milieu through an open process. This means living cultural milieu gets an open possibility to mould and influence the applied architecture and urban design.

The radical global changes in many countries including the resent Arabic countries rise the necessity of changing the old established thinking and practice about architectural identity. It will require making architecture a real reflection of people's culture, needs and participation. We need adopt new ways of architectural education and practice that will consider the multiethnic realities and will adopt democratic and open decision making process.

The case study of Iraq shows that misusing local architectural identity can have negative consequences to the local culture, society, economy and environment of the entire country. The case study also shows that even local architects efforts to achieve modern local Iraqi architectural identity had failed because they used only one cultural heritage as source for their projects and ignored the reality that Iraq is composed of several cultures and each particular city has its distinguished architectural identity.

The case study also shows that using star architects as elite group cannot justify ignoring local realities because Architecture is not Hollywood and architects are not Hollywood stars where users are considered as the audiences.

Solving this conflict cannot be done without understanding how this problem is integrated in modern architectural knowledge and practice. Since this is a global phenomenon, we need global research and efforts in order to identify its global dimensions and their social, economic and cultural affects. All these efforts can be achieved and supported by real liberal architecture.

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