

The Role of Urban Transformations in Highlighting the City's Landmarks - Case Study of Old Karbala

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Abstract:

The urban fabric of old cities witnesses multiple transformations, which makes it prone to crumbling. Things like the development projects or events such as war affect the morphology of the city and its urban features. The old cities represent the most critical part of the larger city, usually representing the original city's ancient essence. The importance of those urban landmarks in this historical center enhances the attractiveness of the old part of the city and are considered the origin of this fabric. This research will aim to analyze the urban transformations resulting from urban development projects or wars in central Karbala city. The transformation of the urban fabric was developed during three-time phases that contributed to highlighting the holy landmarks in the city. The first stage starts with the basics before the development process. The second stage is the initial development stage and the events of 1991 that destroyed parts of the city. The third stage represents the analysis of the last urban development project of the Karbala Centre, which is under implementation. The results showed a discrepancy in the areas occupied by the city's landmarks. The highest percentage of the landmark area was achieved in the third phase, and the lowest was in the first phase, due expand the spaces surrounding most of the landmarks of the Al-Taf event, to be more dominant. Also, the project aims to highlight the landmarks of the original city through the method of access and ease of perception by the recipient and providing nodes and paths that are consistent with the movement of the Al-Taf event.

Keywords: Landmarks; transformations; urban fabric; Historic centres

1. Introduction

Iraq contains many cities that hold important urban landmark that represents the basis for the emergence of most of the historical centres of those cities. The factors behind the establishment of ancient cities were numerous, but the basic factor for the construction and development of the

city's growth. Although, among the most important factors for the emergence of ancient cities are the natural, social, administrative (political), economic, defensive (military) factors, and religious factors [1]. Ancient cities and their centers are classified mainly according to "what they acquire in terms of values and memories connecting contemporary societies to their historical roots. These areas were known for religious, commercial, industrial or political purposes and acquired their importance by events and situations that represent a specific date at a specific time. The regions built in a long time express the features of their civilization [2]. Historic cities in the past and our present-day cities contain important symbols called landmarks. Landmarks represent the vital elements and the seed of the basis for the emergence and growth of many cities because of their functional and symbolic value. While some cities failed to preserve the influence and vitality of these elements [3]. Accordingly, the city as an organism is an organization that includes physical landmarks or cells that represent, which are distinct elements from their surroundings, the basis for the emergence of those cities often. They have a material and moral impact on society, and the designer should be aware of the importance of dealing with those important features in the history of the city. [4]

Landmarks are known to be notable materialistic and distinct physical elements in the city and the urban environment that are gradual in size, which can be seen from long distances. They play important roles in the city and its urban spaces, including determining the direction, facilitating the movement of views in the city and moving between its parts [3]. Landmarks can be a good and prominent sign of urban spaces in cities. The word "Landmark" is used in different areas with reference to a different concept. Linguists and urban planners define it as anything that is easily identifiable. In general, landmarks determine the identity of a country, its culture, or a specific period in history. Landmarks are a type of urban space sign that people choose. These points in the city direct them as a reference guide in urban space that gives a sense of finding the way as well as finding a feeling of safety and belonging.

Symbolic symbols include complex conceptual and pictorial representations of a worldview operating at multiple levels and scales. They often take the form of pictures, words, sounds, or gestures and are used to express beliefs, ideas and theories. The symbolism of urban features is usually associated with reinforcing formal urban forms or the emphasis on important historical events [5].

The transformations in urban spaces from traditional to contemporary spaces occur by transforming homogeneous urban spaces into different spaces. This trend had several reasons, the most prominent of which is the employment of urban spaces and that urban transformations are continuous as well as changeable over time. Therefore, it is necessary to control the causes of transformation for the possibility of achieving the essential results of contemporary urban space [6].

Transformation is considered one of the dynamic aspects that reflect the nature of human life. Transformation becomes a necessity and a response when previous traditional models cannot provide foundational solutions and positive results for the presented problems to meet the requirements imposed by the continuous contemporary changes. The landmarks work to unify the disparate elements as they represent architectural constants through which the city's association with its original meanings and patterns is preserved during the transformation process [7].

There are two types of transformation in the urban context:

- A sudden, intentional act, such as the insertion of certain design ideas, is a uniform, homogeneous transformation.
- A natural gradual event that occurs as a result of an unintended act due to the growth of the urban context by the influence of internal and external influences and forces overtime that is an irregular and heterogeneous transformation [8].

The phenomenon of war also has the ability to change (transformation), as its ability results in creating transitional situations that have transformative energy at the physical, semantic, or cultural level. It is related to a set of objective and personal factors at times, including the nature of the political power prevailing in conflict societies, and the military conflict represents the most rapid and influential level [9].

2. Previous studies

Recent development projects are constantly working on issues related to urban activities and events within cities. This requires interpretation of some critical situations and events in the past. Historical methods can be used to read the semiotic organization of the city by a set of indicative signs to form a semantic network expressing the identity of the context Urban. Development projects call for integration between demolition and preservation, especially in sites with important historical landmarks and events [10].

In this paragraph, the theoretical and practical approaches adopted in urban development projects that have undergone transformations through development projects or other causes such as wars or sabotage will be further elaborated, along with the role of urban landmarks in those projects.

2.1 The urban development of Mecca centre

Makkah (Mecca) is located on the western side of the Arabian Peninsula (west of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). It extends from west to east at a distance of 3 km in length and half that wide in a valley inclined from north to south and confined between two mountain ranges of "Tikadan", connected to each other from the east, west and south. It is at a close distance from the Red Sea,

linked by the port of Jeddah [11]. The holy city of Makkah is a great example of an Islamic city that wraps around its religious center (the Haram al-Sharif). Mecca is famously known for its narrow alleys that flow from all sides to the direction of the Grand Mosque, which is considered the centre of religious, social and cultural radiation. In addition to the presence of markets that have spread around the sanctuary to serve the visitors. Signs of change began to surface, as the appearance of cars led to the expansion of the main roads [12]. The expansion and urban development processes that the city underwent were mainly dependent on the milestones around which the movement of Hajj and other rituals took place. Everything transformed was done so in a way that fits the special function of the holy place. Regarding the development of the space between Safa and Marwa, it was a space belonging to the kinetic space system linking important landmarks and then transforming it to a block belonging to the totalitarian system. When observing the city's planning and the network of movement around it, it is clear to see how the main landmarks of the event, the Grand Mosque in Mecca, is the main piece. It is the starting point and the endpoint of the Hajj rituals, so it must be the link and continuity of movement between all the features of the Hajj [13]. The development processes of the city of Makkah are considered a gradual transformation over time in response to contemporary requirements and the increasing numbers of pilgrims.

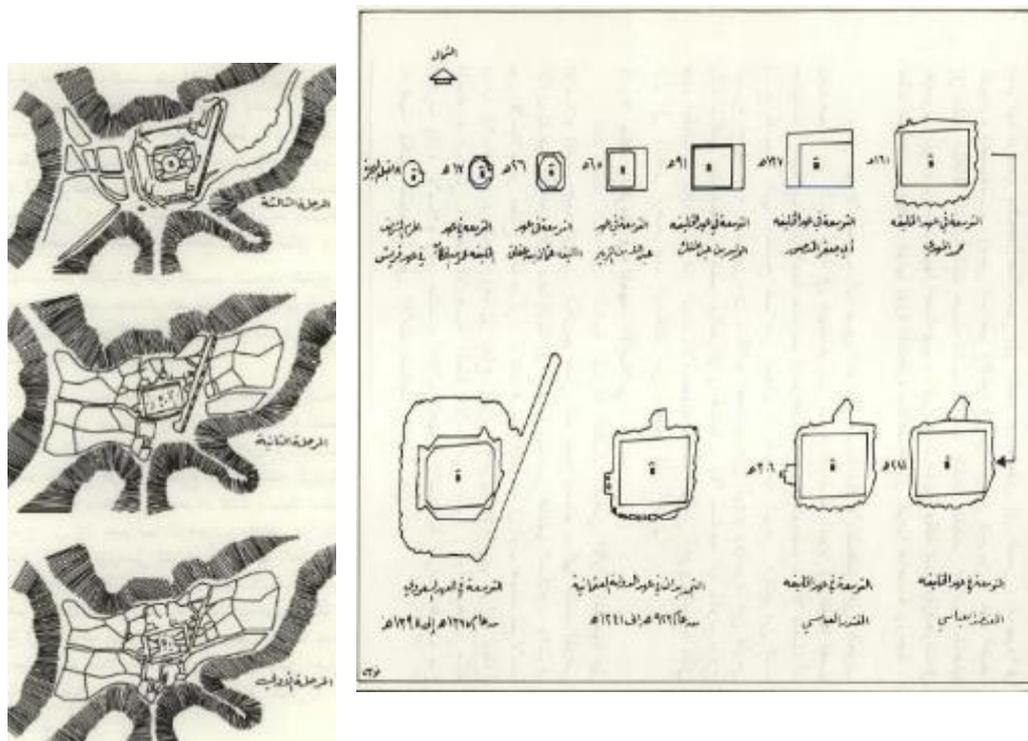


Figure 1 The expansion stages of the Haram al-Sharif. 12

2.2 Development of the historical centre of Warsaw in Poland

Warsaw, the largest city in Poland, is a representation of the economic, political centre, and cultural capital. The history of the city has been linked to the history of Poland due the city history of exposer during the many wars, which led to most of its urban heritage and urban monuments to destruction. The city's history has been linked to the history of Poland, due to the city history of exposer during the many wars, which led to most of its urban heritage and urban monuments to destruction along with applying great precision to the restoration of the churches, palaces and the Old City Market. After the war, the urban development strategy in Warsaw focused mainly on reviving the identity and memory of the city and preserving the collective memory by reconstructing monuments, symbols, and buildings with the same style, model, and materials. As a result, the city's form was reconstructed by creating an exact replica of what had been destroyed, such as its important urban landmarks, representing its urban heritage. At the level of the historical urban fabric of the city, it was rehabilitated with the same heritage characteristics and features before the war to restore the collective memory of the local community while reviving ancient monuments and landmarks [14].



Figure 2 Some heritage buildings in Warsaw during and after the war

The transformation in Warsaw is considered a mandatory change due to war, where developments focused mainly on essential buildings and landmarks of the city's history.

2.3 Development of Berlin

Berlin is the capital of Germany and its largest city in terms of population. The bombing in 1943 in World War II caused it to fall and destroyed at least a third of the city's buildings, monuments, and historical sites. The national trends of the Nazi rule sought to develop and invent a national architectural style to draw new architectural lines in the city of Berlin. As in Roman architecture,

where they find it an incentive to create an original style. They planned to form buildings that symbolized the hegemony of Germany by affirming the values of the greater monuments [15].



Figure 3 Reichstag building during and after the war

The development process focused on urban landmarks, some of which were preserved while providing the appropriate space required making it a memory and witnessing the war. All the destructed monuments spread throughout Germany has been turned and constructed into monuments calling for peace. The designers also sought to restore some urban landmarks and buildings of high symbolism, such as the bombed-out West Berlin city hall. They attempted to preserve some neighbourhoods and streets that provided the major movement in the city. In addition to preserving key components of civil identities, such as rebuilding Romanesque churches in Cologne, reconfiguring the historical identity of cities is of utmost importance [16].

3. Methodology

3.1 Study Area

The history of construction in the city of Karbala began on the 12th of Muharram in the year 61(Hijri Calendar), two days after the Taf incident. The sons of Asad buried the remains of Imam Hussein and his brother Abbas (peace be upon them) along with his close companions (peace be upon them). Karbala was not inhabited on the day the Imam came to it [17]. After the tragic incident of Taf happened, Imam Ali bin Al Hussein Zayn Al-Abidin (peace be upon him) came on the 13th day of Muharram to bury his martyr father and the rest of his family (peace be upon them), where their blessed shrines are now. The Urbanism in Karbala began and did not delay for very long from the incident of Al Taf. Where there were houses close to the shrine (grave) and adjacent to it. It was

derived from the villages near Al-Ghadriyah, Nineveh, and others, and the choice of housing here was to seek blessing near the Imam [18].

The city of Karbala includes a number of landmarks related to the city event (the Taf incident event) that will be discussed further in the research. The landmarks are as follow; the shrine of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him), the Husseini camp, the shrine of the Zinabiyya hill, the shrine of Abdullah –Ali al-Asghar (peace be upon him), the martyrdom shrine of Ali al-Akpar (peace be upon him), the shrine of the meeting of Imam Hussein (Peace be upon him) with Umar ibn Saad, the right-hand shrine of Imam al-Abbas (peace be upon him], and the left-hand shrine of Imam al-Abbas (peace be upon him) as described in Figure 4.



Figure 4 Landmarks of the city referred to in the search

3.2 Description of the search method

The urban fabric of the Karbala city center will be analyzed according to three-time phases that show the transformations that took place in the city center of Karbala over successive periods. The first stage starts with the foundation before the development process. The second stage is the initial development stage and the events of 1991 that destroyed parts of the foundation. The third stage is the analysis of the last urban development project of the Karbala Centre, which is under implementation, to investigate the city's urban development projects.

Two criteria are used in the analysis process:

- The first criterion is the landmark area within the urban fabric. It is calculated by using the AutoCAD program to know the areas formed by the landmarks from the urban fabric.
- The second criterion is the visual dominance of the landmark at the level of the urban fabric. We know it through the percentage of the landmark height in relation to its surroundings (the city sky-line), which makes it visually dominant within the urban environment. The following equation will be used (landmark dominance percentage = landmark height/radius space around it).

$$x = \frac{h}{r}$$

The lower the percentage, the higher the dominance of the landmark because the space surrounding the landmark is more than its height.

In order to achieve the goal of the research that seeks to identify the urban landmarks that emerged after the many transformations, as the holy city of Karbala includes a number of religious urban landmarks that belong to the city's religious event. Which is the event of the Taf incident that the city was later formed around, and these features are mostly unclear within the urban fabric. As a result of the changes that occurred in the urban fabric of the city, most of the urban features of the city have emerged.

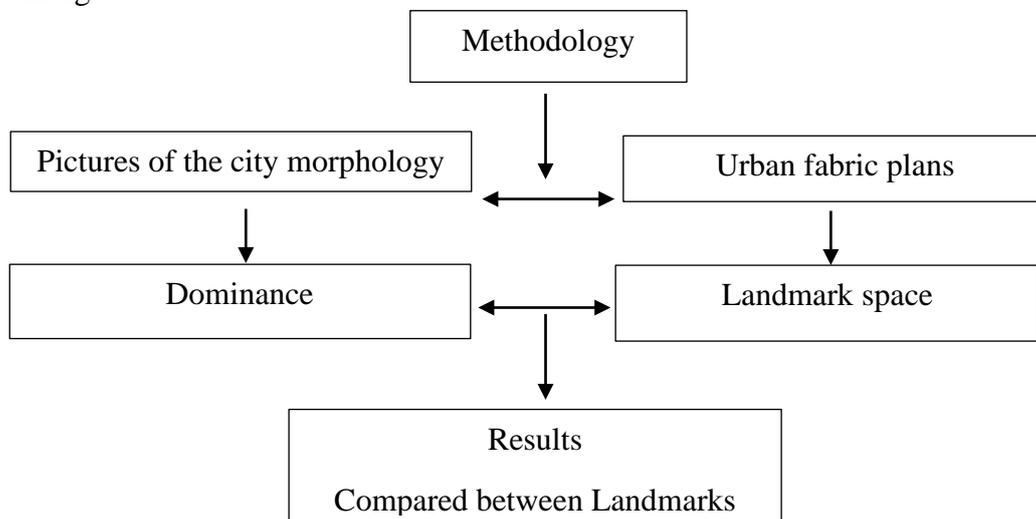


Figure 5 Research methodology process

3.3 The transformations of the urban fabric of the city

The urban fabric of the ancient city has undergone several changes. Where ancient Karbala had a wall surrounding its buildings that were built in 1802 AD, changes began to occur in the holy city

of Karbala in 1916 AD, and the changes continue to this day. These transformations will be discussed in accordance with three-time stages.

3.3.1 The first phase: Milestones of the historical urban fabric before development:

The city's emergence began with two localities around the two holy shrines' northern, eastern, and southern sides. Between them ways and paths that are sometimes a dead-end, where most of the mosques, schools and markets are scattered. The first one is known as Al-Zuhaik; it is called Bab Al-Salamah and Bab Al-Taq and Al-Camp. Meanwhile, the second region is called Al-Fayez, and it is spread in the space between the two shrines; today it is called Bab Baghdad and Bab Al-Khan [19]. Ancient Karbala had a wall surrounding its buildings that were built in 1802 AD, which made it have six gates. Then edges names were replaced with the names of those doors as they are today [18]. The major monuments on the urban fabric represent the shrines of Imam Hussain and Imam al-Abbas; peace be upon them (Figure 6).

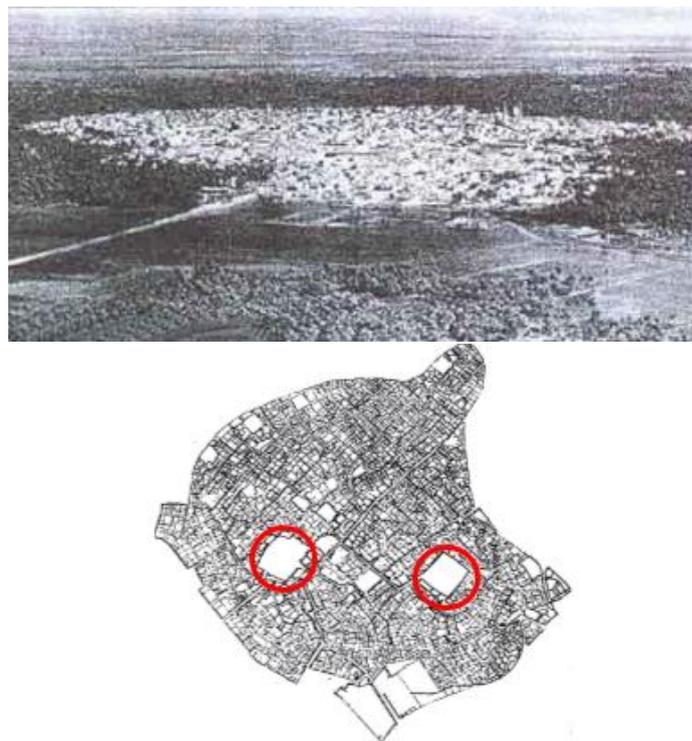


Figure 6 T urban fabric and the old city wall

3.3.2 The second phase Milestones of the historical urban fabric during the stages of transformation

Changes began to occur in the center of the holy city of Karbala. In 1916 AD, Al-Abbas Street (peace be upon him), which extends from Bab Al-Sahin Al-Sharif to the Abbasid district, was opened

and is considered the first straight street in the Old City (Figure 8). Then Imam Ali (peace be upon him) street was opened in 1935 AD, connecting the north of the city to its south. This street separated the two shrines, where the right side was the shrine of Al-Abbas (peace be upon him), and the left side was the shrine of Al-Hussein (peace be upon him). Likewise, Ali Al Akbar Street (peace be upon him) was opened, which connects the Shrine of the Two Shrines with each other, and in 1948, AD the Karbala municipality began opening the street surrounding the shrine of Hussein (peace be upon him) to organize the movement. In 1947 AD, the floors surrounding the Holy Shrines and the religious schools were demolished in order to expand the courtyard, and Bab al-Qibla Street appeared in 1949 CE, parallel to Bab Qibla Street of the Abbasid Presidency. [18] (Figure 9, 10)

The street surrounding the shrine of Imam al-Abbas (peace be upon him) was opened in 1955 AD to surround each shrine with a street and connect together, as they connect together from the south side by a separate street outside the city and from the north. They connect to the intersection of Ali Al-Akbar Street with Imam Ali Street (peace be upon them) heading north. In 1980 AD, the buildings between the two shrines were removed to implement the 40m wide pedestrian street project, which connects the shrines. (Figure 11)

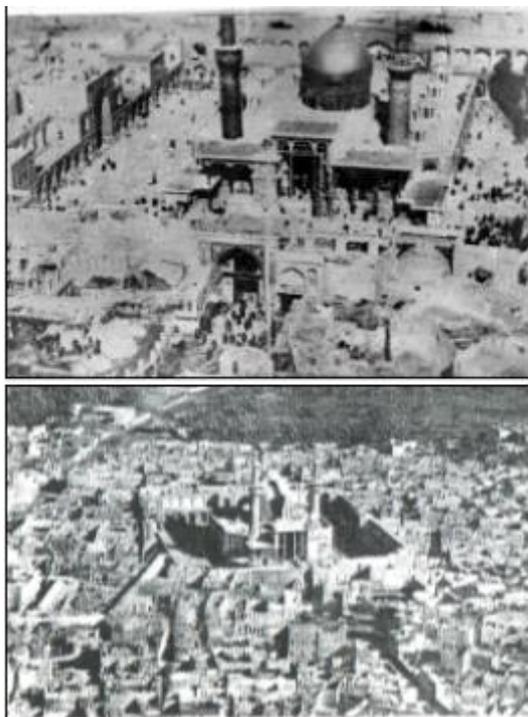


Figure 7 Landmarks dominate the urban fabric [18]



Figure 8 Urban fabric after the first development [20]

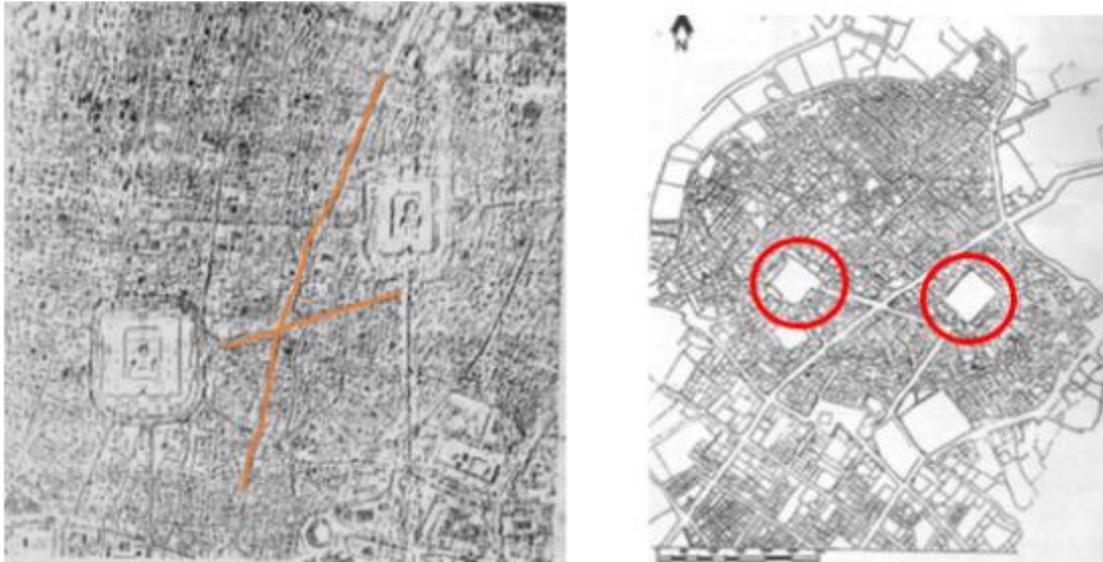


Figure 9 Urban fabric after the second development [18]



Figure 10 A perspective that shows the dominance of the main Landmarks[20]



Figure 11 A perspective that shows the dominance of the main Landmarks[18]

At this stage, the city witnessed another transformation during the events of the popular uprising in 1991, when the elements of the former regime practiced acts of destruction on some of the important landmarks in the city. In addition to removing large parts of the urban fabric.



Figure 12 The impact of the war on the holy sites [21]

3.3.3 The Third phase Milestones of the historical urban fabric the recent transformation:

This stage of the urban development stages of the Karbala city center includes the contemporary time stage, which is in progress until the research is written. It is considered the stage in which most of the main city landmarks related to the city event (the Taf incident event) on which the city arose.

This stage includes the old city in the Holy Karbala and its primary borders from the east Maytham Al-Tamar Street, and from the south the parallel street to Al-Jumhuriya Street in the south Al-Bareed Street. From the west, the Al-Hindiyyah River, and part of the Husseiniya River, and from the north the Husseiniya River, and this area includes the shops (Bab Baghdad, Bab Al-Khan, Bab Al-Taq, Bab al-Salamah, Bab al-Najaf, and the camp). The study identified major goals, the most important of which is to highlight the monuments, buildings, and geographical locations associated with the historical events that were the cause of the emergence of the city within the urban fabric, confirming the religious identity of the city [20]. Most of the Taf incident landmarks were included in the development projects during this stage, and they are the previously mentioned landmarks.

They are the shrine of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him) and his brother Imam al-Abbas (peace be upon him), the shrine of al-Tal al-Zainabi, the al-Husayni camp, the shrine of Abdullah –Ali al-Asghar (peace be upon him), the martyrdom shrine of Ali al-Akpar (peace be upon him), the shrine of the meeting of Imam Hussein (peace be upon him) with Umar bin Saad, the shrine of the right hand of Imam al-Abbas (peace be upon him), and the shrine of the left palm of Imam al-Abbas (peace be upon him). This stage contributed to the addition of urban spaces for the main and secondary landmarks of the Al-Taf incident, which is the basis for the emergence of the city. It is noted that these proposals worked to move the historical sites of some landmarks that are associated with the Taf incident, such as (the shrine of Al-Tal Al-Zinabi). And regarding the height of the land, for example, and this does not match the requirements of preservation of the development of the historic centers of cities. The above spaces were designed in a way that helps in giving visual stimulation to pedestrians and visitors moving around the historical monuments, as the direction of the qiblah, the human scale, axes and kinematic nodes were taken into account with an orientation towards the landmarks of the Taf incident [22] (Figure 13).



Figure 13 Project to develop the holy city of Karbala [22]



Figure 14 FOSTAT-AL-SHUHADA Landmark [22]



Figure 15 Project to develop the holy city of Karbala [20]

4. Results

In this paragraph, the results of the research will be discussed according to the three stages that were explained in the previous paragraph of the research.

4.1 The first stage

While analyzing the urban fabric plan for the old city at this stage, it was clearly noted that the salient landmarks in this stage are the shrines of Imam Hussein and Imam Al-Abbas (peace be upon them). While the other landmarks and features are unknown/ transparent within the urban fabric of the city. Noting that the area of the urban fabric of the city reached (Approximately 802614 m²), each landmark has achieved the following percentages regarding the measurement criteria, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 The results of the first phase landmarks analysis

| landmarks | space m ² | landmark ratio of the fabric space | Dominance |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Imam Hussein Holy Shrine | 13400 | 1.6 | 2 |
| Imam Abbas Holy Shrine | 10130 | 1.2 | 2.5 |
| Total | 23530 | 2.8 | |

From the above ratios, we note that the salient features at this stage constitute a small percentage of the total urban fabric area. Although, visually and with regard to the landmarks on the city sky-line, it is clear and dominant as the height of the blocks around at that stage ranges between 2-3 floors. Still, you need empty urban spaces around them to help aid with the process of perception for the people moving within the axes of the area. The smaller the ratio becomes, the more visual clarity is giving to the landmarks, making it easier for recipients to perceive it. Simply the small percentage means that the area of urban space around the person is greater in relation to the height of the landmark, as we mentioned earlier in the research methodology.

4.2 The second stage:

It is the beginning stage of change in the center of the holy city of Karbala. Here is where Al-Abbas Street (peace be upon him) was constructed, and it is considered to be the first straight road in the Old City. After that, Imam Ali Street (peace be upon him) was opened. At the end of all the changes and the events of the popular uprising [Sha'abn Intifada) in 1991, additional landmarks emerged within the urban fabric. Some of these are the Hussein camp, the shrine of Al-Tal Al-Zeinabi, and the shrine of the left hand of Imam Al-Abbas (peace be upon him). Where each landmark achieved the following percentages with regard to the measurement criteria, as shown in Table 2

Table 2 The results of the second phase landmarks analysis

| landmarks | space m ² | landmark ratio of the fabric space | Dominance |
|---|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Imam Hussein Holy Shrine | 13400 | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| Imam Abbas Holy Shrine | 10850 | 1.3 | 1 |
| The Hussein camp | 500 | 0.061 | 1.3 |
| The shrine of Al-Tal Al-Zainabi | 360 | 0.04 | 0.6 |
| The left hand shrine of Imam Al-Abbas (peace be upon him) | 8 | 0.0009 | 1 |
| Total | 25118 | 3.1 | |

We notice that the proportions of the area of the landmark within the fabric have become larger due to the emergence of more landmarks than the first stage. As for their dominance within the urban

fabric, we note that the proportions have become less, and that means the dominance of the landmark became more invisible due to the availability and increase of the empty area of urban spaces around the main landmark, which gives an opportunity for the landmark to emerge within its surroundings

4.3 The third stage:

The third stage is the stage that witnessed the most emergence of the city's landmarks. It witnessed the expansion of the open urban spaces associated with the landmarks and the providing of a clear form unique to each landmark. It aims to highlight and dominate the landmarks of the original city through the method of access and ease of perception by the recipient. While providing nodes and paths of movement axes directed to the recipient in a manner consistent with the movements of the Taf incident. This was achieved by removing large areas of the urban fabric for the above purpose and for the purpose of meeting the contemporary requirements of the holy city of Karbala and a large number of visitors in most of the year. Also, by providing the necessary services to complete the ceremonies of the million visits that the city witnesses. Accordingly, we see that the ratios achieved at this stage, in relation to the areas of the landmark, were higher than the other stages, as they formed the largest area of the landmarks in relation to the overall tissue. While the proportions of dominance were less than the previous stages due to the dominance of the features through the emptying of larger spaces around them (Table 3).

Table 3 The results of the third phase landmarks analysis

| landmarks | space m ² | landmark ratio of the fabric Area | Dominance |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Imam Hussein Holy Shrine | 21250 | 2.65 | 0.4 |
| Imam Abbas Holy Shrine | 17810 | 2.2 | 0.35 |
| The Hussein camp | 4420 | 0.55 | 1 |
| The shrine 1 of Al-Tal Al-Zainabi | 1830 | 0.23 | 0.46 |
| The left palm shrine of Imam Al- Abbas (peace be upon him) | 16 | 0.001 | 0.4 |
| The right palm shrine of Imam Al- Abbas (peace be upon him) | 16 | 0.001 | 0.4 |
| FOSTAT-AL-SHUHADA | 400 | 0.05 | 0.5 |
| The shrine of Abdullah –Ali al-Asghar (peace be upon him) | 600 | 0.07 | 0.15 |
| The martyrdom shrine of Ali al-Akpar (peace be upon him) | 280 | 0.03 | 0.3 |
| the shrine of the meeting of Imam Hussein (Peace be upon him) with ibn Saad | 280 | 0.03 | 0.4 |
| Total | 46900 | 5.8 | |

It is noted that these proposals moved the historical sites of some of the landmarks that are related to the Taf incident, such as (Maqam Al-Tal Al-Zainabi) because the small percentage means that the area of urban space around the person is greater in relation to the height of the landmark, as we mentioned earlier in the research methodology.

The results of the analysis of the measurement criteria for the three stages showed a discrepancy in the areas occupied by the city's landmarks in the urban fabric of the city. We see that the highest percentage of the landmark area was achieved in the third phase and the lowest was in the first phase, due to the work to expand the spaces surrounding most of the features of the Taf incident. In addition to achieving a visual and dynamic link between them in recent transformations, especially in the proposal of Al-Kawthar Company. Also, clear and defined block of most of the landmarks has been provided. We note the need to preserve the historical sites of some landmarks so that their presence is at the required level that reflects the specificity of the city of Karbala and the event of the great AL Taf incident. Note Figures 16 and 17.

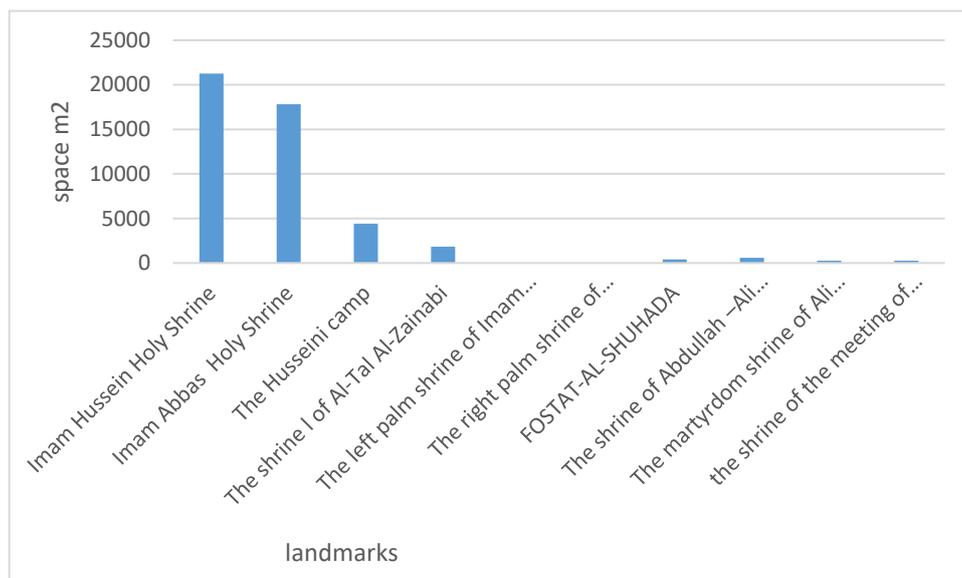


Figure 16. The area of each landmark in the urban fabric

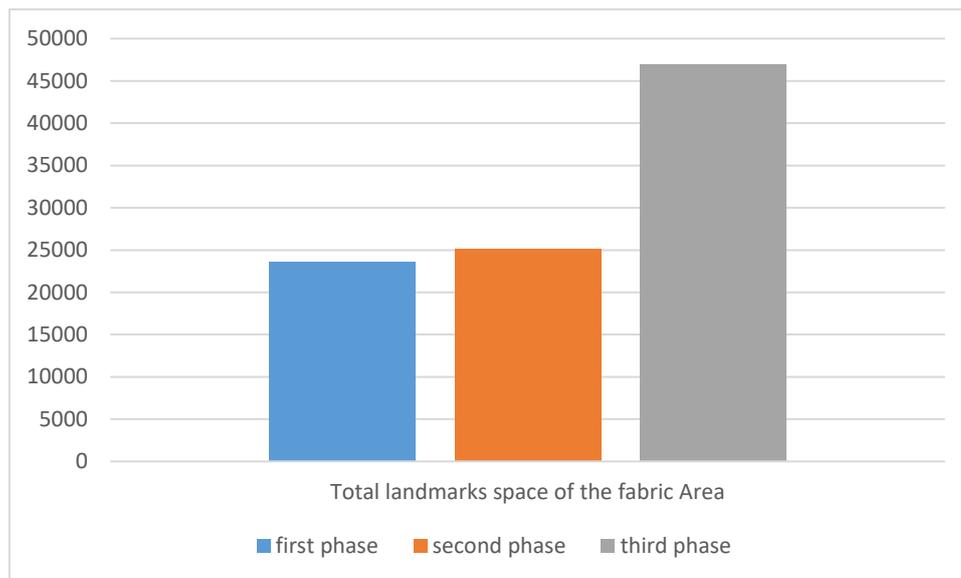


Figure 17. The area of landmarks in each phase

5 Conclusions

The recent transformations, whether natural or forced, contributed to the emergence and highlighting of the urban fabric of the holy city of Karbala. The emergence of the landmarks of the Battle of Taf, which is the basis for the emergence of the city, appeared gradually over time. Where in each period of time, more landmarks become more dominant. Therefore, at the final stage, the landmarks were more dominant than any other time. The projects are of a strategy that aims to highlight and dominate the landmarks of the original city through the method of access and ease of perception by the recipient, by expanding the urban spaces surrounding these landmarks and providing nodes and paths that are consistent with the movement of the Al-Taf incident.

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دور التحولات الحضرية في إبراز معالم المدينة - كربلاء القديمة حالة دراسية

الخلاصة: يشهد النسيج العمراني للمدن القديمة تحولات متعددة مما يجعلها عرضة للانقراض، مثل مشاريع التطوير أو أحداث أخرى مثل الحرب، تؤثر هذه التحولات على مورفولوجية المدينة وخصائصها الحضرية. تمثل المدن القديمة الجزء الأكثر أهمية في المدينة الأكبر، والتي تمثل عادة جوهرها القديم الذي تطورت عليه المدينة الأصلية. ما يعزز جاذبية الجزء القديم من المدينة، هو أهمية تلك المعالم العمرانية في هذا المركز التاريخي، والتي تعتبر أيضًا أصل هذا النسيج. يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل التحولات العمرانية الناتجة عن مشاريع التطوير الحضري أو الحروب في وسط مدينة كربلاء، وفق ثلاث مراحل زمنية، والتي تسببت في تحول النسيج العمراني وساهمت في إبراز المعالم المقدسة في المدينة. تبدأ المرحلة الأولى من المرحلة الأساسية للمدينة قبل عملية التطوير. المرحلة الثانية هي مرحلة التطوير الأولى وأحداث 1991 التي دمرت أجزاء من المدينة. المرحلة الثالثة وهي تحليل آخر مشروع تطوير حضري

لمركز كربلاء (قيد التنفيذ). أظهرت النتائج وجود تفاوت في المناطق التي شغلتها معالم المدينة. تحققت أعلى نسبة من مساحة المعالم في المرحلة الثالثة وأقلها في المرحلة الأولى، وذلك بسبب توسيع المساحات المحيطة بمعالم حدث الطف، لتكون أكثر هيمنة. حيث تهدف المشاريع إلى إبراز معالم المدينة الأصلية من خلال طريقة الوصول وسهولة الإدراك من قبل المتلقي. وتوفير العقد والمسارات التي تتوافق مع حركة حدث الطف.