

# Alienation in the Urban Form of the Port Cities (Ashar City) as a Model

Khalid Sameer Baqer<sup>1,\*</sup>, Nisreen Razaq Ibraheem Joboury<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Architecture Engineering, College of Engineering, University of Baghdad, Baghdad, Iraq

E-mail addresses: [khalid.baquer1104@coeng.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:khalid.baquer1104@coeng.uobaghdad.edu.iq), [gnisreen@coeng.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:gnisreen@coeng.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

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## Abstract

Alienation is a broad concept, conveying a bunch of cognitive issues, such as Language, Philosophy, Sociology, and Psychology in addition to Architecture as well. Society is affected by a group of factors, reflected by various phenomena giving rise to making a change in society in all different aspects.

There exist various concepts, such as estrangement, weirdness, and place, which must be distinguished from alienation in all its forms and categories. These are spatial alienation, social alienation, and psychological alienation. In this respect, spatial alienation means the break of continuity of Man from the place he/she belongs to due to the defragmentation in the urban fabric it can affect its architectural components. In addition, it created some sort of discrepancy and mess between the physical components of the city and its worn-out urban voids. Consequently, this creates a weakness in the social and functional interaction, as well as a divergence of the urban landscape of the urban fabric of the port cities from the cultural and civilized legacy and the identity of the place as well.

This research entails concepts relating to alienation, study, and analysis of the urban form of the port cities. AL-Ashar city has been chosen to be the model of the study sample. The research has come to findings that there exists alienation between urban voids and the physical elements within the urban fabric leading to weakness in the continuity and affiliation to the identity of the place and the city's architectural heritage. Thus, the research includes two axes: first, the theoretical concepts, while the second is the field study followed by a descriptive approach, then we introduce the outcomes, the most important conclusions, and recommendations.

**Keywords:** Estrangement, Alienation, Urban fabric, Place, Port cities.

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## 1. Introduction

Society is affected by a group of factors that are reflected through many phenomena that lead to a change in it in all aspects resulting from new ideas, theories and ideologies developed that are alien to the concepts of societies, especially the old conservative society because of its distinctive characteristics that distinguish it from others, and alienation in studies that pertain to it. Urban cities are a change in the urban fabric of the city in a way that moves away from its identity and belonging in a way that affects its urban fabric and urban structure.

### 1.1 General Theoretical Concepts

#### Transformation and Alteration Concept

Transformation is the change from one state into another. It applies to any organization in all aspects within a time period, positive or negative. It may be a sudden transformation in the conditions or appearance of a certain thing, or it may occur in all aspects of life. Likewise, the interruption of something from one state into another. Moreover, it relies on its connectedness. However, it is related to the determinants of society as it is the most common since it is comparable to women reflecting the changes in manner, self, science, policy, and economics [1].

On the other hand, alteration is the transition from one state into another due to a certain reason. It may be in whole or part in accordance with the responsiveness to such causative. Alteration is mainly related to offered and different ideas of daily life in addition to how Man is receptive to such changes [2].

#### Alienation Concept

Alienation means the idea of the lack of unity as a main feature. It is determined according to the ego view. Nowadays, it is an ontological occurrence showing conscious discrepancies. In the past, it was a theme of imaginary novels in the history of philosophy. It has been converted into the cognitive path, formalized with a theoretical and practical feature and concept for the knowledge of the ego towards a specific domain. That is, there is the possibility to have self-comprehensive knowledge that is unconditional to a certain decision. Such comprehensiveness is peculiar to people, as it should be construed as (an identity in difference). Simply, during establishing his civilization, Man is to create rules that are his own products, which he imposes according to specific determinants, which he himself may not understand to the extent that it would be strange. Without such rules and determinants, the human mind cannot reach higher levels [3].

Alienation, in foreign dictionaries, is defined as the equivalent of the term Alienation, as defined in Macmillan's Modern Dictionary (Macmillan's modern dictionary, 1945) as follows:

- Alien : foreign ; different in nature ; out of harmony with .
  - Alienate (v.) : estrange ; loss ; turn away ; make unfriendly.
- It is traced back to the Latin verb Alienare which means alienate or estrange.

Both of the Arabic and the English notions indicate alienation by reference to the psychological distance, which means distance from self or to move into another one. The self within this notion represents all concepts and ideas like social parameters, civilized legacy, traditions, and customs as well as the cultural heritage in its tangible and intangible forms. Such concepts fall under the Implied Concept framework [4]

As for the direct concept, it refers to isolation in society away from the values which he owns, as it is called social alienation [5]

Beery defines the concept of alienation and its forms as per figure (1), which investigates the indicators of the relationship between Man and his surrounding urban environment. He found in this figure the mutual effect between the physical indicators in the urban environment, the individual behaviors and Man. He deals such indicators by clarifying three levels: the behavioral level (social), conscious level (self, ego) and the physical level (spatial/ material) [6]

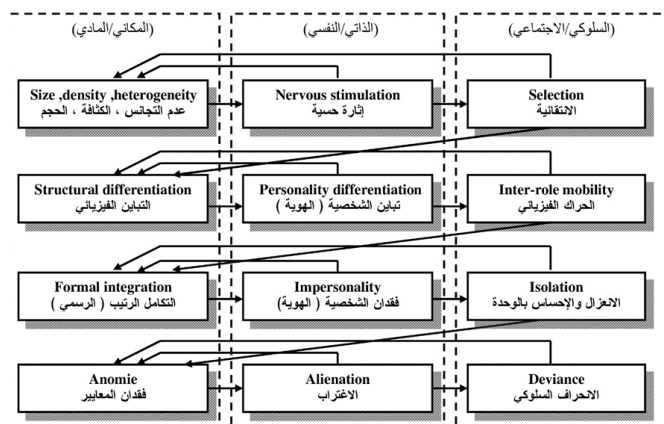


Fig 1: elucidates the relationship between the physical indicators of the urban environment and the conscious and behavioral indicators. [6]

### 3. Weirding

The concept of weirding is both a human and social notion, which has received a considerable attention. Most of the societies experienced crises on all political, economic, social and cultural aspects have yielded several types of alienation, where people and societies were suffering from leading to some sort of rebellion and insurrection resulting in inevitable changes [7]

Linguistically, Weirding is defined as the non-existence of a criterion. This means that the alienated person does not feel such a criterion that if he wants to achieve his goals, he must not be conscious by means of common criterion in terms of social or manner.

As a term, Weirding according to the linguistics derivatives, literally means a person to be an alien or to make something he owns to another one. It is the state of human existence as being weird or left something or someone.

Procedurally, weirding a state of discontinuity and separation from reality, the feeling of non-affiliation and the loss of the special identity calling for own self (ego) and the attempt to impose a new view that is totally different from existence.

Theoretically, Weirding is what occurs or occurred such as accidents or factors that make it alien to its environment. In foreign languages, the word (alienation) has been derived from the English word (alienation) indicative of alienation, which means affiliation. Moreover, the term alienation reportedly means the break of inspiration by refusing to hide the means of simulation and achieve inspiration for the spectator and smash everything that suggests tradition so that the spectator is still in a state of complete vigilance and participates with his mind in the issue before him. (Oxford Dictionary) [8]

### 4. Estrangement

Estrangement is described as an empty special space or deserted due to the lack of faith in the sacred view. Hence, the person who is unable to believe will be left alien in space and nullity [9]

Estrangement is a category for everything that ought to be hidden and secret, but regardless of that, will be discovered, come out, and appears. In Freud's opinion, Estrangement is the appearance of the unfamiliar in the familiar context; the foreign stranger in the country. Estrangement comes out from superimposition rather than composition, which happens between the old ideas, images, and buildings, and between what is new to live together in a strange manner combining what is familiar and unfamiliar in one context [10]

Therefore, it is a dual-nature term, lively, multi-meaning and dreadful, depending on the reading of the person to it according to his/her own ideas and views. It combines rationalism and irrationalism together. For this, the modern cultural theory emphasizes the need to the feeling in Estrangement and to take off the familiarity. The purpose behind that is to accept the difference, which in its turn, leads to a new world (new society) and new culture. At this point, Estrangement is considered very important from two perspectives: firstly, to hold on to the old time, repeating it and imitating it, and secondly, the discontinuity to the old culture and abandonment [10]

Estrangement indicates the human feeling that he is not at his home in this world. That is, he is not at the place where he should be affiliated, which gives the rise to a sort of anxiety attached to the rational image in the mind and his actual life. It threatens the self-stability leading dysfunction of feeling between what is familiar and what is unfamiliar [11] Estrangement includes a group of ideas as shown below in figure 2:

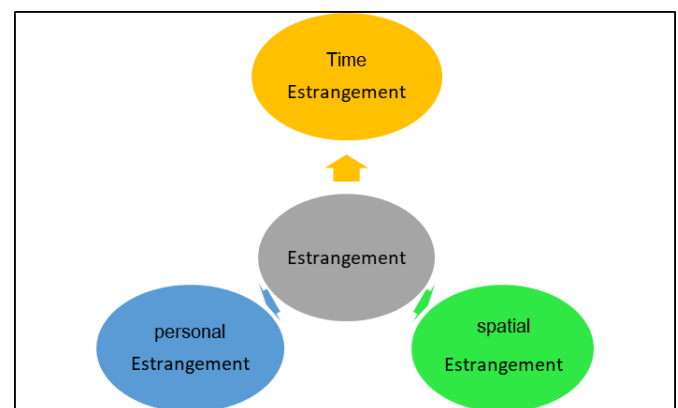


Fig 2: elucidates the classification of the concept of Estrangement [11]

The two tiers of Estrangement as in figure 2 above are as follows:

### 1. Spatial Estrangement

Over years, the realistic place would be unrealistic, which may make it loses its own ego and not to feel its borders, causing to dysfunction of feeling, the strange enters in a place, where Man moves according to his spatial experience as he puts forthwith. However, the place has fixed and organized hobbies firmed in the sense, in which all corners and landmarks established on the conceptual perceptions, concepts and actual realities which are semi-limited to Man, that are changing (altering) sometimes for reasons making a person view the old place as another strange and unfamiliar one. However, he may leave it and tries to come back again while he thinks it is familiar, whereas it is unfamiliar leading to a state of ongoing and uninterrupted astray, resulting in a state of astray in the reality and one's own self gradually leading to make a person departing the place view because it becomes another landscape [12]

### 2. Time Estrangement

Time disturbance is related to the concept of identity and the other, and the concept of closeness and other concepts used in the modern cultural theories. The attempt to rebalance the disturbed old time manifesting the awareness marks. The concern is on the special mechanism which is the memory of the mage by remembering whatever absent, as the need to remember a pictorial through the spectroscopic which puts a special historical movement, reminding him on the light of what it requires to be a s kind of redefinition and cognitive remembrance, especially to the absent culture. Because reality becomes not as it should be. This is due to the difficulty in thinking about any theme without returning to its essence unless it has already been existed. [7]

### 3. Personal Estrangement

Man is considered as the predominant ghost on the age, who is present and disappearing. The temporary awareness and fixed ideas, such as rationalism, human essence, and ethics are concepts and perceptions controlling mind which deny the difference trying to visualize person on his behalf. Therefore, they deny his unity and thus makes him estrangement. Likewise, the temporary Man has been estranged by the ghost of novel and frozen ideas that he has innovated and visualized in his imagination, and how he coordinates and converts them, and how they control him without his awareness and consciousness, leading to create an illusionary image on the world around him as being a world of appearance. [13]

### 4. Space Concept and its Components

Place is the cradle of the human existence and its major condition. It is considered as the most convertible syndromes and summing up concepts. A point is a place, the universe is a place and all what exists between them in all their different sizes and areas are places. Man exists through such places where his meeting with them constitutes a conceptual reality as a single place, such as a region or a country, where they can keep their multiplicity and diversification, without leading into a disharmony. Place is the most important syndrome which bestows (being) with the idea of existence. There is no

existence out of place, the interference between Man and place, and the issue of such interference is the most prominent one, giving rise to the life of place and to acquire something of its justifications. Man is exchanging what is being informed about everything around him consciously and in awareness. If a change (replacement) is made between the two parties, we will face one of the most important philosophical issues, which is the spatial relationship between a component and the place established such component. It is one method to understand the variation and the importance of place philosophically, physically and technically and the variation of the accurate relationship of Man and place. Mas as being the place for falling time and it's a place for its passage and a place for consciousness summing up all places, from the smallest to the biggest ones and finally up to the absolute place the Universe [13]

There are a group of elements of the place components as shown in figure 3 below:

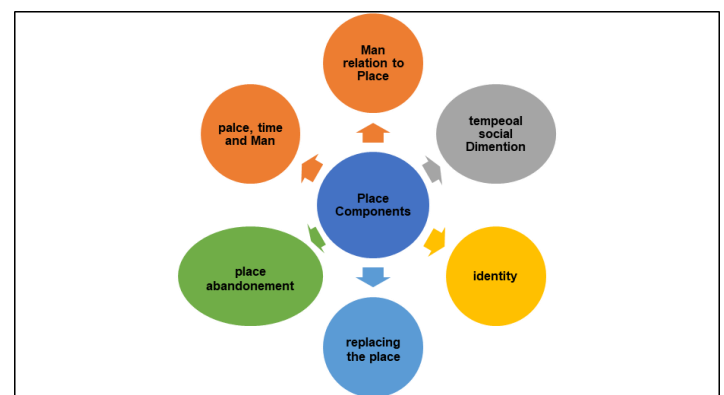


Fig 3: elucidates the elements related to place [13]

#### 1. Mental Image

It is a term used in the cognitive and social sciences, including philosophy, psychology, media and others. Such image is created in people mind by means of what they have already seen, heard from others or by experimentation. A person will react to such things according to his own mental perception and what is existed. That is, an expression on description of the impressions towards a certain thing as a result of being affected by prior knowledge or accumulative knowledge. This means that, it has superficial aspect for form distinction, mental aspect concerning the mind and the intended understanding to understand this thing and its conceptualization in the mind with its perceptions [14]

#### 2. The concept of Urban Form

Urban environment means patterns configured from a solid, void and the way of their linking. Such patterns, in their concept, depends on several variables, including (pattern of densities, pattern of land use and activities, i.e. the relationships between solid and void) which are considered as the formation of the spatial structure within the human criterion. Simply, the Urban Form is the result of a set of functional relationships between services, urban environment events and the daily population need. Moreover, the urban form results from two dimensions. The first is related to the scale of the spatial structure and the other dimension is related to the city's activities. [15]



### 3. The Urban Fabric

It is a system that includes a set of physical components represented in the transport network, space, buildings and free space. However, the interaction between such components is known as the characteristics of urban space, as such components are formed over time [16]

### 4. The Architectural Urban Environment

The term environment can be defined as the external space (empty space), with all the natural forms contained in such space that are directly related to the environment in all its natural forms (plants, landscapes, terrain and the like). In addition, it expresses the urban components that are man-made, including (buildings, land uses and infrastructure), as it entails social, cultural and economic aspects as well as legislative and regulatory aspects with all its temporal and spatial variables. From the point of view of architects, the urban architectural environment is considered as the formations established by Man, as they are compatible and integrated in a way that leads to the creation of a holistic environment that interacts, affects and affected by Man [17]

#### II. Field Study

##### 1. Location and Boundaries of the Study Area

Basra is the third largest city within the Republic of Iraq. It is located between latitudes (25 30, 35 30) and longitudes (55 47, 43 47), as it is bordered by several districts: Qurna and Shatt al-Arab northwards, Shatt al-Arab and Abu al-Khasib eastwards, Zubair westwards and to the south by Al-Faw. Basra is characterized by its strategic and economic importance and the diversity of the economic basis at the level of the agricultural, industrial and service sectors as well as the diversity of employment. The study sample was selected on the area located within the municipality of Al-Ashar, where the area located along Al-Dakir Lake was selected, i.e. the port side, as shown in Figure 4, for three different time stages, in addition to the spatial and heritage characteristics, cultural heritage and its location to the port. All such advantages characterizing the region were chosen to conduct the field study and to know the morphological changes that the region underwent through different periods of time [18]

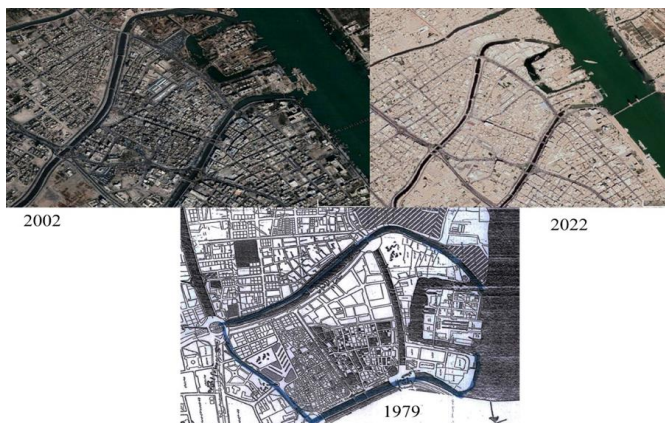


Fig 4 Satellite images and a foundation plan showing the study area (Al-Ashar) during different time stages

##### 2. Analysis of The Urban Landscape of the River Front

The urban landscape of the river front of Al-Ashar city can be analyzed through the below images, where the scene can be tracked during the period 1979 and the period 2021. In which, buildings illustrate the preservation and heritage adjacent to

the port in the two periods, we note the spatial alienation and place migration in the current period, as the region witnessed deterioration and alienation in its landscape overlooking the river front as a result of neglecting planning treatments, conservation operations and urban renewal in accordance with policies, standards, distance from identity, the cultural heritage of the city and the abandonment of its inhabitants until it became a neglected area despite of all its characteristics.

3. Analysis of The Urban Form of The Study Area (Al-Ashar)  
Under analyzing the components of the urban form of solid and void within the urban environment of the study area, the urban form of the morphological stages 1979, 2002, and 2021 were investigated and clarified as follows:

##### (a) Time period of 1979

Through the map shown in Figure (5), it is possible to analyze the pattern of the urban fabric, including the mass and space of the study area in the time period of 1979, as follows:

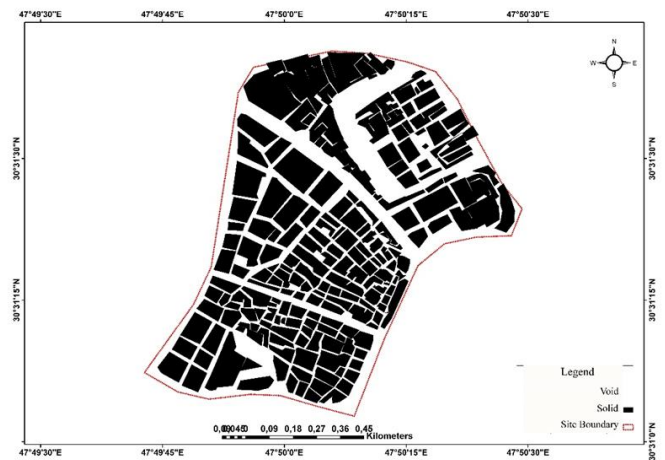


Fig 5 Map showing the urban shape in 1979

Source: Researcher based on Basra municipality data and the production of a map in the GIS program

Through the map shown in Figure 5, we observe the pattern of the urban fabric and the urban form represented by solid and void, where the physical elements of the building blocks within a free-forming urban fabric seem to be large in terms of area, relatively close and detached from each other. As regards the pattern of paths and streets, building blocks are separating between them, as the architectural sectors appear to be surrounded by roads in different directions, in addition to the distribution of urban solids within the urban fabric in the boundaries of the study area. The building blocks permeate the lake represented by the distinctive natural element in the study area into the urban fabric of the area from the upper north side, forming what clearly resembles the letter U.

##### 2. Time period of 2002:

Through Figure 6, it is possible to analyze the pattern of the urban fabric, including solid and void of the study area in the time period of 2002 as follows:

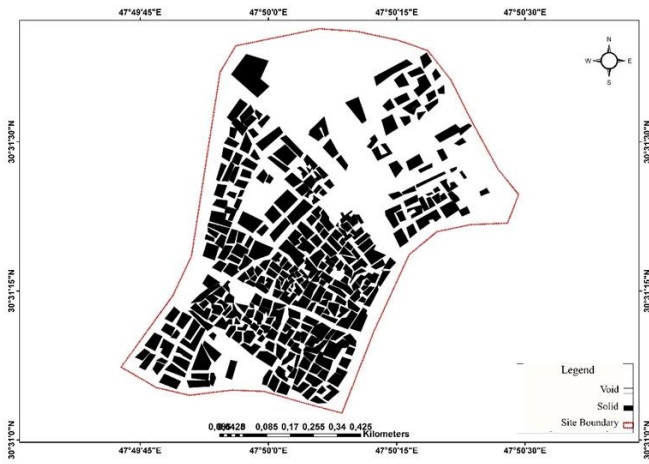


Fig 6 Map showing the urban form in 2002

Source: Researcher based on Basra municipality data and the production of a map in the GIS program

By looking through the map in Figure 6, it can illustrate the pattern of the building blocks, which witnessed alienation at the physical level within the architectural environment of the urban fabric, it is a noticeable change from the previous time period. Mainly, the building blocks were small in terms of area, as their distribution were irregular in terms of getting closer among themselves one time and getting away another time. In addition to the presence of clear gaps as a result of the erosion of parts of the urban fabric in this period, this affects the morphological form of the study area, in addition to paths and streets between blocks that can be dominated of being in irregularity in the flow of movement. In addition to the fact that the morphological form of the natural boundaries of the river changed significantly from the previous time period 1979. The reasons for this change are a set of architectural, economic and social factors associated with the migration of the population to the place, which led to neglect the activities as replacing the uses of residential land with a breaking fabric.

4. Time period of 2021:  
Through Figure (7), it is possible to analyze the pattern of the urban fabric, including the solid and void of the study area in the time period of 2021, as follows:

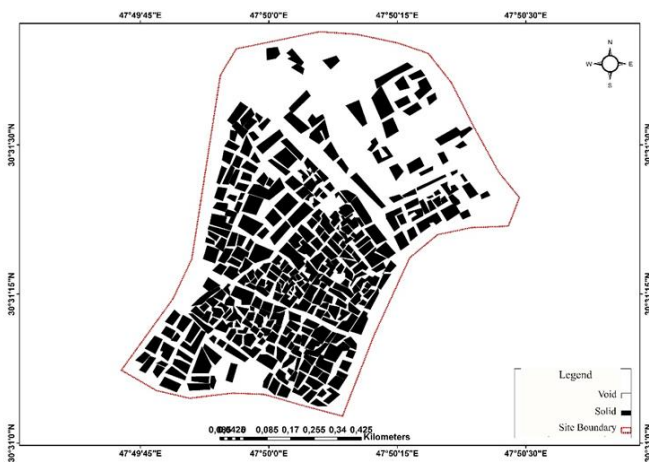


Fig 7 Map showing the urban form in 2021

Source: researcher based on Basra municipality data and the production of a map in the GIS program

By looking at Figure 7, it is possible to analyze the pattern of the urban form. It did not differ much from the time period

2002, but we notice the presence of some building blocks in the northern direction of the study area. However, we also note the small building blocks in terms of area with irregularities in the paths of movement and streets. Figure 8 shows the urban form of the morphological stages for the time periods 1979, 2002, and 2021.

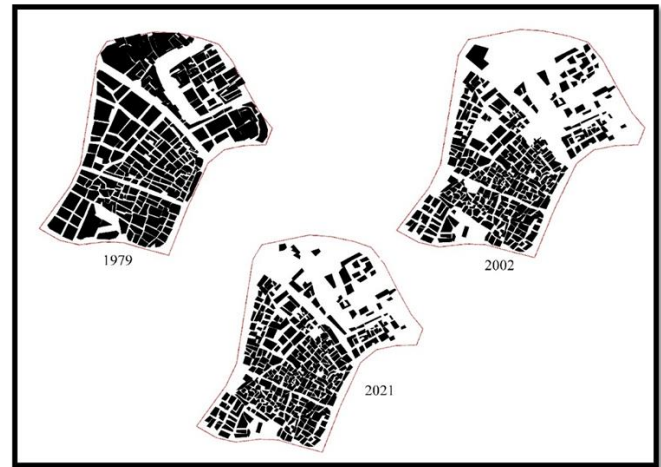


Fig 8 Shows the morphological stages of the urban form in the study area

Source: Researcher

### Summary

1. The fact of Weiriding starts from the collapse of the objective self, loss of identity and content of the study area, so we observe alienation at the physical level of the urban form.
2. The modern view of Weiriding from Hegel's point of view is that it what the self lives and what it feels as the real existence. On the other hand, Max attributes it to the societal values that affect the self, its sense and perceptions, as he considers Weiriding as a means of mechanism for the reality of the new life.
3. Weiriding results in a deviation from the basic (traditional) principles of the form, thus it is a far departure from the architectural and cultural heritage of the city.
4. Absence and distance from identity, tendency towards (the new) tradition and not to use the heritage, all lead to not to deal with the concept of Weiriding within a cultural cradle of the society, its traditions and original values.
5. Identity is the rational matter in terms of its privilege from the outsiders, as privilege here means privacy and difference, not in the sense of differentiation, as everything has its own nature, thus the privacy and identity of AL-Ashar city emerges. According to reality, the city can be observed as being away from its historical and cultural identity.
6. Through the study of the morphological stages of Al-Ashar city, we notice different forms of alienation, which was represented by physical alienation represented by the distance of the urban fabric from the identity of the place as well as behavioral alienation represented by psychological or self, i.e. the inability of residents to express themselves and their needs within the boundaries of the place.
7. According to the analysis of the urban form of the Ashar area, in addition to alienation, there was a disintegration and dispersion within the material components of the urban fabric (Solid), while the urban spaces (Void) and what's in between them are characterized by divergence, i.e. spread, while

moving away from space organization in social communication, thus leads to the lack of communication.

#### Recommendations

1. The necessity to link the urban fabric and its physical components and the elements of the place, including the identity and the architectural and cultural heritage of the city.
2. Revitalizing and restoring the urban fabric in line with the background and identity of the city.
3. Creating containment between the port and the edge overlooking it so that it reflects the urban landscape that is consistent with the privacy of the place.
4. Upgrading the level of the city by reviving the activities in it again and reviving the dilapidated fabric in it, and thus to realize the attraction of the population to it.
5. Respect for humanitarian, design and planning standards between urban solids and voids in order to form an integrated and coherent urban fabric.
6. Interest and keenness to find symbols, meanings and indications that express the identity of the city and society, in a manner inspired by the past and the characteristics of the region in the past in a pattern that enhances the affiliation to the present.
7. The importance of awareness among planners and designers by referring to the identity of the city, its heritage, culture, habits and traditions of its population within planning processes, such as urban renewal or preservation.

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