

The Absence of a Local Pattern in Iraqi Architecture

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Abstract

This research discuss the absence of a local pattern in our current architecture, and the profits of the rich heritage of this area and the Iraqi traditional architecture in particular at all levels in developing or shaping a new architectural form that can be more sustainable.

Therefore the research begin with discussing the richness and originality of Islamic architecture in the rhythmic movement and how Islamic elements and characteristics can create a special local pattern and personality with all its art, architectural, environmental and social aspects in regarding to our cultural background, and the different movements that took place in Iraq in the last few decades of the last century in order to give an example of an architectural integration between the modern style that invade the region and the local one.

The last part of the research discusses the role and the orientations of the academic institutions in loosing or marginalizing the importance of this heritage, and the cultural levels and abilities of the current architects. Then, the research gives many conclusions and recommendations that can help in preserving our heritage and create a local Iraqi pattern .

خلاصة البحث:

يناقش هذا البحث غياب الطابع المحلي في العمارة العراقية، والدور الذي يلعبه الموروث المحلي والعمارة العراقية التقليدية في تطوير وتشكيل نمط وشخصية معمارية يمكنها أن تكون أكثر إستدامة.

لذا بدأ هذا البحث في مناقشة غنى وأصالة العمارة الإسلامية في الحركة الإيقاعية للأنماط المعمارية، وأهمية ذلك في خلق نمط وشخصية محلية من جميع الجوانب الفنية والمعمارية والاجتماعية والبيئية، بالإضافة محاولة التيارات المختلفة في العقود الأخيرة من القرن الفائت في ايجاد نوع من التكامل والتمازج بين التيار الحديث في العمارة والمحلي لغرض ايجاد نوع من المعاصرة بكافة تعريفاتها ومسمياتها.

فيما ناقش الجزء الأخير من البحث الدور والاتجاهات السلبية التي لعبتها المراكز الأكاديمية وأقسام العمارة من خلال مناهجها التدريسية وإتجاهاتها المعمارية والفنية الغير واضحة في فقدان وتهميش لهذا الموروث، بالإضافة الى المستويات العلمية لخريجها وبالذات لمعماري هذه المرحلة والدور الذي يلعبه هؤلاء في صنع القرار في مؤسسات الدولة المختلفة. فيما خرج البحث بمجموعه من الاستنتاجات والتوصيات كمحاولة للتنبيه الى حجم المشكلة والى محاوله للحفاظ على الموروث الفني والفكري والمعماري في خلق نمط وشخصية محلية.

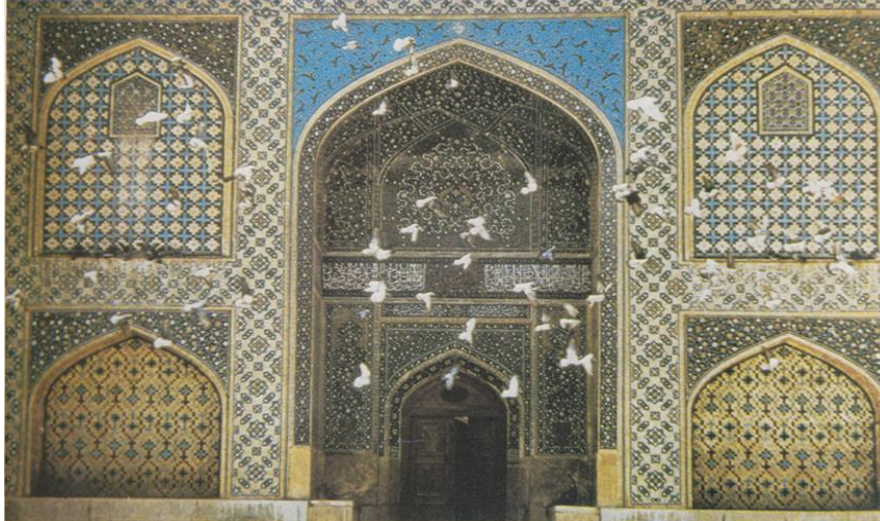
The forefront of research:

The local Iraqi architecture is passing through imbalance and a state of confusion in cognitive intellectual concept and meaning of architecture in general and in feeling the essence of the architectural personality in exact, but in the marginalization of the clear role of the intellectual architect sober from taking part in the attempt to refine the public taste in the architect himself and even in the academic as well. This staff, who entrusted him greater responsibility in the process of the patch by launching architecture throughout its working methods and styles and philosophies of different manner to accommodate the social, economic and political effects by the intellectual, philosophical and technical supports of the rich heritage of the Islamic architecture and civilization, which lie as well at the mercy of a group suffering from the imbalance in their intellectual approach to such concepts and belonging's root of this spot.

So we cannot describe the buildings and the architecture of this period as a real architecture, but as subject of random controlled by the concepts and the control of the currency in drawing its intellectual and formal borders. In this research we will address the absence of a local nature in the Arab architecture in general and Iraq in particular from different aspects and directions.

Overview of Arab Islamic Architecture:

Arab Islamic architecture in general is flourishing by the richness of intellectual, cultural and artistic heritage over the centuries. This richness have been generated and based on solid foundations and their different effects in the formulation of diverse local models within the broader concept of Islamic architecture. These additions came as local agents, emphasizing the richness and originality of Islamic architecture in the rhythmic movement of a respected Islamic Architecture in its different local patterns.



Islamic architectural model reflects the atmosphere, which creates harmony musical motifs

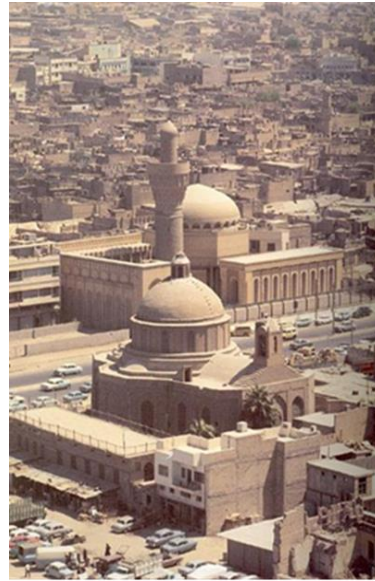
What we find, for example, in Andalusia art of artistic and architectural additions go along with the intellectual and literary realities of its local, are great examples of differentiation in form from the architecture of Mesopotamia or the Persian or other models, with emphasis on the use of the term "style" on the various artistic patterns of Islamic Art and Architecture because of the richness of its artistic, intellectual and philosophical aspects. Each of them represents a unique school in the art of architecture. These models were able to address social and environmental impacts and extreme weather in some cases, in addition to its philosophical originality. This richness is found not only in architecture, but beyond that to the Arab city planning and urban patterns, with respect for human as a basic unit in all urban processors. Moreover coupling the theory of Islamic architecture with the values and behaviors that stem from the Koran and Sunnah which have affected the physical environment. These values espoused by the Muslim and adopted as well its urban contents and society, both economically, politically, intellectually and socially (Ibrahim, 1986, p. 57).

How this dogma associated with content, and so on content over form is reflected in the architecture of the Muslims. Therefor the shape and content represent the real essence of the theory of Islamic architecture, wherein represent any technical or plastic additions complement the values emanating from the content (Ibrahim, 1986, p. 56).

Islam emphasizes self-Muslim and his ability to move in some area of freedom and choice. The concept represented by the Islamic law of God and the created link with God for the Muslim, give the muslim the sense of his presence and being (Khatib, 1963, p. 53).



Caliphs Mosque, detail
Architect- Mohammed Makiya



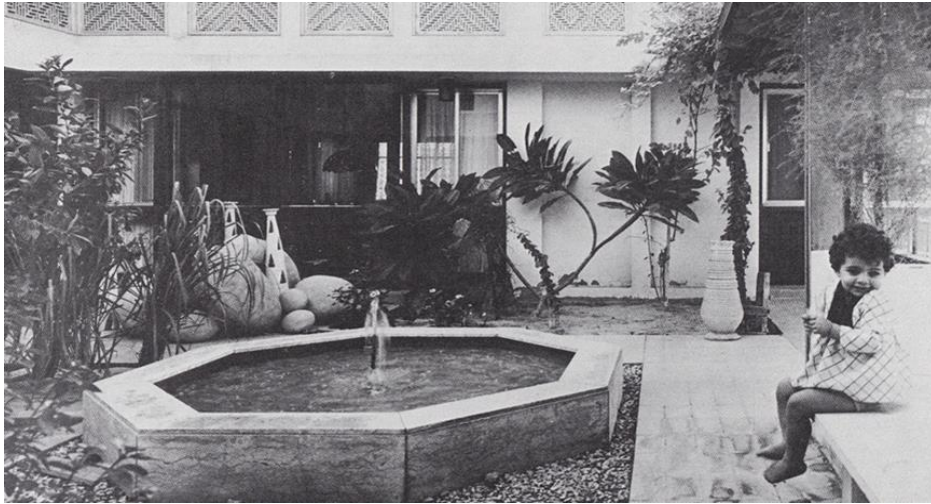
Caliphs Mosque, Eye Bird view
Architect- Mohammed Makiya

We cannot in any way accept the abstraction of architecture of its intellectual and philosophical basis, but is suitable for the application of measurement and theory. Unity, repetition, rhythm, harmony and other elements has formed the whole foundation of Islamic art and architecture and managed in countless ways to resolve various environmental and social problems in different areas, including the architecture and environment of the Arab region and the region between the two rivers as a subject to search.



School Mustansiriya

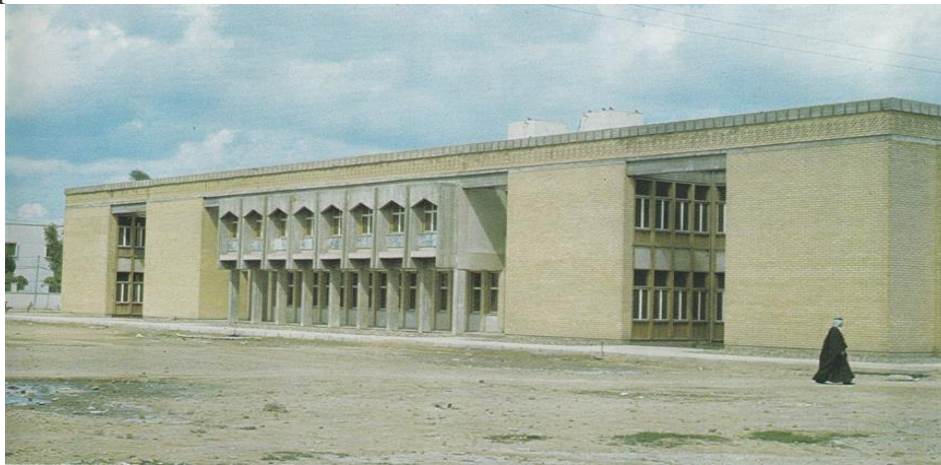
Arab architecture, in the philosophies of Hassan Fathy, is the architecture of inside more than outside, content rather than form, in a dynamic and ongoing transitions in horizontal and vertical directions, which prepares the mental and visual comfort in humanitarian scale that achieve the spiritual belonging to this built environment. Meanwhile, Porter thought that architecture is intellectual and society, as a basis in the search for form, and Islam helps architecture to form a means to confirm the relationships between people in time and space (Ibrahim, 1986, pp. 70-74).



The courtyard of a residential house - Manama architecture Mohammed Makiya

It is the responsibility of architects to study and document this heritage of all its aspects and elements and then imposing the basis of designed capacity and planning facilities over the added constructions in a synergetic style that form a whole integrated unit with the urban fabric.

As we see, the opposite is common in the Arab region of the forceful insertion of an imported architecture to the fabric of the urban city through the use of different architectural styles that cannot permit a specific model or specified intellectual concept of them.



Faculty of Jurisprudence – Baghdad

Moreover, we can mark an organized movement to marginalize the rich heritage of the traditional buildings which had been replaced by crates, concrete and glass, without consideration to the magnitude of the loss of cultural heritage or a simple study of the implemented designs from all aspects, or at least the nature of the used materials or choose colors that reflect the overall level of the architect of this stage intellectually and technically, and to the deterioration of the whole taste.

Personality in Architecture:

We can identify personality by a set of physical, spiritual and moral characteristics, which is characterized by a person from another. This means that the civilization of any society is a reflection of the physical, behavioral and spiritual dimensions of the individual. Therefor the personality of the Greek individual differs significantly from the Roman's, Arab's` or others, and this is what generates several differences in the cultures when taken to indicate their characteristics and advantages.

So, civilizations, in general, are based on the will and the mind of science and the conscience of Arts (Zarif, 1983, p.112).

Islam, as ideology, bestowed on the Muslim in many dimensions and characteristics embodied in the artistic, intellectual and architectural personality of its culture. Besides, the environmental, social, moral and economic elements of each part of Islamic civilization added special dimensions on the local personality of each region, creating a local model or pattern which differs from others within the broader class of Islamic civilization.



Form of balconies in the city of Jeddah

These local personalities were not the product of a certain historical period, but the impact of multiple historical periods. Therefore, the local Iraqi personality differs in its formal elements and processes of art and architecture from the Egyptian or elsewhere due to their social environment and community roots and culture, including their customs, traditions, legacy, and personal values (Fayyad, 2004, p. 82).



Heritage buildings on Haifa Street

Customization in our artistic personality shows our belonging, and that we can find in our culture the characteristic that reflect our personality. Culture, as seen by Al-Jabiri, is the homogeneous compound of memories, perceptions, values and symbols that reflect the cultural identity of the total human (Fayyad, 2004, p. 62), and our ignorance of this personality in our approach is a crime of thought, but killing of

individualism embodied her and marginalization of the individual in all physical, spiritual and intellectual senses.



Hilla City Hall in the fifties- Mohamed Makiya-From the archives of Khalid Al-Sultany

Overview of the local pattern in architecture:

Privacy is a concept of moral with a dynamical nature, variable dialectically with the two main factors, environmental affiliations and cultural factors (Royal, 1985, p. 18). This phenomenon has been clearly dominated on the surface of the ideological and the artistic debates and architectural styles for a long time and since the emergence of the power of modern and international style in architecture, in addition to several architectural and ideological trends in an attempt to create an objective concept of local personality and giving an embodiment privacy in art and architecture. Some of them had been distinguished by creativeness from a many Iraqi architects, represented, for example, by Al-Mustansiriya University for Qahtan Abdullah Awni, which represents part of his thesis in architectural and environmental treatments; and the design of the Institute of Fine Arts for Said Ali Madhloom or the attempts of architect Mohammed Makiya in a range of his projects.



Mustansiriya University for architecture Qahtan Abdullah Awni

In addition to several attempts of many architects in creating a style in architecture that originated from the local environment and filled of its elements, and far away from deceptive, imitation, or contradiction between form and content, as we see in the design of the Iraqi Scientific establishment for architect Rifat Al- Jadraji (Mulla Howish, 1988, p. 240). This local pattern is characterized by a specific privacy, where the concepts of the social and spiritual impacts of Islam have affected the

human life and behavior, and these, in turn, have shaped the style of structural, architectural and environmental treatments (Warren, 1983, p.8).

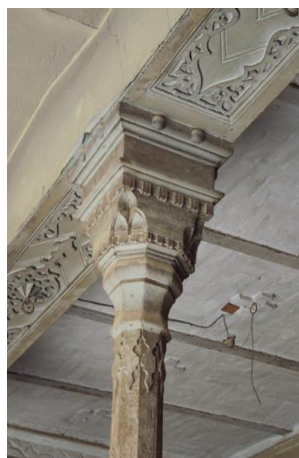


Al-shanasheel detail in the traditional heritage buildings in the city of Hillah - from the archives of the researcher

Internal Courtyard, open design towards the inside and the presence of the basement and its occupational and environmental importance, the use of water and plants in the courtyard, "Al-badkirat" and other climatically and socially processors, "Al-Orsi" and "Al-chanachel" in all artistic and architectural details of the Iraqi traditional house, the organic situation of residential units and the flexible transition for paths and alleys from private to semi-private and public, the treatments for the joints of this transition, then the openness towards the main square of public buildings or the market or other religious buildings and services, then the way of dealing with the different modes of transport, with huge respect to human as the base unit for this character. All of these are the most important features.

This heritage is characterized by two main factors: -

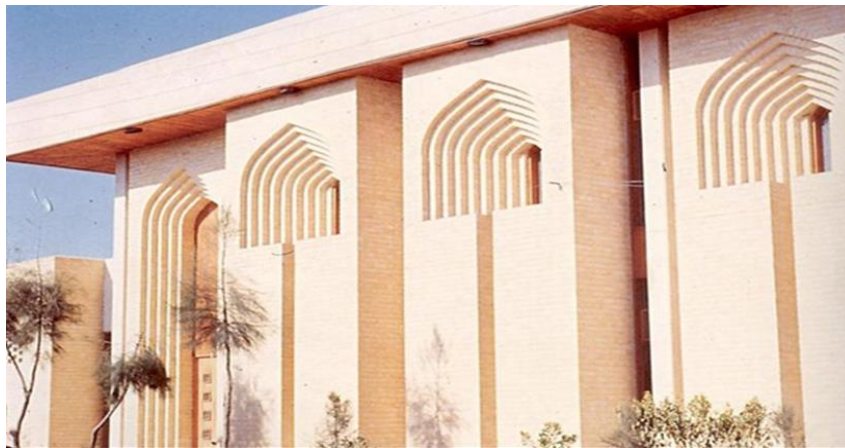
- The mental appearance, which includes curriculums and the intellectual and philosophical values which constitute the whole essence of the spiritual identity of a community or a certain civilization, and is a fundamental principle in reporting the basis materials and formats to interact with the physical conditions therein.
- The physical appearance.



Internal yard and a breakdown of the columns (Al-dinka) in a heritage house in the city of Hillah - from the archives of the researcher

Through the integration of these two factors, the issue of Heritage at the social, art and architectural configurations becomes the technical and practical scientific basis (Atiyah, 1979, p. 92). However, we can mark the architectural and intellectual effects of the twentieth century all over the world and specially the impact of the pioneers of modern architecture with all its methods, and the attempts to insert these directions in the local pattern of Iraqi architecture with an ignoring of this tradition in all concepts, elements and methods and in the way of discussing the contemporary architecture.

In spite of the intellectual and architectural tendencies to maintain the personality of the local Iraqi architecture throughout several thesis came from here and there; we did not find the ear which can accommodate the disaster that is going to be happen through the loss of Iraqi personality in art and architecture, and thus the systematic destruction from different political directions of the Iraqi and Arab architecture and civilization. This is visible and clear at the present time throughout the huge destruction of the local traditional character and the negative perception held by the individual towards this heritage in an attempt to ignore it that called retarded.



Building the Rafidain Bank in Kufa, 1968 Architecture - Mohamed Makiya

Among the most important architectural movements that responded to modernity and inherited what came before (postmodern) is a local Vernacular Architecture. We have had a global impact of this trend in an attempt to find the architectural and environmental integrity by the studying and analyzing of the environment and its effects through local autonomy in design (Mullah Huwaysh, 1988, pp. 225-234). However, the reality has produced unexpected results and greatly radicalized by flooding architecture with symbols and monuments reproduced and glued over the facades as exotic elements that has led to a total loss of architectural identity, ignoring the content and the logical and aesthetic distribution of spaces. We loss, as a result, the pure matchmaking of architecture with heritage as a controversial and substantial ideology which is carefully integrated with the content, and led to a strange movements in dealing with forms and surfaces especially at the end of the sixties and seventies, as in Al-Rabat Hall for architect Ihsan Barboty and the dormitories building for girls in Baghdad for architect Kahtan Awni which its walls and ceiling inlaid with Moroccan inscriptions which are exotic on the local Iraqi heritage and architecture (Mullah Huwaysh, 1988, pp. 260-261).



Internal courtyard in traditional building in the city of Hillah

On the other side, we can find some concepts that had been developed in traditional style and continued in the same spiritual view due to the political orientations toward privacy and the need for a national and regional privacy as the traditional Arab Islamic architecture (Mullah Huwaysh, 1988, p. 264). But the several developments had been brought by the style of postmodern as symbolic and decorative styles which had been illustrated romantic characters in its thinking and nostalgia for the old models.



Caliphs Mosque - General view; Architecture: Mohamed Makiya

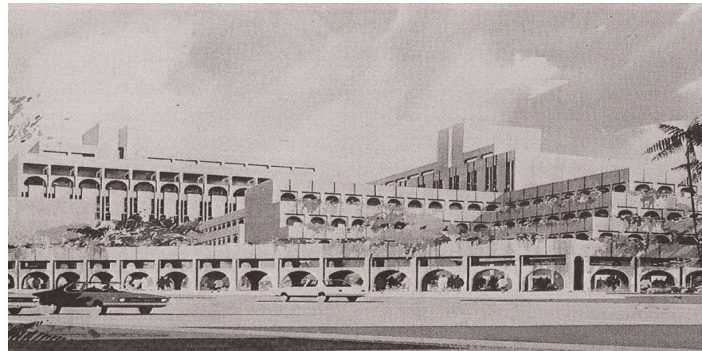
Dr. Mohamed Makiya, who openly criticizing the pioneers of modern architecture in spite of flirting with them in some of his buildings, believed that contemporary is different from heritage that preceded by the generality of the last and the individuality and isolation of the first. Therefore, the contemporary, according to his point of view, is a great disappointment to its users.

Modern architecture is not associated with the overall specificity by the unity of the geographical, environmental and social integration. In fact, the reality reflects a modern architecture in essence, cladded by traditional elements here and there, as abstracted metaphoric symbols of the heritage represented by the architecture of the sixties of the last century. The following and as a result of the political positions and the overall social movements is the emergence of the Arab nationalist movement as a naïve movement to borrow elements of different cultural parts (Mullah Huwaysh, 1988, p. 267), to other individual tendencies that did not have the clear and substantive study, and as a reaction to some of the proposals.

The Academic Orientations of the Iraqi Universities:

The modern style and architectural formations which stepped-oriented the international style acquired on the style of academic study of Iraqi schools of architecture in the fifties, sixties and seventies of the last century because of the impact of the new style on its pioneers and ideologists, whom the large number of

them have got their degrees in Western universities. Therefore, we believe that modernity took the biggest share in the academic orientation for long decades and some of them were the founders of the architectural departments and its intellectual and theoretical teaching approach. And despite various attempts to integrate the local traditional architecture in that period with the modern style, but the general characteristic has a modern architecture in form and content. At the same time, the students tried to confirm this tendency after graduation despite the propensity of some simple attempts to return to the past and to create a local figure derived from the heritage in some of its designing elements.



Side of the Haifa Street The current schools of architecture have been floundered as well with endless problems due to the various architectural styles that strike the Arab region and the use of a large portion of them without taking into account the circumstances of the region, its history and intellectual and cultural heritage and without any consideration to their social and environmental relevance to the society in general and more accurately to the individual. All that led to a huge loss of the Arab personality in the midst of monumental structures which are suitable to be grown and belonged to other parts than the Arab region in all intellectual, social or environmental elements. These trends have been brought to the Arab region and given the full confidence to change the face of the Arab city without any consideration to the legacy of civilization or any recall for the specificity of Arab identity, by the use of the high technology of materials and structural methods. That led to an architectural disaster in all dimensions.

The monumentality in form and the randomly selection of shapes and blocks without considering the possibility of adapting to the circumstances of the local area, transferred large parts of the Arab region to an architectural panorama of all types of models, methods, and tendencies. The most prominent example of that is what hit the nomadic Gulf region, in most accurate expression, with such models and structures illustrated by the high technology in the use of materials, open spaces and industrial glass treatments to provide comfort, or the so-called " internal microclimate", ignoring all the efforts and researches on how to obtain these comfortable ratios naturally by using local materials, components and architectural details, and without any consideration of the concept of privacy in all its meaning.

Hence the processors of environmental, climatic and architectural terms transmit professors of architecture and tutors just as codes on the leaves of their lectures without any application. Moreover, the region has not seen any tendency like the trends that have emerged in the sixties and seventies of the last century in an attempt to reject these models and purification of the Arab region from its negative effects.

In Iraq, we can, in addition to the above, comment on the total points that have large effect in the loss of the entire local Iraqi personality, which can be summarized thus:

- The access to the higher education in the engineering colleges and for a long time is accessible for several who do not have the cultural and the solid scientific background due to the political decisions. This slot has become the decision-maker in many official circles and governmental organizations, which require the scientific sobriety in the decision-making. The result was a state of confusion in the image and the architectural landscape. This led to increased confusion and clear marginalization of the Iraqi architectural personality.
- The political, economic and intellectual conditions push large numbers of staff that find in them the ability to create and innovate, to leave the country in search of an appropriate place to their potential. The rest were forced by many circumstances to look for different methods of income without consideration to their scientific and academic level and the scope of development, in addition to the big experienced gaps by the Iraqi individual, which was the results of graduating huge numbers of academics in general and architects in particular who do not have the architectural foundations in the reality of themselves which pushed them to develop their potential in the manipulation and fraud.
- Such a slot does not have the ability or the will to form any intellectual, philosophical or scientific tendency in the case of any intellectual invasion for our region, as was the case especially after 2003 and brought down all the design and planning laws and standards which were in place previously at least. And despite its simplicity, they did not completely abolish the role of local Iraqi architecture, and defended in many forums for an Iraqi personality.
- With this view of melancholy creeps into the decision, as the institutions managed by a group who do not have a covenantal scientific, cultural and intellectual background or ignoring and forgetting the seriousness of the Arab civilization. This group has become in certain circumstances the decision-maker in a lot of investment projects that lack the minimum gravity or designed capacity, and in designs that has not any cultural background of our heritage. These investments have entered the region under different names and in such projects aimed to profit only rather than the intellectual, cultural, architectural values.

These circumstances and many others distort the form of the Iraqi city in all its parts in such a way that cannot be described, and just like the product of a musical band whose each of them is playing according to his discretion and in accordance with the political dress and without any study of the reality of Iraqi society and the social and environment background of this region.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- The lack of awareness in a huge segment of Arab and Iraqi society of the real role of the traditional house intellectually, and as a database that could be used in future designs towards sustainability. Therefore it is necessary to direct an organized awareness campaign for all segments of society to represent the richness of the traditional buildings in the Arab and Iraqi region.
- The wide organized campaign in destroying the Iraqi intellectual and cultural heritage at the design and planning levels with the need for a clear and strict policy to preserve the heritage. Therefore it is too necessary to determine a scientific basis that can be used as a reference for any decisions which coming from any formal or informal directions.
- The lack of designing and planning foundations that could be used and adopted to deal with the new architectural styles and the need to a specialized committee to develop a set of architectural and planning binding standards for all segments of society.

- The abstraction of the Iraqi personality from all technical, architectural, intellectual and ideological aspects.
- The failure of the academic and researches institutions in dealing with the field of Iraqi traditional architecture at all levels. Therefore it is necessary to rebuild the studying curriculum of the architectural and scientific departments and establishing research conferences that focus on this aspect.
- Climate and environmental pollution in the city because of the deliberate neglect of the role played by natural environmental resources and the need for diagnosis to be the basis for future designs in terms of architecture and planning and in the creation of sustainable form.
- The Management of a wide range of architectural offices by people who do not hold any degree in architecture or any technical background that enables them to assess the scientific, intellectual or architectural provided designs. It is therefore necessary to activate the role of an Iraqi architectural association that could be entrusted with the responsibility of the supervisory role of all architectural bureaus and take strict decisions and sanctions against non-licensed offices, as well as various other responsibilities in drawing a clear picture of the scientific part of the subject of this research.

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