The Loss of Identity in Contemporary Iraqi Architecture: Baghdad City

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Outline

Abstract

The urgent need of infrastructure and utilities to fulfill the needs of population became a priority after sequential wars that Iraq experienced.

Although the traditional architectural environment in Iraq reflects the ancient history of Mesopotamia, the contemporary new architecture in Baghdad and many Iraqi cities is losing its identity.

The newly constructed buildings are causing conflict within the urban scenery .There is no longer a sense of localism and intimacy. This paper aims to discuss the relationship between factors of culture, technology, regulations, and there effect on setting the architecture and urban identity.

using in-depth questioner with experts & Likert Scale in determining the factors affecting architecture and urban identity.

Key words: Architecture Identity, Metaphor, Building regulations and codes.

1-Introduction:

- The increasing role of technology in all aspects of life is playing a major role in destroying the identity of the culture and the Iraqi architecture.

- In building projects, the main concern during and after the war years, was the mass production and the quick impulse in the process of implementing buildings to meet the increasing need in residential, commercial projects. Quantity exceeded quality.

- The architecture in many Iraqi cities lost its beauty, uniqueness and identity. The building regulations and codes didn't cop with the rapid change in need and technology which led to different and strange buildings in the built Iraqi environment.

2-Research Problem:

This research aims to answer the following questions:

-What are the basic elements of architecture identity?

- Why are Iraqi cities losing their architecture identity?

2-1Research objectives:

1. Identifying the main elements that determine architecture identity

2. Explaining the role of regulations in setting architecture identity.

2-3Research Methodology:

-Descriptive and comparative analysis in explaining research problem

- Likert Scale for evaluating elements of identity

3-TheTheoritical Part

3-1Culture And Architecture: o

Through the different historical eras, architecture in Iraq carried o
the privilege of reflecting the culture. Speaking of a certain
culture always brings to mind its most famous or monumental
buildings.

In discussing the relationship between culture and architecture, o
Baydar focuses on two different statements of architects,
belonging to different eras, Vitruvius, and two nineteenth
century architects,

He argues that, "recognizing the historicity of the relationship o
between architecture and culture involves problematizing
architecture as an identity category, as much as, questioning
culture as an architectural category." [5].

The Architectural environment has an immense impact on the o
perception of people around and on persons using them.

there are always symbols, signs and codes which remain stuck o
to the person's memory. These are called mental images.

"It was due to Kevin Lynch's studies of the ○ cognitive maps that people create in their minds memorizing the distinguished characteristics of cities, and getting attached to certain places more than others." [1].

This cognitive approach of perceiving architecture ○ is the characteristic that led architecture to be a language of communication to bear the burden of reflecting the culture.

Architecture is the language of culture in its built ○ environment

Architecture could reflect the identity of a certain ○ culture by signs and symbols.

The identity of architecture is a reflecting mirror of ○ history and technology.

3-2 Architecture And Identity:

Many definitions of identity :

the RIBA identification which is "Identity is the foundation to a sense of belonging. It is the means by which people locate themselves as members of communities and groups and how they define their place in society" [13]. Identities are not singular, nor are they stable.

There has been a move from the "community sociality" of physically localized connections, to an increasing "network sociality" of informational, ephemeral and often temporary associations.

Any study of how architecture and urban form participate in the formation of identity must be seen in the context of this shifting global condition and must include a speculation on its future direction.

3-2-1 Architecture & Identity In International Aspects:

Robert Adam in his assay about identity, o

"Creating local identity through architecture" setts two techniques o
for giving new architecture an identity to relate a building to its
locality emerged:

"the spirit of place and the symbol of place"[3]. o

Choosing a symbolic identity relevant to the location was o
described by the Berlin conceptual architect,

Jurgen Mayer, as finding **"certain elements that are local that we** o
could interpret and make into something architecturally new."[3].
See Figures (1) and (2).

the Catalan architect Enric Mirales and his Italian partner o
Benedetta Tagliabue chose for the Scottish Parliament.

Using boats as a symbol of Scottish identity is not how most Scots o
see their national identity but was, as Tagliabue said,

because as architects "you have to get the best of what you o
perceive" [9].

The overall concept for the Parliament building at Holyrood o
focused on the relationship between the Parliament and the
landscape surroundings.
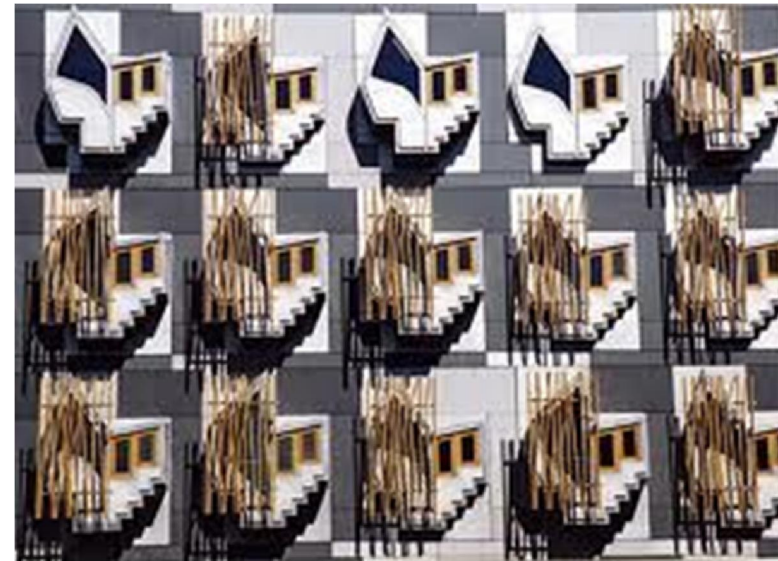
Figs. (1) & (2) Edinburgh, Scotland - Parliament, / Windows detail / Holyrood Palace, Holyrood Abbe, 2003
Source: Jencks, Charles (January 2005).

4-The Role Of Technology In Setting The Architecture ID:

Cultural symbolism of architecture is unfortunately connected to materials, size and myths of the society.[2] It is influenced today more by values for foreign goods and ideas, for fashions and trends, consumerism and the market..

Shashi Bhooshan in his article ", Globalization, building technology and architecture", 2010,noted that"

"This process of globalization, and the resulting service sector centered urbanization which evolves unabatedly is leading to a systemic changes in the industry and architecture as part of the evolving conundrum of social and cultural hiatus. Architecture and technology plays a significant role." [15]

World class in architecture and building in practical terms is a projection of manufacturing and service norms to a cultural practice. This is opposed to the aesthetic value for the handcrafted products which has a different levels and value system for finishes and geometry.

As a result architecture as production of materials in a built environment must be affected by this process of industry and the market.

The challenge is what to choose and what to reject in order to create an architecture identity at local level.

3-2-2 Architecture And Identity in Local / Iraqi Modern Architecture:

Metaphor "is a figure of speech in which an implied comparison is made between two unlike things that actually have something important in common". The word metaphor itself is a metaphor, coming from a Greek word meaning to transfer or carry across. Metaphors carry meaning from one word, image, or idea to another."[11].

It is a tool for setting continues language in architecture and creating communication between the old Iraqi heritage with all its symbolism, and the new architecture inspired by new technological trends.

Elattar warns that, "Technology today offers a big variety of materials and finishing which differ and change without any scientific approach to evaluate its quality, or measure its impact over the presumed age of the building" [7]. Furthermore, the application of new technological trends in architecture, with the lack of awareness of the special features of Iraqi environment and heritage, ended to the loss of identity in Iraqi architectural buildings.

The approach of the new generation of architects aims to the unlimited imitation of the western modern architecture and the application of international trends and movements in architecture.

The use of different importmaterials for both exteriors, and interiors of buildings, ended to a strangely shapeed d environment lacking the familiar cozy sense of the traditional Iraqi architecture. In addition to that, there is a lack of specific regulations, and codes to rule the process of applying new technologies.

5-The Role Of Building Codes & Regulations In Setting The Architecture ID

In a comparison study between two samples of the regulations and codes applied in the housing buildings for both Baghdad, and California Davis:

1. The Davis Municipal code in the chapter 8 dealing with buildings, "It regulates (erection, construction, enlargement, occupancy, alteration, repair, moving, removal, demolition, conversion, equipment, use, height, area and maintenance of all buildings and structures)" [6] (Davis Municipal Code ,Chapter 8,p (8.01)10).

There is a specific item in the Davis Municipal code regarding the height of the fences, "Fences not over 7 feet height" in residential areas.

2. The Baghdad Regulation of buildings and land division, there is a greater tendency to generalize the descriptions of the processes above (Baghdad Municipal Codes 7-16). While in the Iraqi Municipal code there is only a note saying [4]:

ملاحظة : لايتجاوز ارتفاع الدور السكنية ٩ متر من مستوى الرصيف الى اسفل مرد الماء .. أي يمكن ان "يكون الدار بثلاث طوابق ضمن محددات الارتفاع".

The Davis Codes assign a certain preceded knowledge or image of the total outlook of the building, which will decide the characteristics of its identity later on.

the Iraqi code fixes the height of the building only. This leads to a variety of high and low fences affecting the general scene of the area and the loss of its unity.

Although, this small detail may seems unimportant, it affects the whole view of a certain street

commercial street in Baghdad/Almansur Street.

Figure (3) reflects a modern commercial building designed by the Iraqi architect Rifa't Alchadirji , in the traditional way. It reflects the national trend in dealing with technology, and the application of brick as a traditional finishing material for the elevation in a contemporary architecture.

Figure (4) reflects a building opposing the first one in the same street. It shows a typical building type becoming familiar in the new Iraqi architecture. It is locally called, the box type, with the different use of finishing materials, the unpurified height between the attached two buildings in the street with the lack of intelligent use of technology as a major role player in architecture.

Fig. (3) Building in Al Mansur street/Baghdad
Fig. (4) Commercial Building/Baghdad

6-Practical Study:

A questioner was done questioning experts in architecture from academic field , and the Likert Scale of three levels (Low), (Medium), and (High) was used for evaluation.

Components of Architectural identity

1. **Cultural Factor**
2. **Technical factor**
3. **Social and Psychological factor**
4. **Legal factor.**

-In depth Questioner was given to **20 experts** in architecture (PhD, Masters, and Bachelor), in both academic and practice fields. **60% Phd, 30% Bachelor, 10% Masters**

-**Two commercial buildings** were chosen in Baghdad. Alchadirgi commercial building in Karkh, and Coral Hotel building in Rusafa. Different building styles, different techniques, different time and place for both buildings.

- **Two residential buildings**/ houses were chosen with new, contemporary materials

استمارة استبيان

Loss of Identity in Modern Iraqi Architecture

هذه الاستمارة هي لاغراض البحث العلمي في موضوع البحث الموسوم " فقدان الهوية العمرانية في البنية المعمارية الحديثة في العراق".... يرجى تعاونكم في الاجابة على الاسئلة المذكورة .ولاداعي لذكر الاسم.. مع الشكر الجزيل

ملاحظة: يرجى الاجابة لكل مبنى بشكل منفصل ..بعد رؤية الصور المرفقة (1) و (2) تجارية تم (3) و (4)سكنية

التحصيل العلمي:

بكالوريوس		ماجستير		دكتوراه

1. العامل الثقافي- الانتماء المكاني

ا. هل تشعر ان المبنى يتوافق مع البيئة المحيطة؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

ب. هل يعكس المبنى معنى معينا او مرجعية خاصة؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

ج. هل يرتبط المبنى برمز او رموز معينة ؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

د. ان كانت الاجابة في السؤال السابق نعم ، فما هي الرموز التي يعكسها المبنى؟

ثقافية	اجتماعية	تقنية	اخرى اذكرها

ه.هل تشعر ان المبنى ينتمي الى البيئة المحلية ام العالمية؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

2.العامل الثقافي- الانتماء الزماني

ا. هل تعتقد ان المبنى يرتبط بالمرحلة الزمنية الحالية؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

ب. هل تعتقد ان المبنى يمتلك التوجه الزمني المستقبلي؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

3.العامل التقني

ا.هل تعتقد ان المبنى استغل توظيف التقنية المعاصرة ؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

ب. هل تعتقد ان المبنى نجح في توظيف المواد المحلية ؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

4.العامل الاجتماعي والنفسي:

ا. هل تعتقد ان المبنى يشكل نقطة جذب اجتماعي على المستوى العمراني والنفسي

كثيرا	متوسط	لا *

5. العامل العمراني التشريعي:

ا. هل تعتقد ان للتشريعات والانظمة دور في رسم الهوية العمرانية في البيئة؟

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

ب. هل ترى ضرورة اعادة النظر تشريعيا في تحديد طبيعة المواد البنائية المستخدمة لاعطاء هوية معمارية

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

ج. هل ترى ضرورة اعادة النظر تشريعيا في تحديد الارتدادات والارتقاعات للابنية لاعطاء هوية معمارية

كثيرا	متوسط	لا

شكرا لتعاونكم

صورة (1) مبنى- عمارة الجادرجي- بغداد- المنصور
المصدر:Http://baghdadpictures.blogspot.com2009>

صورة (2)عمارة فندق كورال- بغداد – الجادرية
المصدر : الباحثة

صورة (4) مبنى دار سكني حديث- بغداد
المصدر : الباحثة

صورة (3) مبنى دار سكني حديث -بغداد
المصدر : الباحثة

7-Findings of Practical Study:

7-1-Commercial buildings: ○

7-1-1-Al-Chadirgi Building / Karkh / 1989

1a. Cultural factor / Place: ○

80% of answers chose high for Questions (a ,b, c, d, f) related to ○
Building harmony with surrounding, the building has a meaning, is
related to a symbol, and the building is related to local environment.

1b. Cultural factor / Time ○

50% of answers showed high relation between building with present ○
time.

80% of answers showed high relation future time. ○

2. Technical factor ○

80% of answers chose high for building use of contemporary ○
techniques and successful use of local materials.

3.Social Factor: ○

100% answers chose high for the building being a focal and ○
attraction point socially.

4. Legal factor: ○

100% chose high for role of regulations in setting architecture ○
identity, determining building materials, and setting heights and
setbacks for buildings to give architectural identity.

7-1-2-Coral Hotel Building / Rusafa1a. / 2012

1a.Cultural factor / Place:

60% of answers chose medium for Question (a) 40% chose low related to Building harmony with surrounding, 80% chose low for Question (b) for the building has a meaning, and 100% chose low for Question (c) related to a symbol, 80% chose low to Question (e) for the building relation to local environment.

1b. Cultural factor / Time

80% of answers showed meduim relation between building with present time.

80% of answers showed medium relation with future time.

2. Technical factor

60% of answers chose medium, 40% chose low for building use of contemporary techniques, and 100% chose low for Question (b) related to use of local materials.

3.Social Factor:

80% answers chose low for the building being a focal and attraction point socially.

4. Legal factor:

100% answers chose high for the importance and role of regulations in setting architecture identity, determining building materials, and setting heights and setbacks for buildings to give architectural identity.

7-2 Residential Buildings:

1a. Cultural factor / Place:

80% of answers chose low for Questions (a ,b, c, d, f) related to Buildings harmony with surrounding, the building has a meaning, is related to a symbol, and the building is related to local environment.20% showed medium.

1b. Cultural factor / Time

40% of answers showed medium, 60% low relation between buildings with present time.

80% of answers showed low relation with future time. 20% medium relation with future.

2. Technical factor

95% of answers chose low for building use of contemporary techniques and successful use of local materials 5% showed medium.

3. Social Factor:

100% answers chose low for the buildings being a focal and attraction point socially.

4. Legal factor:

100% answers chose high for the importance and role of regulations in setting architecture identity, determining building materials, and setting heights and setbacks for buildings to give architectural identity.

8- Results And Conclusions:

8-1-Theoretical:

1. Architecture and identity are inseparable companions. Architecture in countries like Iraq resembles their past, present, and future. It is the communicating language that speaks for the city,

2. The technology is the application tool ,it affects the choice of building structures and materials, and has a strong effect on the architecture production and identity.

3. Building Codes and regulations play the most major role in setting the urban and architecture identity of the city.

4. There is a major difference between the Iraqi building regulations, codes and the foreign, international ones, in setting details, setbacks, materials, dimensions…etc.

8-2-Practical ;

- **8-2-2-Commercial buildings**
- **Chadirji Building 1.**
- **80%** of answers agreed that the Chadirji building have an architectural identity related to Iraqi culture reflecting the place, time and future aspects.
- **Coral Hotel Building 2.**
- **60%** of answers chose **low 40%** chose medium **for cultural, social factors** in relation to architectural building identity, **85% chose medium** for the technological factor and the building relation to present and future aspects.
- **These results :the new technologies and building materials are used without relation to cultural or social factors.**
- **importance of regulations in setting the the urban and architectural identity, especially for new commercial buildings..**
- **8-2-3-Residential Buildings:**
- All the results agreed for the low effect of these buildings on architecture identity due to cultural, technological and , social factors, which reflects the importance of technology in building materials and structures and, building codes, regulations in setting the present and future identity.

9- Recommendations:

1. To maintain the identity of Iraqi architecture the technology should be applied rationally, and regulated effectively to result in architecture which reflects the Iraqi culture and resembles its identity.

2. There is an urgent need of rethinking and rewriting the Iraqi building regulations and codes for a more detailed and specific codes to maintain a unified approach of the urban city form.

3. Detailed studies should be done in relation to the use of proper building materials especially for main elevations of both residential and commercial buildings to stop the bad choice of materials that affects the urban and architectural identity.

4. Architecture schools should give detailed attention to studying local building materials and technologies with rational application of modern technologies and new aspects, and structures in design and implementation.

Thank You

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