

**IMMATERIALITY IN ARCHITECTURE: THE USERS' SPATIAL
EXPERIENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF BAHRAIN**

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Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

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Dated 1st June 2016

Abstract

Architecture is a creative process that relies on representational tools (drawings, physical scale models, digital models etc.), which describe what is being designed. Such tools are useful in showing the position of the solid elements that make up a building, their shape and size, as well as the physical boundaries of the space. Even though these tools are “immaterial” representations, they are different to the immateriality that is associated with space when experienced by users. This research is interested in theoretical debates relating to immateriality as part of the users’ spatial experience and how these can inform the design process.

Firstly, this study discusses the relationship between architecture as a creative process, and the lived experience of people as a way of consuming space. Space is seen as a product of the design process and the context in which architecture exists. The particular context that this research is interested in is that of Bahrain, as a typical example of a geo-cultural part of the world, whose economic conditions and cultural values are changing fast.

Given that Bahrain is part of the Islamic world, the discussion of the context is extended to Islamic architecture. The thesis will delve into how Islamic architecture, which is informed by religious and cultural values, combines both material functions and immaterial aspects. However, the economic and social transformation that the Gulf region has seen over the last few decades has impacted on people and their relationship with the everyday space, the city, its design and the way it is experienced.

Using both the place of dwelling, as a private space, and public spaces in the city, this thesis looks at the spatial experience of city dwellers to consider how that experience relates to the context in which those spaces exist. This thesis is particularly interested in the immaterial aspects of the users’ spatial experience, which is often overlooked or naively assumed to be part of the design brief. This study uses qualitative research approaches, as it aims to explore people’s lives and to identify and clarify its underlying meanings. Firstly, case studies from the literature were referred to in order to gain a sufficient understanding of architecture, culture, context and their impact on people’s lived experience. Subsequently, fieldwork-based primary research was undertaken using a variety of methods including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion, organised walks with participants and observations.

It is anticipated that the discussion would lead to a better understanding of some of the issues around immateriality in architecture that could inform architecture as a practice and a discipline. Such a practice would reflect the social, cultural and environmental conditions of this particular context. In this respect, the design process will be informed by both material and immaterial consideration of the users and their context.

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Definition of terms

<p>Immateriality</p>	<p>The term ‘immateriality’ is used here to refer to all what a material object, such as a building, comes to mean to its occupants or users. With regard to its use in relation to people’ spatial experience, it focuses on ideas and concepts that are related to the ways of experiencing space which go beyond what the five senses can experience. The concept of immateriality is interrelated with the users’ cultural, social and ideological values. This includes underlying meanings that describe the relationship and interaction between people and their spaces, which are influenced by many aspects like function, needs, desires and aspiration. It is also concerned with the way the user interacts with their surroundings, and how people feel architecture through their senses.</p> <p>The term also involves challenging the users’ spatial experience through the intangible parameters that are considered from philosophical and psychological standpoints when describing the experience of the space including its physical attributes and any other meanings, symbols and association that the users may have of the space. Such an experience of inhabiting a space would be related to the social, cultural and economic settings. The way an individual would perceive a space, how it would look, feel and smell is not only influenced by specified rules set by the architect or the builder, it is also affected by memories, emotions and feelings that are set within the inhabitant’s background.</p>
<p>Culture</p>	<p>Culture is a set of actions, beliefs and structure, that surrounds us all the time, which constructs and produces our habits and values. It defines the individual’s or the community’s basic attitudes, including how to dress on a daily basis or on certain occasions, how we facilitate our sense of humour, how we interact with others, males and females and many other details of daily life. One should admit that culture is in a dynamic and continuous process of change and amendment.</p> <p>The culture of a community is not necessary exactly the same as how it used to be many years ago, or how it will be some years ahead. These shifts and changes in cultural values could be imposed or inherited, controlled, verified and altered in a society.</p>
<p>Vernacular</p>	<p>Vernacular architecture is a term that is used to refer to architectural design which is in most cases designed, built and inhabited by the users themselves, by using locally available resources and materials. Vernacular architecture addresses local building and design needs and it tends to evolve over time to reflect the environmental, cultural and historical context in which it exists. In vernacular architecture, the function of the building would be the dominant factor, while aesthetic considerations would take a secondary role.</p>
<p>Modernism</p>	<p>There is a difference between modernism as a movement and modern architecture as a style.</p> <p>Modernism is a movement in art, architecture, literature, etc., started at the beginning of the 20th century and generally characterised by a deliberate break with classical and traditional forms and methods of expression.</p>

	<p>Modern architecture is the style that emerged along with modernism and was associated with an analytical approach to the function of buildings, a strictly rational use of (often new) materials, an openness to structural innovation and the elimination of ornament.</p>
<p>Islamic architecture</p>	<p>Islamic architecture includes sets of architectural and spatial features that are inherently influenced by Islam as a religion, cultural phenomena and way of addressing life. Islamic architecture today certainly differs from how it used to be centuries ago. The old Islamic architecture during the period of Islamic civilization could be defined as an architecture that was founded by Muslims, most probably for Muslims and in an Islamic country, or in places where Muslims have an opportunity to express their cultural independence in architecture.</p> <p>Nowadays, the term Islamic architecture refers to a contemporary architecture that is inspired and influenced by full adherence to the norms and values of Islam, and the features of the old Islamic architecture, whether it is founded by Muslims or not, or built in an Islamic country or not.</p>

Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research problem

This thesis attempts to re-examine the conventional way of looking at architectural practice through the architect's viewpoint, which describes the space through its physical and commercial values and descriptors, and neglects a very important element that deals with the non-physical aspects. Many influential architectural theorists and practitioners promote a vision of architecture as an intellectualised, abstract form of exploration, claiming that it should be as free from any traditional constraints as possible. Through this approach, architecture is thought to follow global trends and market forces. In this respect, less attention is paid to the specificity of a given place and the needs of a local community.

It is essential, in a world where architecture is something to be contemplated, appreciated and experienced, to try to focus the attention on immaterial aspects of architecture, which can be as important as the material ones, if not more so, and which have started to gain popularity. This research proposes to examine users' spatial experience through an exploration of the relationship between space as an output of a creative process, based on an architect's intentions, and as an experience that the user will have. This study will be a way of reconsidering space through non-physical aspects, which reflect the narrative of the users' everyday life and therefore emphasise the importance of the users' experience of a built environment.

In recent years, the diversity of exterior forms and interior spaces can be witnessed in new, dramatic, never-before-experienced buildings, such as the works of the late Zaha Hadid or Frank Gehry. These buildings are made possible only through digital design techniques, computer software and parametric applications, which are essential in the creation of a new kind of architecture that is fluid and elegant, complex, and technologically innovative. Architecture is being approached as a product of a creative process, artwork or even sculpture, with a scale that could house human beings; it is as if the experience of the user is incidental and takes a secondary role compared to the expressive forms.

On a more specific level, this study will be situated in the particular context of Bahrain, as an example of a geo-cultural part of the world, where economic conditions and cultural values are changing fast.

Bahrain, the chosen context, has been referred to because of the researcher's personal relations with this culture on the one hand, and the lack of such studies that are oriented towards the user and his/her spatial experience on the other. The discussion will involve looking at the architectural discourse from psychological and cultural studies perspective. Using interdisciplinary approaches and methods to identify the non-physical and immaterial aspects will allow for different ways of

examining the built environment, based on the use of methodologies from other subject areas. Within this context, the proposed research will be looking at architecture through the users' perspective, which will help in establishing a more user-oriented architectural practice.

Cities in the Gulf region in general have been through a major transformation in the past four decades. As a result, the urban space, which was mainly shaped by traditional social structures and the local economy, which was based on fishing, pearl trading and farming, has been modified beyond recognition. The transition of the Gulf states' economy, due to the increase in oil revenues and the accumulation of wealth, led to the development of a distributive and comprehensive welfare policy, which then became a major and unique factor in shaping the country.

Bahrain, and the Gulf states in general, were hugely influenced by the contemporary architectural style, which then precipitated a rapid urbanization resembling a checkerboard of architectural styles and global signature designs, dominated by tall skyscrapers and western style shopping malls. Some argue, like Hamouche (2013) and Mahgoub (2011), that this has led to a loss of appreciation for local architectural heritage and social alienation of the citizens.

Many traditional houses were demolished and whole neighbourhoods were cleared to provide space for the new architecture to grow. To enhance the image of Bahrain, and as a way of marketing it to the world, tall buildings of various forms and heights stand to present the country to the world. Skyscrapers seem to be the favoured style in Bahrain nowadays, and are intended to be of mixed use, serving both housing, as well commercial activities and financial services.

Against this background, this research is going to look at ways of understanding the spatial experience of people, whether be it in the private space (home) or the public space (city).

Consequently, this proposed study intends to discuss the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience through both secondary research using a number of case studies from various contexts, and primary field research conducted in the chosen context of Bahrain.

The thesis uses research questions in order to frame the discourse and help clarify the aim and set some objectives to achieve it. At the initial stages of the research, the proposed research questions were the following:

1. What are the immaterial and non-physical aspects of architecture that affect the users' spatial experience?
2. To what extent do architects use immaterial descriptors to set their design intentions and how are these deployed to transform ideas into design?
3. To what extent is the participation of users taken into account as part of the design process?

4. Based on the findings of the above three questions, how does the debate inform the understanding of the users' spatial experience and the degree of participation in architecture within the context of Bahrain?

These questions, however, have been through a process of refinement after the initial fieldwork research. After getting in touch with users and discussing aspects related to the experience of their spaces, both public and private, it seems that some aspects of the research needed to be recognised more. The cultural impact on architecture appeared as one of the main recurring themes during the pilot fieldwork. Therefore, the argument of participation in design has been replaced with the discussion around the cultural impact on architecture, as it appeared to be more important and relevant to the core of the study. This had led to the rewording of the original Question 3 to include the impact of culture on architecture. Because of the extensive length of time needed to carry out the research, this then limited the breadth of the research, and it was decided to leave out the original Question 2 relating to the use of immaterial descriptors to set the design brief, which will be considered in postdoctoral research. Based on these considerations, the revised research questions that informed this thesis are as follows:

1. What are the immaterial and non-physical aspects of architecture that affect the users' spatial experience?
2. To what extent does culture impact on architecture as a lived experience in the specific context of Bahrain?
3. Based on the findings of the above, how can the culture-architecture debate enhance the understanding of the users' spatial experience in this context?

The research addresses these questions in a number of ways. First of all, through the review of the literature, a holistic framework has been created to describe the overall areas related to the research, including the historical, cultural, social, religious, theoretical and practical aspects of the context.

The research intends to address some of the issues, challenges and opportunities that surround the users' experience within these specific social, cultural and economic settings. In order to understand the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience, the primary and secondary research was conducted to try to identify the immaterial descriptors that can be associated with users' spatial experience.

The findings of this research show that the notion of immateriality is acknowledged within the work of some theorists, while the contemporary practice is more overwhelmed with the physicality of architecture and its appearance, as if immateriality either ignored or taking a secondary role. Therefore, the research focuses on this gap between theory and practice in regards to acknowledging immateriality as part of the users' spatial experience. In Bahrain, the context

of this study, traditionally, architecture had strong connections with immateriality, culture and the context in which it exists. Therefore, there is a need to understand the change that led to the lack of such connections within the contemporary setting, which will be dealt with in details in the coming chapters.

It is anticipated that this study will lead to a better understanding of the contemporary architectural discourse with a focus on a user-centred practice. Such a discourse, it is hoped, would encourage designers and decision makers to consider the users and their needs with a view to creating an architecture that is meaningful for its users and responds to the contemporary social and cultural conditions of the context for which they design. For such an outcome to be achieved, the design process would need to be informed by both material and immaterial considerations of the users and the context. Such a study will benefit architecture both as a practice and as an academic discipline.

1.2 Research aim and objectives

This study aims to set a framework for acknowledging the importance of the immaterial aspects of architecture, with a view to considering the culture-architecture debate as a way of enhancing the understanding of the users' spatial experience within the context of Bahrain. Achieving this aim will be through the objectives set out below:

- To undertake a critical overview of contemporary architectural discourse with regard to immateriality and users' spatial experience and position them within the theory-practice relationship.
- To carry out primary and secondary research into immateriality with a view to identifying how it affects users' spatial experience in practice. Through this, the extent to which Bahraini users are aware of immateriality would be tested.
- To discuss the culture-architecture relationship in Bahrain with a view to exploring the extent to which the former has an impact on the latter.
- To investigate, through the primary research, how the understanding of the users' spatial experience could be enhanced as part of the culture-architecture debate.

Through the use of primary and secondary research, this study will look at architecture from the users' perspective, with a view to understanding what could shape up their spatial experience. Such an understanding could lead to a greater awareness of the issue among the various stakeholders, which in turn could lead to a better built environment.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The thesis is organised into nine chapters. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the contextual background and summarises the literature in areas relevant to the research context. It starts with an introduction to the context of Bahrain, as a typical example of a geo-cultural region of the world and where this study is contextualised, followed by a section that discusses the wider context of Islamic architecture, given that Bahrain is part of the Islamic world. The discussion of the context is extended to explain how Islamic architecture is informed by religious and cultural values as well as having an impact on people's way of life. The section will delve into how both the material functions and immaterial aspects of everyday life are informed by the religious and cultural values of the context. The socio-cultural values of people and the architecture they produce and experience are shown to be interrelated. For instance, the mosque was not merely a place for worship but rather a focal point in the city and a "social condenser", which symbolised and nurtured a sense of community spirit.

Furthermore, the latter section of the chapter discusses the economic and social transformation that the Gulf region has seen over the last few decades. It explains the result of such a change and how it impacted on people and their relationship with the everyday space, the city, its design and the way it is experienced.

Chapter 3 discusses the relationship between architecture as a practice and a theory, as a way of understanding the space from different perspectives including those of theoreticians, practitioners and users. The chapter starts with a review of the main concepts that articulate *space* and *experience* in order to outline the concept of *spatial experience*. Aesthetics and immateriality are also articulated in a way that explains the theoretical framework for such concepts as part of the contemporary architectural discourse.

Consequently, the chapter focuses on how the theoretical issues affect practice, beginning with a discussion of the meaning of architecture as a practice. Then, the discussion moves on to explain how cultural issues affect architecture as a practice. It also touches on elements related to ethics and the rights of the users, and concludes with identifying a gap in the relationship between theory and practice in a way that reflects immaterial and cultural considerations. It also expresses the relationship between architecture and culture, trying to explain how architecture as spaces, buildings, details and documents can be related to the cultural insights of the users and their context.

Chapter 4 sets out the research methodology. It argues for the need to carry out this study using qualitative research methods, because the aim and the objectives of the study are concerned with exploring people's lives and everyday behaviour, and seek to identify and clarify underlying meanings. This chapter acts as an account of how the proposed work would be carried out,

identifying the type of data needed and methods used to collect it. The chapter starts with identifying the qualitative approaches related to this investigation, followed by a detailed explanation of the thesis methodological approach. Primary and secondary research methods are explained including the use of case studies, interviews, questionnaire, observation and participatory research in the form of focus group.

Chapter 5 looks at two different case studies from the literature where the design process seems to have taken into account the users. Such case studies are being used as examples in order to invest a sufficient understanding of architecture, culture, the context and its relationship with people. The research refers to two case studies from different backgrounds and settings in order to explore real-life interventions in which different spatial experiences were generated, and to understand immateriality in architecture within different contexts. The chapter starts with a western model giving an example of the work of the American architect Samuel Mockbee, who is thought of as the father of *socially responsible architecture*. The second case study articulates the work of the Egyptian architect Hasan Fathy, as an example of a work from the Middle East, a context that has a lot in common with Bahrain. Fathy's philosophy is based on critical attributes such as community architecture, sustainability and self-build, and he was against the unchecked influence of international architecture, which he saw as an imported product with no connections to the local community, and in which its main focus was technology rather than humanism.

Chapter 6 presents the details of the data collection deployed in the fieldwork and the data gathered. Using both the place of dwelling, as a private space, and public spaces in the city, this study intends to look at the spatial experience in both types of spaces, with a view to considering how that experience relates to the context in which those spaces exist. It is particularly interested in the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience, which is often either overlooked or naively assumed to be part of the design brief. This chapter presents the collected data and information from the fieldwork using the methods explained earlier in the methodology chapter.

Chapter 7 presents an analysis of the information gathered during the fieldwork by means of semi-structured interviews conducted with 44 participants with a view to delving into their respective spatial experiences and the aspects of immateriality that underpins the experience, as well as the impact of culture on architecture. It is worth mentioning that these interviews helped in informing the participants' understanding of architecture and its relationship with the local cultural and social conditions. It also acted as a way of generating greater awareness among the participants of how to understand their spatial experience and appreciate its immateriality.

In this context, the chapter considers addressing some of the issues, challenges and opportunities that surround the users' experience within these specific social, cultural and economic settings. It

also aims to represent the stories and everyday narratives that the participants shared in the discussion, as a way of exploring the immaterial aspects that contribute to their spatial experience.

Chapter 8 offers a discussion of the second fieldwork data, relating to the public urban space and the theoretical concepts that relate to the city nowadays. This chapter combines a theoretical framework from the literature with the research findings from the workshop and the focus group, and those gathered using observation, in order to generate a wider meaning of the city experience as part of the inhabitants' daily life, with a view to addressing some of the research questions.

Finally, Chapter 9 summarises the research findings and presents some recommendations. The interpretations of the findings help in demonstrating how the research questions were addressed and pointing out the limitations that the methodology used may have. The chapter also discusses the contribution of this thesis to knowledge, and identifies areas for future research.

It is hoped that this research could influence the way in which architectural practice works nowadays, and could lead to creating built environments that help in sustaining culture. A user-centred practice could be considered as an approach of understanding architecture in the light of the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience. As a result of this approach, architecture will be more integrated with people's everyday lives, responding to their context with its social, cultural, economical and environmental settings. Such an approach would lead to the enhancement of people's way of life through establishing a positive interactive atmosphere between the people and their environments.

Contextual Background

Chapter 2: Contextual Background

2.1 Overview

This study will be a way of reconsidering space through the non-physical aspects that configure the narrative of the users' everyday life and therefore emphasising the importance of the users' experience of a built environment. More specifically, this study will explore this issue through the particular context of Bahrain.

Bahrain, the chosen context, has been referred to because of the researcher's personal relations with this culture on the one hand, and the lack of such studies that are oriented toward the users and their spatial experience on the other. Initially, it is important here to give an overview of Bahrain's history, economy and culture.

This chapter starts with a historical review of the development of Bahrain, with a particular focus on the city of Manama. This review divided into three main historical eras: early history, twentieth century and post-independence. The argument then delves into a bigger discussion around the historical background of Islamic architecture, given the fact that Bahrain is part of the Islamic world. This discussion covers areas related to the historical background of Islamic architecture and city, describing how the immaterial and social aspects played a vital role in shaping the Muslims' built environment.

2.2 Historical review of the context of Bahrain

The "Kingdom of Bahrain is the smallest of the States on the Arabian Peninsula" (Schöneberg, 2008: 8). It consists of 33 islands, with a total area of 767.26 square kilometres located in the Arabian Gulf, between Saudi Arabia and Qatar (official web: www.bahrain.bh). Traditionally, pearling and trading dominated the country's economy, however, since the discovery of oil in the early 1930s, the islands have undergone a massive transformation in all aspects of life, not just economic. Not only has the lifestyle of its inhabitants had a huge and fast transformation, even the structure of the society, the cultural features and the people's outlook on life have been affected.

2.2.1 Early History

Human settlements have existed in Bahrain for a long time. The country has known many civilizations since the *Dilmun* period (see Figures 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3), which was more than 3,000 years ago (1800 BC), when stone houses were in existence, and "the world's largest conglomeration of burial mounds, which is indicative of a historically significant civilization" (Dayaratne, 2008a: 912). The *Dilmun* era was followed by *Tylos*, during the Greek and Roman

times, and afterwards Bahrain was known as *Awal* during the third century, named after the Arab tribes *Bani Wael* and *Abdu Al Qyis*. Finally, at the time of the arrival of Islam in around 630AD, “Bahrain referred to that vast area as mentioned by the Arabs that extended from Basra in the north to the Omani coast in the south” (Al-Orrayed, 2009: 11).

In order to understand the traditional architecture in Bahrain, one has to understand the Islamic architecture, which is more than 1,400 years old. As Islam is the most practised religion in the region, Islamic architecture was the most dominant since the religion arrived on the islands. Moreover, the capital of Bahrain, Manama, is a typical example of an Islamic city, which represents how architecture and lifestyle within this context were integrated, both materially and immaterially.



Figure 2.1: Dilmun period (3200–320 BC) burial chambers at Saar, Bahrain (Source: <https://uk.pinterest.com/pin/304204149805475630/>)



Figure 2.2: Dilmun Burial Mounds dating to around 4100–3700 BC (Source: <http://bahrainside.com/index.php?topic=1209.0>)



Figure 2.3: Dilmunian seals (Source: <http://www.crystalinks.com/dilmun.html>)

“Architecture has a language of its own. It is the visible expression of thoughts, beliefs, and aspirations of man. In Islam we find ideas, emotions, and sense of poetry vividly evoked by the beauty of its buildings.” (foreword Creswell and Allan, 1958: xiii)

Creswell, who studied Muslim architecture since 1910 argues in his book *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*, “Arabia, at the rise of Islam, does not appear to have possessed anything worthy of the name of architecture” (Creswell and Allan, 1958: 1). He claims that during that time the Arabs remained with no architectural ambitions, and a large portion of the population were tribal and nomadic, living in temporary dwellings made of reed, cane and straw, which could be pulled down easily to move to new areas.

Later, and chiefly for political reasons, according to Creswell, the Arabs decided to settle after their exposure to the architectural developments of the talented peoples they conquered. It seems that Creswell’s declaration is quite ingenuous, as many ancient settlements had already existed, including the *Dilmun* civilization in Bahrain. Even at later stages during the tribal period, there were local non-tribal communities that existed previously, which were supported by agricultural land, according to Fuccaro (2000). Later on, Arab tribes gradually began to understand the use of locally available building materials, which suited their climatic conditions, such as clay, lime and gypsum, to build their permanent dwellings. The people were planning their dwellings and cities according to their social and religious requirements, which administered and guided their designs.

Economy, society and culture played a very important role in the Arabs' settlement, not only politics as Creswell claims.

2.2.2 Twentieth century

In her essay *Understanding the Urban History of Bahrain*, Fuccaro (2000) explains the link between the creation and the transformation of urban spaces in Bahrain before the discovery of petroleum. She refers to the urban studies as a method for understanding history and policy. Fuccaro starts by articulating Ibn Khaldun's literature, which employs *badawa* (nomadism/ruralism) and *hadara* (urbanism) as a base for her discussion upon the urban history, "particularly in the light of the demographic and socio-political structures of the islands", which was highly affected by the tribal migration (Fuccaro, 2000: 51). The author states, "By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bahrain's tribal communities had become predominantly merchant seafarers and were integrated into urban settlement that had emerged around the quarters, *suqs*, and the houses of rich merchants" (Fuccaro, 2000: 53).

Thus, the most important reason for people's settlement was economic, especially since pearl trading brought wealth to the Bahraini towns. The majority of the population constructed their buildings using masonry, with lavish architecture, while others built their humble dwellings using mud and reeds. Fuccaro also mentions that there were local non-tribal communities that existed previously, which were supported by agricultural land. Afterwards, urbanism expanded widely, "By the beginning of the twentieth century only few families [...] were nomadic, and the great majority of tribal groups settled in Bahrain were concentrated in coastal towns and large villages" (Fuccaro, 2000: 55).

In 1919, the municipality of Manama, created upon the newly required role of capital city, was the centre of British political influence during the colonial period. "1919 marked the beginning of new administrative and political arrangements that had led to the formation of the modern state of Bahrain" (Fuccaro, 2000: 57). As a part of the municipal responsibilities there was an introduction of new regulations and forms that governed the city's physical and socio-economic spaces, which therefore led to "the provision of electricity and water, the cleaning and repair of roads, and the security of markets, gardens, and cemeteries" (Fuccaro, 2000: 57).

The British citizen and advisor to the ruler of Bahrain (1926-1957), Belgrave (1894-1969) served in Bahrain under two rulers as an experienced British colonial officer. Belgrave published his personal diaries, where he described in details how Bahrain used to be in that period.

In his personal diary, Belgrave describes the life in Bahrain starting with his arrival to the island during the late 1920s. He was the first to explain in detail the life in Manama at that time. He started with talking about the sea view and the short line of mud-coloured houses along the

shoreline. The height of the buildings was low, and there were no minarets and nothing green, except some palm trees. Belgrave states that the building materials used in Manama and Muhharaq (the second largest city in Bahrain) as any typical Arab coastal towns, were the coral stone brought from the sea. Most of the houses had only two storeys, few exceeded.

Thirty years later, the author stated that Manama had changed a lot, as roads became wider along the sea front and the housing features changed, particularly with the addition of deep-shadowed verandas and white paint. The Manama skyline became pierced with tall minarets and groups of trees among the buildings. At the time of Belgrave's arrival, there were only a dozen cars in Bahrain, however, thirty years later the total number of cars were over 7,000, which required new wider roads and modern infrastructure.

Belgrave was fascinated with the bazaar at all times, since his arrival. In his diary, he clearly described the people's spatial experience and daily interactions with their surroundings. He stated that the bazaar was clean and free from smells except the section where the dried fish was sold. The streets were narrow, congested and roofed and shaded with palm branches/leaves, leading to the heart of the bazaar where there were little shops, with wooden shutters selling a variety of goods including some European merchandise. In fly-infested matting booths fish, meat and vegetables were sold.

These shop interiors were like dim little caves as the narrow lanes between the shops were roofed with matting, however, shafts of sunlight were used to provide the needed lighting.

Belgrave also described the Persian spices section, his favourite section of the bazaar, where the distribution of wares was within the narrow passage, wide enough for him to ride through on his pony. He describes the spice bazaar in details, arguing that the colours and tones between brown and yellow acted as a symphony, as the wooden stands outside the shops displayed the yellow saffron, dried rosebuds, orange-coloured peas, dark-red chillies, cloves, cinnamon and pepper, mysterious coloured powders and roots, tamarinds, all kinds of spices and cones of loaf sugar wrapped in butcher-blue paper. The atmosphere was pleasantly perfumed with the smell of spices and rose water and the merchants were normally laying on old Persian rugs in the dim recesses of their little shops, dozing or telling prayer beads. Belgrave expresses the people's sense of hospitality in his description, as he states that people would invite anyone who passes by their shops to drink a cup of tea with them.

Belgrave also talks about the changes introduced to the architecture in Bahrain during the thirty years he spent in the island. Stone houses had replaced the straw huts and a modern essence was introduced into many old houses. The tall wind tower, which used to be the main feature of the local architecture disappeared gradually, especially since its ventilation function had been replaced by that of electric fans, and air conditioning later on.



Figure 2.4: Bab Al Bahrain when it served as the government office building (Source: <http://intlhistory.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/bahrain-old-photographs.html>)

Belgrave also talks about “Bab al Bahrain”, which was designed by him in 1945 to serve as the government offices. The design included a customs square with a little garden in the middle, leading to the pier and waterfront. The view was fascinating as he declares, especially with the hundreds of dhows anchored alongside the pier (see Figure 2.4).

On an urban development level, Belgrave talks about Awali, the town that has been built to accommodate over 1600 European families, who inhabited brightly painted bungalows of the same size and shape. He stated that the houses in Awali were inspired by the American style, and they were all identical, including the interiors and furniture. Big companies in Bahrain provided them for their foreign employees. All houses and offices in Awali were modern and air-conditioned with low ceilings and small rooms, compared to the stone houses in Manama. These changes had been made to facilitate the efficiency of cooled air. This approach was taken as a model for the state housing projects launched by Belgrave later on.

In 1956 two main ideas had been launched, initiated the beginning of housing schemes projects in Bahrain. The first was to build a number of stone houses for working people, supplied with water and electricity, and let at low rent. This idea succeeded, especially as it suited labourers with a low income and large families, and who mainly lived in *barastis* (palm-branch huts, see Figure 2.5). The second scheme was a loans system offered to the government employees to buy land and build houses. However, this idea did not succeed well as the people preferred to use the loans to build nice little modern houses and rent out them instead of living in them. In terms of

profit, this idea worked well with the people, while they continued to inhabit their own houses, which is what Belgrave described as “insanitary homes”.

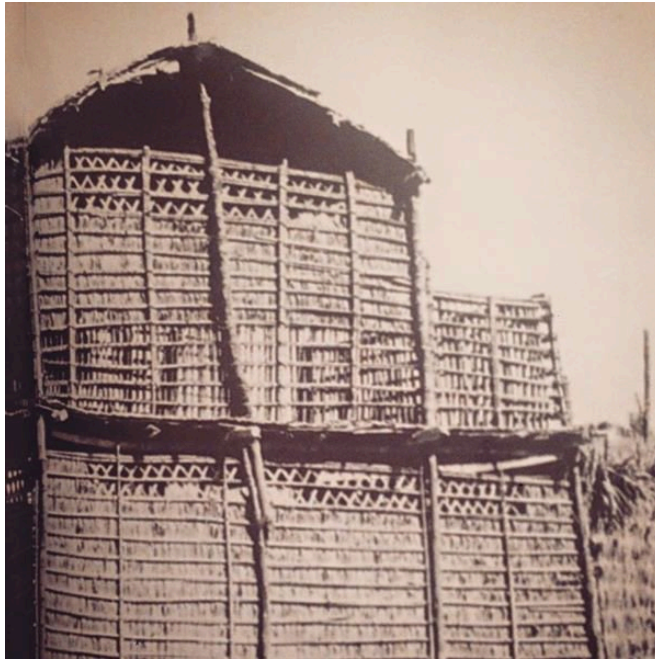


Figure 2.5: *Barastis*: palm-branch huts (Source: <http://www.hiddcity.com/albums.php?action=show&id=123>)

Belgrave also described the Shia Baharna, the original inhabitants of Bahrain as he describes them. He stated that in their early days they inhabited palm-branch huts or stone and mud houses alongside a *date* (garden). They mainly worked in agriculture or as fishermen, or as drivers and tenants for the Arabs (inhabitants who are not Shia).

During the month of Muharram, Bahraini Shias used to assemble in *ma'tams* in Manama and the villages mainly after sunset, where they practised their religious rituals in the memory of Imam Hussain. Belgrave described the *ma'tams* as resembling church halls in England; used for religious and other meetings and supported by religious endowments. They also could be used, for accommodating travellers and for the preliminaries of funerals.





Figure 2.6: Collection of historical images presenting life in Manama during the 1940s (Source: <http://intlhistory.blogspot.co.uk/2013/01/bahrain-old-photographs.html>)

Until the 1960s, like many other Arab-Islamic settlements, the old city of Manama had a compact architectural and socio-economic structure, with an urban texture marked by a harmonious relationship between mass and space. Within the residential quarters, the narrow, irregular and winding roads with closed views controlled peoples' privacy and mitigated the high temperature and humidity of Bahrain's climate. These quarters also housed public buildings, especially mosques and *ma'tam* (funeral houses), and the neighbourhoods were well defined and usually inhabited by extended families and their clients. Jami' was the only large mosque that was located within the residential quarter. "The fact that the mosque gave its name to the quarter indicates the extent to which large places of worship in the city were unusual" (Fuccaro, 2000: 66).

Within the commercial quarters, the large public areas comprised the *souq* and the port, both of which historically stimulated urban expansion. Manama's urban identity was largely defined by the *souq*, as it was the largest area of public space in the city.

After the 1960s, the social unity of the residential quarters in Manama was disrupted, especially with the development of modern residential areas at the outskirts of the city. In addition, in 1968, a new port along the eastern coast of the city was opened and Manama port lost its importance as a result.

The first nucleus of the modern administration, under British control, established new urban and state institutions, and led to city expansion, especially through extensive land reclamation around the port and along the north eastern coast of Manama. “In an important sense land reclamation reflected the trajectories of the economic expansion of the city as a hub of local, regional, and international trade throughout the history” (Fuccaro, 2000: 72).

This changed the physical forms of the city and presented new and different uses of urban space, leading to modernisation. The traditional economy was destroyed by the development of the oil industry. The percentage of the population living in urban areas increased from 56% to 87% between 1940 and 1981, which caused big cities like Manama to expand, challenging the urban growth through the creation of large housing projects like Isa Town and Hamad Town.



Figure 2.7: An aerial view showing the dense urban fabric of the old city of Manama, and the reclaimed land with new globalised style architectural (Source: <http://culture.gov.bh/en/babcompetition/resources/>)

2.2.3 Post independence



Figure 2.8: Old and contemporary architecture in Bahrain (Source: Author)

Throughout the last three decades, Manama and cities in the Gulf region in general have been through a major transformation. The transition of the Bahraini economy, due to the increase in oil income and the accumulation of wealth that led the state at that time to adopt a distributive and comprehensive welfare policy, then became a major and unique factor in shaping the country. At the same time, Bahrain was hugely influenced by modern architectural style, simply copying the architecture of the western world, which then caused a great loss in culture and heritage. Many houses were demolished and sectors were cleared to provide lands where the new architecture could grow.

Recently, Bahrain seems to be influenced by globalisation, which has directed efforts toward the development of communications, financial services, banking infrastructure, commerce and tourism, in order to transform Bahrain into a financial centre (see Figures 2.7 and 2.8). To enhance the image of Bahrain as a way of marketing it to the world, towers of various forms and heights stand to present the country to the world. Skyscrapers symbolise the favourite style in Bahrain nowadays, and are intended to be of multi-purpose use, serving both housing and commercial activities.

In his essay *Contemporary Architecture in Bahrain* (1999), Bucheery, a famous Bahraini architect, tackles the cultural, social and economic changes that accompanied the discovery of oil

in Bahrain in 1932, followed by the period of independence in 1971, along with modernism. He stated that in the 1980s, people started to consider the great loss of heritage and culture that resulted from copying the western architecture, therefore, Bahraini architecture tended to try to present a sense of meaning, in order to create genuine buildings that might revive the lost heritage. Furthermore, Dayaratne in his essay and the *Vernacular in Transition: The Traditional and the Hybrid Architecture of Bahrain* (2008b), argues that, “Despite the massive increase in urban populations and modern settlements, a very significant proportion of vernacular and traditional characteristics still exists, transformed in numerous ways and adapting to the change. Swinging between tradition and modernity, their built forms can only be described as being ‘hybrid’ which possesses characteristics often of both the vernacular and modern or sometimes even belonging to neither” (Dayaratne, 2008b: 1).

At a time when “global” architecture is reaching for the skies and racing to build even taller skyscrapers every day, there is a need to re-appraise the human dimension in a cost-driven design process. One way of doing this is through redefining the relationships between the design proposal and the users. Better understanding of that relationship would help in achieving better outcomes, which will impact on people’s lives, and provide built environments that could contribute to the advancement of the social and cultural needs of the society (see Figure 2.9).

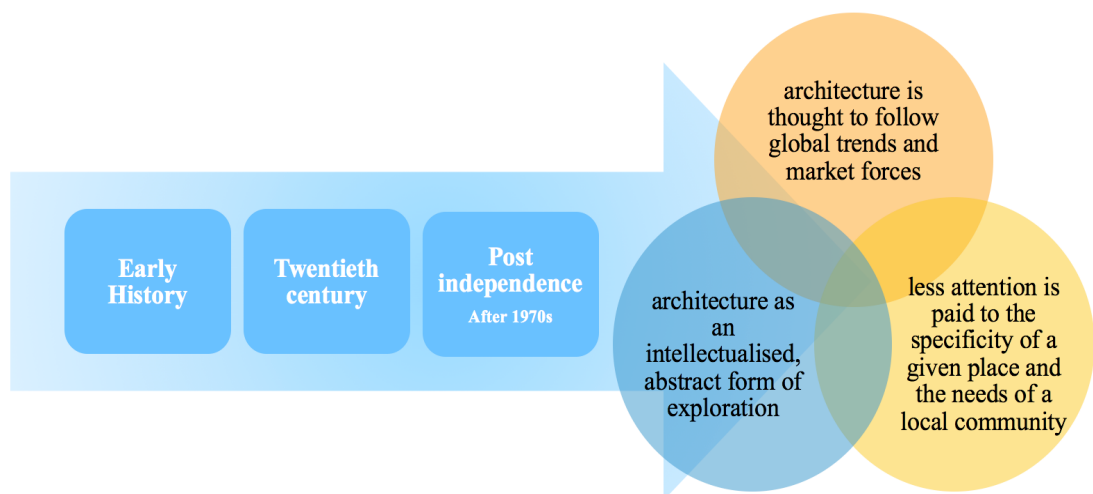


Figure 2.9: Development of architecture through history has led to the current situation where the research problem sets (Source: Author)

2.3 The context of Islamic architecture: the immaterial and the social

This section discusses the wider context of the research in more detail. Given that Bahrain is part of the Islamic world, the discussion of the context is extended to Islamic architecture and how it is informed by religious and cultural values as well as having an impact on people’s way of life.

The thesis will delve into how both the material functions and immaterial aspects of everyday life are informed by the religious and cultural values of the context. The socio-cultural values of people and the architecture they produce, consume and experience are interrelated. For instance, the mosque was not merely a place for worship but rather a focal point in the city and a “social condenser” that symbolised and nurtured a sense of community spirit. Similar comments can be made about other buildings and urban spaces that can be found in the city, such as *madrassas*, *souks* and cemeteries.

However, the economic and social transformation that the Gulf region has seen over the last few decades has impacted on people and their relationship with the everyday space, the city, its design and the way it is experienced.

2.3.1 Historical overview

Islam is the religion that is practised mostly within the middle regions of the earth, from the African Atlantic shores to the South Pacific, including many races like Arabs, Berbers, Turks, Persians, Afghans, Pakistanis, Indians, Chinese, Malaysians and many more. Around 1.5 billion people adhere to Islam. This variation in culture, ethnic background, language, customs and even forms of social and political organisations represent countless variations in human experiences, however, Islam unifies all of them.

Islam in these societies plays an important role in shaping daily lives and existence, by way of creating societal bonds, desires and spiritual values. To these Muslim societies, Islam is not only a religion, it also contributes to their characters and way of living, ordering communities and configuring aspirations and identities.

As Lapidus discusses in his book *A History of Islamic Societies* (2014), Islamic religious conceptions and values, embedded as thoughts and feelings in the minds and hearts of Muslim believers, especially in the early days of Islam. Such a connection had directly affected the meaning of human experience and lifestyle, thus, the result is political and social experiences that are expressions of Islamic values and symbols, as if the whole process acts as a dialogue between religious symbols and everyday reality.

During the long period of existence of Islam, for more than 1,400 years, there were many sequences and processes that affected the main themes of the concept and structure of Islamic societies. The progression of states, communities and cultures, as well as the previous and contemporary cultures of each region within the Islamic world, continually shaped the Islamic societies, economies, technologies and political conditions.

In the area of the Middle East, during the early days of Islam, the society was basically a continuation of the preceding civilization, with new soul that gradually dominated and restructured the community according to Islamic laws and values. The Bedouin elements that govern the pre-Islamic era in the area of Arabian Middle East had shaped the politics and trade, as well as cultural and religious principles, which then integrated and interconnected with the overall pattern of the new Islamic lifestyle.

Alongside the Arab-Islamic conquests, the cultural interactions continued in creating the unique collection of heritage, which later on was called the Islamic civilization – a matrix of cultures and beliefs including Arabian tribal culture and religious practices, Jewish and Christian beliefs and theologies, and Roman and Sasanian literacy and arts. All of these organisations, systems and institutions reshaped the social and cultural values of Muslim people with different backgrounds, with the emergence of new linguistic and religious cultures of the Middle East region, in what Lapidus called “the Arab-Islamic renaissance” (2014: xxii).

The caliphates’ understanding of the imperial rule was influenced by the Roman-Byzantine and Sasanian emperors, therefore, a similar legitimacy was identified and expressed through many mediums such as architecture, art and literary.

Muslim theology (*Kalam*) was built upon the teaching of the holy Quran and influenced by the translated Greek and Syriac philosophy, as well as Christian theology, which all created the distinctive cultural achievement of the Islamic civilization. It was also well connected with the Islamic law (*fiqh*), the teaching of the Quran and Hadith, as well as its integration with poetry (*qafia*) and literature (*adab*).

All these major cultural assimilations had an influence on architecture, from the basic design and decoration of mosques, to the elaborate palaces and urban environments, such as in the case of Andalusia in Spain today (see Figure 2.10). In this case in particular, the Arab-Muslim presence

created a distinctive visual vocabulary that configured the substantial character of the city and its residents, Muslims, Jews, Christians or any others.



Figure 2.10: Alhambra Palace in Granada, Spain today (Source: <http://www.theconfuseddasher.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/DSC0471.jpg>)

Over centuries, around the period from the eleventh to the fifteenth centuries, the Islamic civilization continued to be creative and distinctive with its material and immaterial structures and forms, expressing a phenomena of multiculturalism across the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean regions, even reaching the Far East. This had led to the establishment of Islamic civilization with its solid religious values, political forms, modes of economic productions and social structure, along with fundamental ideologies, linguistic approaches and identities.

Later on, and because of conquests, colonization and many political conflicts, the Islamic empire had been distributed into new smaller empires like the Ottoman, Safavid and Mongol empires. Each empire had established different social and cultural organisations that reoriented the human experience and provided a new context to develop new cultures, which probably had Islamic culture as a base, but did not necessarily follow all its details and rules. For instance, the Islamic culture in the Indian Ocean region does not exactly match the Islamic culture in the Middle East Arabia or Persia, however, both are Islamic and Islam formulates its main roots. This had led to

the establishment of several variants of Islamic cultures and societies, with differences that expand to touch social organisations and even religious practices.

Along this global diffusion of Islam, which even reached the south eastern parts of Europe in the east, and the north and middle regions of Africa in the west, the interconnections of the Muslim societies had become weaker, especially around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while the European powers, politically and commercially, were getting stronger and more influential. At that time, most of the empires, like the Ottoman and the Safavid, were facing a decline in political power, decentralisation and reduction of territory. On the other hand, the power of the European societies supported by their economic wealth, technological inventions and military power, had deeply changed the life around the world. Muslim societies had been profoundly affected by the new situation and the expansion of the European powers, especially the British, and the established colonial regimes over most areas of the Islamic world.

By the nineteenth century, European society had a deep influence on Muslim states, styles, concepts and even moral values, which formulated what later was called the “Modern Era” in the history of the Muslim people. The new commercial, social and political activities and approaches affected the everyday human experience in the East, and changed the way in which people understood “modern” life. The main objective was not just trade gains, but it also extended to reach the reformulation of cultural and social life in a way that served the European colonizers and their political and commercial interests up until the present. The Muslim people’s response to the new culture imposed differs not only from one region to another, but also on an individual level. Most of the religious people were against the newly introduced customs and lifestyle and were calling to revive the old days of Islamic societies, especially the days of the Prophet (Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), as a way of restoring the integrity, the viability and the power of Islam and Islamic societies.

“There were two principal worldwide Muslim responses. Muslim religious leaders attempted to revise and reform Islam itself. They wanted to return to the pristine Islam bequeathed by the Prophet Muhammad. This was to be found in the Quran and in the earliest and most valid sayings of the Prophet (*hadith*). The second response came from the political or former political elites, and from a newly developing modern educated intelligentsia of soldiers, administrators, professionals, and intellectuals. They believed that their societies had to adapt to the power of Europe and the conditions of the contemporary world, and that the basic principles of Islam could and should be the foundation of rational, scientific, and patriotic modern societies.” (Lapidus, 2014: xxv-xxvi)

On the other hand, scholars and educated people thought that the society should integrate and adapt to the new political, social and intellectual changes of the modern movement. They thought that adapting to the contemporary world situation would be the best solution to build new societies, while still preserving the basic principles of Islam, and introducing some reforms into the interpretation of religious beliefs and practices at the same time.

In the twentieth century, particularly after World War II, most of the nations got their independence from the British Commonwealth, especially throughout Africa and Asia, and “Most of the new Muslim-majority states declared themselves secular national states” (Lapidus, 2014: xxvi).

There are mainly two ideological approaches that the Muslim states in this period struggled between; the Islamic and the secular national ideologies, which both played very important roles in defining the independence and identity of the nation.

“Starting in the 1970s, in reaction to political oppression, economic exploitation, and conflicting cultural values, Muslims everywhere began to reassert their Islamic identity. The Islamic revival was in part personal and communal; in part it was a political effort to transform nation-states into Islamic states. The struggle between secular, often military, elites and Islamic parties goes on to the present.” (Lapidus, 2014: xxvi)

The study of Islamic architecture reveals the transformation of societies and cultures throughout history, since the early days of Islam, where the religion originates and the authenticity of the holy Quran could be easily read and observed through the use of spaces and the spatial practices within the Muslim societies. Thus, Islamic architecture is a formal expression of Islam as Rabbat (2012) states in his paper *What is Islamic architecture anyway?* However, the term, “Islamic architecture”, itself is not homogeneously defined. Such a definition would require deep consideration of both material and immaterial values that encompass all the vast territory and geographical expanse of the Islamic civilization across different eras. Those considerations would not perform the geographical and historical contours of Islamic architecture only; rather, it would include sets of architectural and spatial features that are inherently influenced by Islam as a religion, cultural phenomena and way of addressing life.

Analysing Islamic architecture would need a set of specific architectural criteria to be developed, and to make this type of architecture recognisable not only through visual means. Islamic architecture today certainly differs from how it used to be centuries ago, but what would make both the old and the contemporary, Islamic? Firstly, both are built by Muslims, most probably for Muslims, and in an Islamic country, “or in places where Muslims have an opportunity to express their cultural independence in architecture” (Rabbat after Garbar). When such an approach is adopted, it “allowed the study of Islamic architecture to claim vast terrains, artistic traditions,

styles, and periods, including the modern and contemporary ones, and sometimes to transcend religious and cultural divisions to acquire an ecumenical patina”. (Rabbat, 2012:4). After a distinctive discussion on defining Islamic architecture in his article, Rabbat argues “To me then, Islamic architecture is of course the architecture of those cultures, regions, or societies that have directly or via some intermediary processes accepted Islam as an integral component of their epistemological and socio-cultural makeup” (Rabbat, 2012: 15).

On the other hand, Islamic architecture could easily be distinguished through the ontological classification and approach to aesthetics and spatial sensitivities that are based on Islam and Islamic teachings. The architectural expressions in the Islamic world share a similar cultural approach, as architecture is not merely an object, rather, it is built based on a living tradition with culturally distinct roots. So Islamic architecture is not only associated with occasional formal or decorative references, but it is a foundational body of knowledge with symbolic manifestation of the religion and culture.

The architectural practice in the Islamic world nowadays is influenced by western architects and architecture, in a way that is reminiscent of the imperial and economic interests that were operating during the colonial period. In some cases, Islamic architecture is overlooked and considered to be a traditional style from the past, which does not necessarily fit into contemporary life conditions. Most of the architectural elements in the Islamic world became unnecessary, like the courtyard, the wind-tower, and the pointer dome. These elements, which embodied cultural and social, as well as environmental specificities, had been replaced with sealed, air-conditioned spaces. The whole cultural identity of the Islamic vernacular architecture had been changed, and could not resist the massive change in lifestyle that accompanied the extensive wealth, especially in the Arabian part of the Islamic world.

It seems that the new socio-cultural needs created newly acquired tastes, even within very conservative societies like those of the Gulf region. Thus, the result is an environment that is surrounded by competing ideologies, between the preservation of the Islamic architectural heritage, which only appears to take a visual recognition, on one hand, and the demand for a contemporary global architecture on the other.

However, there is an important point that needs clarification here. In the Islamic world, unlike in Europe, there was never a total break with religion, and the secular values imported from the West lacked a local acceptance and intellectual roots, which then ensured that these ideologies had never been fully adopted. According to Rabbat, “The majority of thinkers in the Islamic world resisted secular modernism. Some rejected it outright, but many worked hard at adapting it through the prism of religion. And that is how it was absorbed into the local cultures, a moderated modernism stripped of many of its secular underpinnings and endowed with qualities that are

acceptable to the religious inclinations of the majority of Muslims” (Rabbat, 2012:14).

The author goes on to argue that Islam’s encounter with modernism led to a changed religion but not a defeated one. He points out that Islam remains a major force for ethics and beliefs for Muslims today, as well as in shaping their social relations, individual behaviour and collective policy while adopting modern means and methods.

“Islam came out of its encounter with modernism changed but not defeated. It has remained a major force not only in dictating the ethics and beliefs of Muslims today, but also in shaping their social relations, their individual behaviour, and their collective polity and imaginary, even if its adherents had to adapt modern means and methods. Religious motives, interpretations, and inhibitions still transpire in the Islamic world in many aspects of modern life that have gone totally secular in the West, to the point where their enactment often causes puzzlement and misunderstanding among Western observers and commentators.” (Rabbat, 2012:14)

Islam, the religion, defines most, if not all, aspects of Muslims’ lives, either challenging or harmonising with modernity and contemporary forces. According to the same author, the architectural forms that those expressions take is distinguishing Islamic architecture, and they are tangential in understanding it. Moreover, what gives the Islamic architecture its true distinction is the impact of Islam, legally, spiritually, symbolically, socially, politically, functionally, behaviourally and formally on architecture and people's lifestyle. Such an architecture “had to coexist with other powerful and effective universal phenomena, such as competing world religions and more advanced cultures in its formative stages, and modernity, secularism, capitalism, and globally networked tastes and techniques of representation today” (Rabbat, 2012:15).

2.3.2 City and people in the Arab Islamic tradition

“Islam according to Fisel (1956) and Hassan (1972), is an urban religion. Religious practices, beliefs and values especially those relating to organisation and authority, emphasised the social gathering and discouraged nomadism and dispersing.” (Saoud, 2002: 2)

According to Othman, in his book *The Islamic City* (1988)¹, as Islam is an urban religion, this contributed to the creation of the great progress of the Islamic civilization. The main characteristic of the Islamic city is considering the religion as the source of legislation, and a way of life. The

¹ The reference is published in Arabic.

material appearance and layout of the Islamic city was created is to fulfil religious, social and cultural requirements, and this is what gave the Islamic city its specificity.

The author goes on to argue that a study of the Islamic city needs to consider the religion's system, organisation, rules and all aspects related to the life in the city, given that Islam governs both the organisation of the city and the lifestyle of its inhabitants. Furthermore, the absence of the understanding of the Islamic vision in studying the material composition of the Islamic city has led to misleading results, particularly when comparing the Islamic city with the European/western city, which differs a lot in terms of the establishment and progress. According to Othman (1988), such a comparison would diminish the importance of the Islamic city, and would eviscerate its identity and originality.



Figure 2.11: The city of Muharraq, Bahrain. The map above is a part of the traditional fabric resulting from a generative process (Source: MoMAA, Bahrain, 2005 [http://www.palgrave-journals.com/udi/journal/v12/n2/fig_tab/9000194f1.html])



Figure 2.12: Karbala/IRAQ one of the Islamic cities (Source: http://cache.emirates247.com/polopoly_fs/1.312884.1452325110!/image/image.jpg)



Figure 2.13: Aerial photograph of the old medina in Fez, Morocco (Source: <http://www.payette.com/post/1879756-profiles-in-planning-formal-structure-in>)

Nonetheless, in his journal article titled *Architectural Characteristics of the Islamic City*, Ibrahim states that: "...there is no firm consensus on what the term 'Islamic city' means." (Ibrahim, 1998:1). The author tries to suggest alternative descriptions; he states that the Islamic city could mean a city that was founded by Muslims during a particular historical era. Or it can also mean a city that was designed, constructed and expanded during the period of Islamic civilization. Or a city that has specific features generally identified as Islamic, like mosques and minarets. Or a city, old or new, that happens to be located within the Islamic world. And finally, "the term is sometimes used as a theoretical or abstract concept, as kind of ideal city in which the architectural styles are inspired by full adherence to the norms and values of Islam" (Ibrahim, 1998: 1).

Organisation of life in urban communities in the ancient Islamic city used to be governed by Muslim attitudes. It was divided into quarters, connected with narrow streets, and there was an open, multi-purpose central space.

"The narrowness of the streets with their mixed traffic creates a vibrant street life, full of noise and bustle, with movement slow enough to facilitate social interaction and improve shopping." (Lewcock, 2002: 41)

The components of the Islamic city differ from one region to another, however, the main common components, buildings and amenities are divided into two main quarters, the public commercial quarter, and the private residential quarter. (See Figures 2.11, 2.12 and 2.13 for different examples of the urban fabric of various Islamic cities)

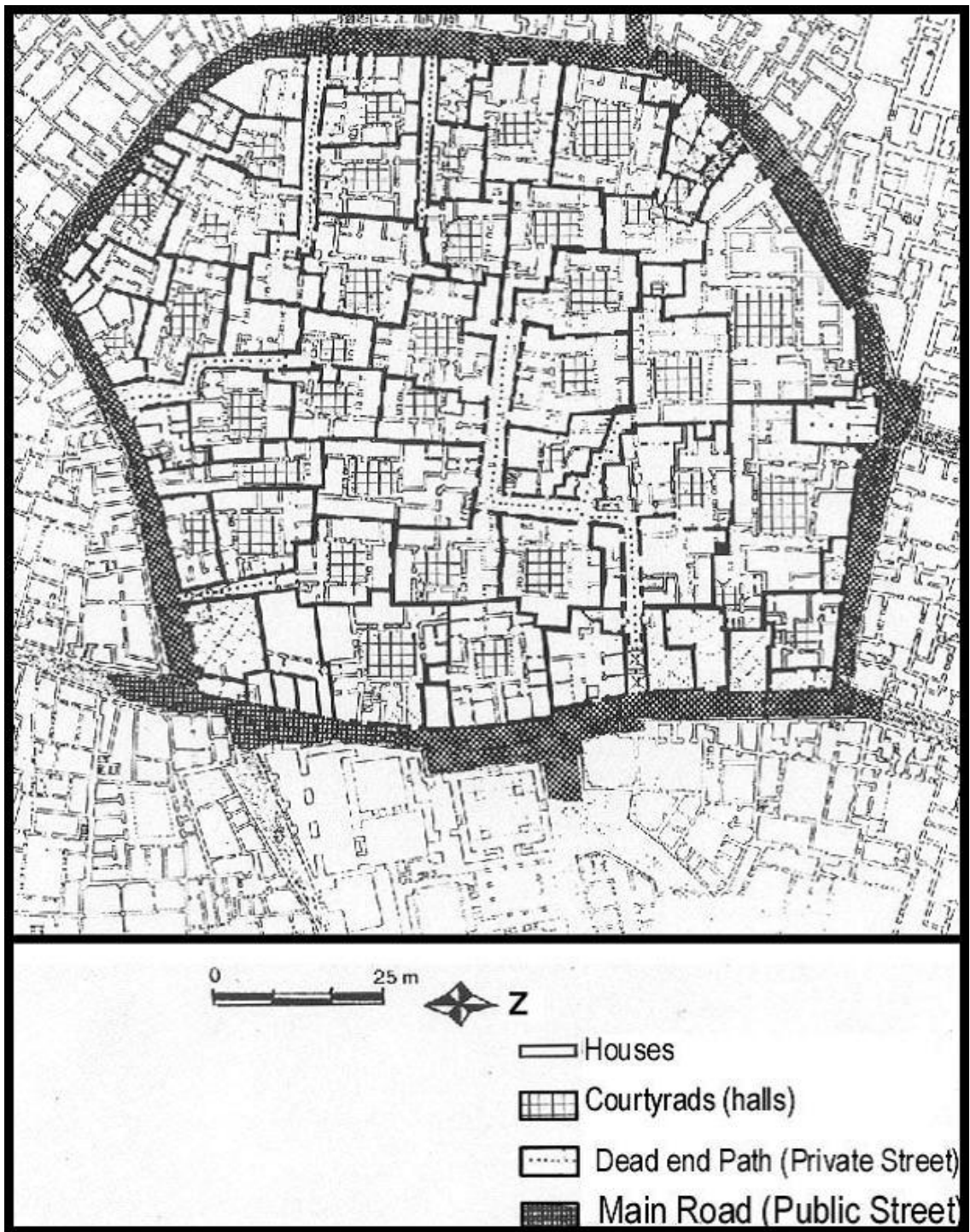
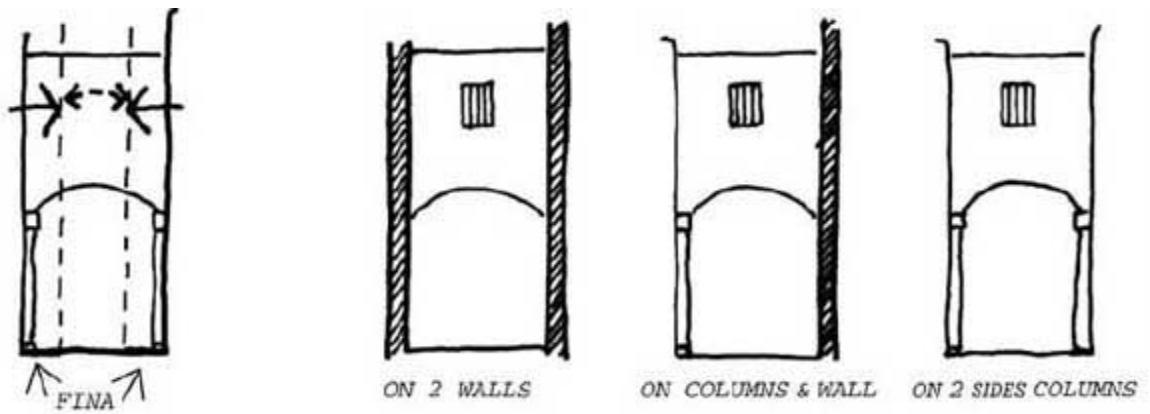


Figure 2.14: Main features of the Islamic city (Source: Hakim, 1994)



The sabat concept is related to utilising the air space of the fina on both sides.

Alternative support systems for a sabat

Sketches taken from the book *Arabic-Islamic Cities: Building & Planning Principles*, London 1986, by Besim Hakim.



Figure 2.15: Examples of two alleys: on the left from Tunis, on the right from Hafuf in eastern Saudi Arabia (Source: Hakim 1994)

According to Saoud (2002), local topography and morphological features of pre-existing towns played a decisive role in shaping and planning the Islamic city, while the socio-cultural, political and economic settings structured the newly created society. The law of nature is the first principle that shaped most of the Islamic city character. This factor led to the adoption of certain building form and plan concepts, like the courtyard, terrace, narrow covered and shaded alleyways, in response to the local environmental conditions. However, such techniques were adopted not only to help with coping with the hot weather conditions, but also fulfilled the religious and cultural

beliefs, which is one of the main values that shaped the Islamic city. Cultural life of the Muslim population is informed by the religious teachings, thus, the city plan is organised in away that helped satisfy these laws. According to Saoud (2002), the mosque was given the central position in the spatial and institutional hierarchies, and was usually surrounded by the *souq* (market), and attached to the *madrassa* (school) providing religious and scientific teaching. The congregational mosque was built to express and focus the religious commitment of the Muslim community and its solidarity. The *souq* (market), as a common architectural feature of the Islamic city, is designed as a central public square surrounded by shops and usually overlooked by the main mosque. Public and private lives were separated, in order to regulate the spatial order between the functions and the areas. Such separation was intended to provide peace and quiet, intimacy and security to the inhabitants. The central area of the Islamic city housed the public, commercial and administrative activities, such as the social services, administration, trade, arts and crafts, *hammam* (baths) and hotels. The governor's palace was usually located in the high part of the town, near the wall and surrounded by its own wall and had its own mosque, guards, offices and residence (see Figure 2.16).

Streets and roads branched out from the commercial centre, usually becoming narrower and more winding, more disposed to provide seclusion than general access into the residential quarters (See Figures 2.14, 2.15 and 2.16). In the residential quarters, described as clusters of households of particular quality of life, the division was based on families occupying the quarters. These quarters, where the Arabs settled, were named after clans who first inhabited them. Quarters for non-Arabs and non-Muslims were separated in different areas and were linked by roads and lanes.

In some Islamic cities, the residential quarters also had small mosques and prayer-halls.

In most cases, and for defence purposes, most of the Islamic cities were surrounded by a wall, which also protected the city inhabitants against the sand-laden desert wind. In the city walls, there were large gates, providing the starting point for the concentrated commercial activities along the main spinal roads.

In the Islamic city, streets were recognised by being plain and simple, the majority of the exterior façades and elevations were plain, contrasting with the rich interior architectural details and ornamentations. To confirm the unity, solidarity and egalitarianism of the community, the outside appearances were simple and look alike, while the variety of wealth was to be found in the interiors.

That was a description of the Islamic city that survived for centuries since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the golden era of the Islamic civilization, and continued into the eighteenth

century. However, from the late seventeenth century, and by the decline of the Ottoman empire, Islamic cities fell into consistent architectural decline and chaos, especially since the trade and commerce of the Islamic world was squeezed by the expansion of the western European powers.

Unfortunately, by the nineteenth century, most of the cities in the Islamic world were colonized, and the European economic and military superiority curtailed the independence of Muslim people.

As discussed earlier in the previous section, falling into the hands of colonial powers created a new situation that slowly stripped the Muslim city of its originality. This colonization had great impact on changing the social, cultural and economic life of the Islamic world and this in turn was reflected in the architecture of the Islamic cities. Moreover, even after independence, in their quest for development, Muslim countries adopted a strategy of modernisation, which led to further alienation of the Islamic city. Those cities lost their identity and their distinct architectural spirit.

However, “the term ‘Islamic’ architecture’ is still a valid designation for architecture being built today because Islam has never ceased being that constitutive component, even though the ways in which it expresses itself have drastically changed over time and space” (Rabbat, 2012: 15). The new architecture is being used by Muslim people, who give this architecture its Islamic designation, even though it has to coexist within the power of colonization or globalisation.

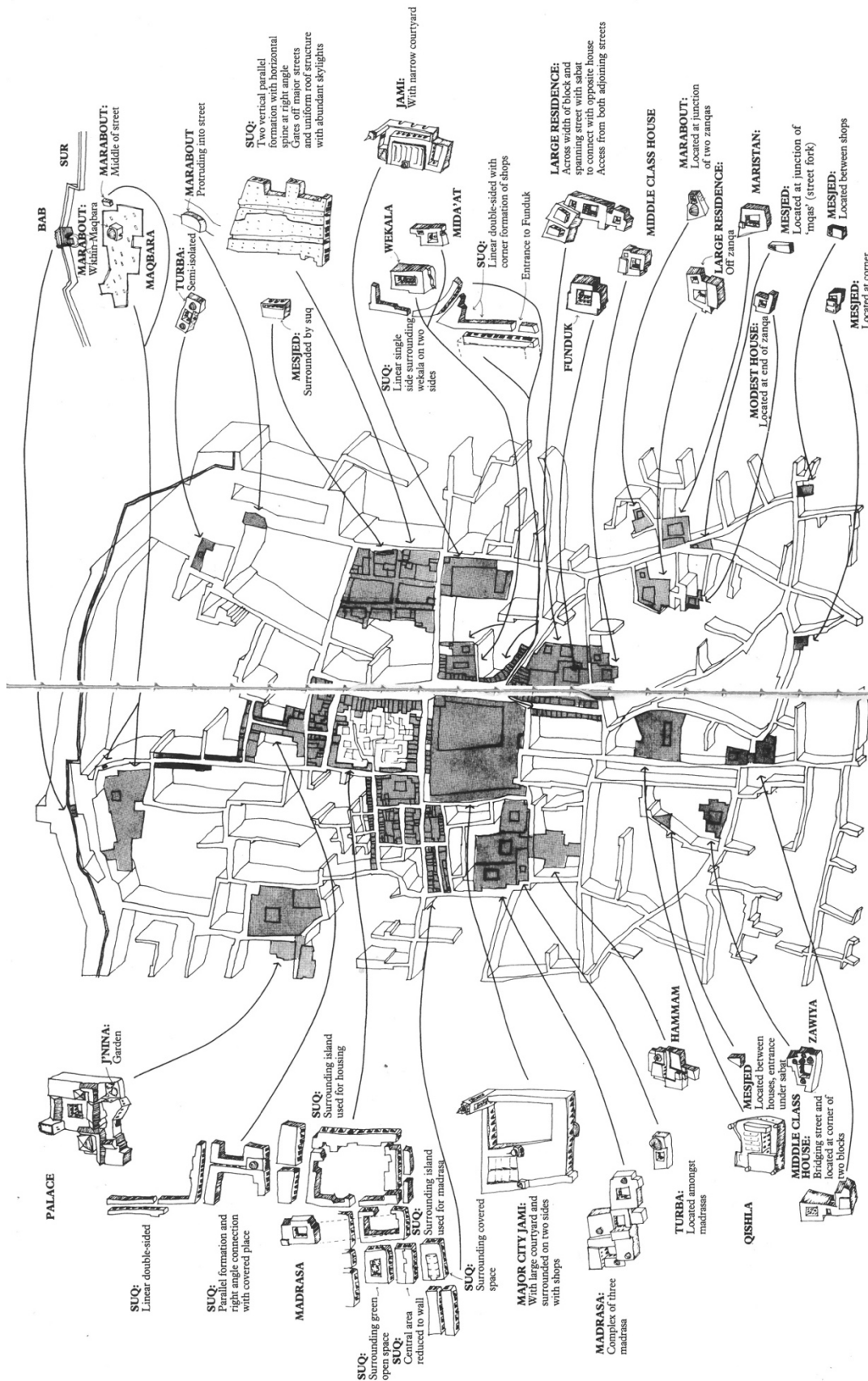


Figure 2.16: Morphological analysis, core of the central medina, Tunis, showing urban elements and street system (Source: Hakim, 1986)

2.3.3 Immateriality in Islamic architecture

There is a huge debate around the definition of Islamic architecture as explained earlier, to the extent that some researchers would define it as architecture that was constructed by Muslims, while others may go to a more holistic approach by considering the architecture on Muslims' land as Islamic architecture (see Figure 2.11). According to Grube, "If Islamic architecture is distinctly different from non-Islamic architecture, and must be interpreted as one of the many emanations of the spirit of Islam, the adjective 'Islamic' is fully justified. The interpretation of it as a whole as well as the understanding of its specific parts can only be successful and meaningful if seen against the background of Islam as a cultural, religious and political phenomenon, and only in the precise relation to the specific circumstances that led to its creation" (Grube, 1978: 14). In fact, the author admits that it is far beyond the ability of a single scholar to exactly specify and explain the phenomena of Islamic architecture, as it requires many years of research.

However, this architecture that was informed by the spiritual ideas of Islam highly appreciated the immaterial aspects. The cultural and social values were interpreted to create environments that reflected the people's harmony with their religious principles. The building did not serve a specific function like praying or living only, it was a place for participating in the process of living as a whole, therefore leading to a certain ideology that refers to the idea of serving this life and the afterlife; earth and heaven (*aldeen wa aldonya*).

Al-Khan (1987) described the old Arab Islamic house in specific using a very poetic way; explaining that the early house had a revealed space with central greenery, sanctum, and sense of autonomy. The eye and the soul were enjoying the sanctum that encouraged the unity with the universe, and increase of the faith in the only God. The dwelling courtyard had a whole symphony of nature, beauty, sound, sight and theology.

Al-Khan also stated that architecture was not only about walls, but what also really mattered was the void between the walls. These voids immaterially and randomly formulated the house courtyard, the mosque prayer hall and the main town's central square; these three were the centre of life, movement and activities. These three voids symbolised the oasis that always reminds the individual of their relationship with God. It was the source of freedom, silence, tranquillity and satisfaction. These values were also confirmed by adding water features to these voids, which helped mitigate against the harshness of the climate, and as a reminder of heaven and the afterlife.

This description of the multiple uses of spatial voids (openings toward the sky), and the everyday life of Muslims, explains the importance of the immaterial side of their architecture. The description of the harmonic relationship between the people and their environment and surroundings proves that Islamic architecture was not rigid; but it was a reflection of both their natural settings and specific human religious' beliefs.

In fact, the house courtyard was used to fulfil one of the features of Islamic architecture that is based on religion, which is privacy. It is an essential principle that played an important role in planning and building dwellings in the Islamic world. Therefore, to achieve privacy Muslims tried to adopt solutions, which then led to the use of enclosure design with an inward looking internal courtyard (see Figures 2.17, 2.18, and 2.19). The courtyard played a vital role in house planning, since it is the focal point of family life and interaction, while preserving total privacy.

The segregation between males and females is a principle that found its use as another immaterial value that played vital role in planning the house. This value is obviously featured within the house layout, like the guests' room's location for instance, which was meant to receive male guests. This room was located close to the main entrance, away from the which prevented the visitors from viewing the whole house. This principle encouraged the establishment of division, not only in the dwelling, but also in the public spaces like in mosques for instance, where there were two prayer halls separated by a barrier. These principles will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

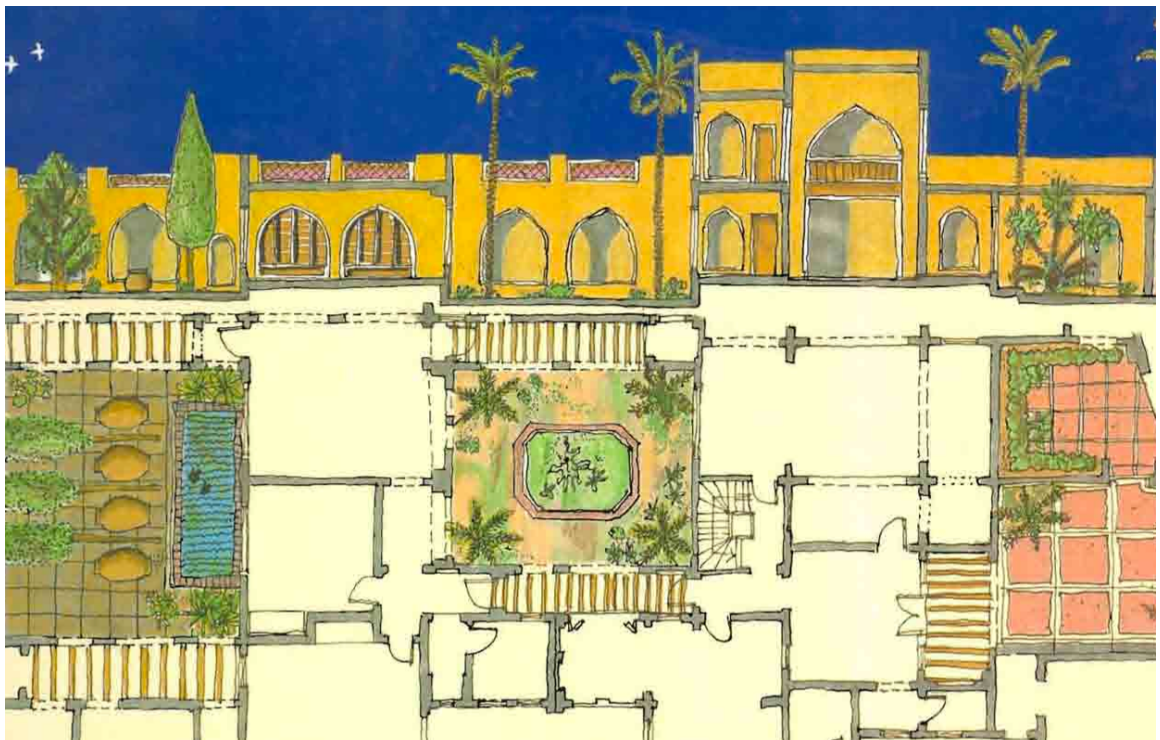


Figure 2.17: A sketch illustrating the courtyard within a traditional house in Bahrain, cover of *Private Skies* (Source: Waly, 1992)



Figure 2.18: Aerial view of the city of Muharraq, Bahrain in the 1980s (Source: Waly 1992)



Figure 2.19: Interior of a typical traditional Bahraini house

On another level, early Islamic cities had the mosque in the central part of the city, with the governor's accommodation around it, and then the dwellings were built to surround both. According to the Islamic principle, the mosque was not only a place for praying and worshipping; rather, it was the city's focal point that symbolised the brotherhood of Islam (Al-Khan, 1987: 75). A similar picture is given by Erzen (2011) in his essay *Reading Mosques: Meaning and Architecture in Islam*, where he states: "The mosque was not only a place for prayer, but in its early phase, it also served as the communal meeting place and a place for judiciary court meeting under the supervision of imam" (Erzen, 2011: 126). The author argues that the use of symbols and metaphors was central and embodied in the design of the mosque, where the aesthetics of mosques could be explained. In his analysis of mosques, the author discusses four types of symbols: "paradise regained", "heavenly theatre", "urban sculptures" and "the cosmic spiral" (ibid). Each of these symbols could be read differently, according to the cultural and experiential differences of each observer.

This acts as an example of many other architectural features in Islamic architecture, which proves that every single detail provided has a certain connection with the religion. The ornamentation for instance, a huge, impressive type of art, could be seen as another example of this, as it was largely used to represent scripts from the holy Quran. This artistic approach has a spiritual meaning that acted as guidance for the inhabitants, and as evidence of their faith and beliefs. According to Hillenbrand the author of *Islamic Architecture: Form Function and Meaning* (1994), "It is entirely possible that Islam as a religion played a significant – perhaps even the significant – role in inspiring Muslim architects, but in that case such inspiration was not explicitly acknowledged" (Hillenbrand, 1994: 12).

In more detailed approach, *Architecture of The Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning* (1978) edited by Michell and Grube, is the first book that articulates the Islamic architecture in relation to its cultural settings, where the influence of social, theological and immaterial factors upon architecture is acknowledged, discussed and analysed.

"Islamic architecture is more than just a spectacle of domes and minarets, perfumed pleasure palaces and exquisite turquoise tiles; it is a true expression of a rich culture that has unified countries as far apart as Spain and Java, Central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, over some thousand years and more. Islamic buildings express the religious beliefs, social and economic structure, political motivation and visual sensibility of a pervasive and unified tradition." (Michell and Grube, 1978: 7)

Nonetheless, Islamic architecture and building does not exist in isolation, rather, it plays a vital role in the total spatial experience of places and cities, serving and reinforcing political and social structure and religious belief. The relationship between Islamic architecture and its society is

based on regulations that are mainly associated with spirituality and humanity. For instance, the city's tripartite system of public, semi-public and private spaces clarifying the degree of accessibility and enclosure explains the consciousness of social identity that is based on the teaching of Islam.

Omer's paper titled *A Conceptual Framework for Sustainability in Islamic Architecture: The Significance of the Islamic Concepts of Man and the Environment* (2010), discusses the intangible context of the Islamic architecture that gives it its uniqueness and differentiates it from other architectural expressions. He argues that Muslim architects, builders, engineers and users should be familiar with and follow the Islamic architecture conceptual framework, otherwise replacements will be sought instead. Such replacements, to a certain extent, will be incompatible with the Islamic philosophy and teachings, and will act to alienate rather than harmonise with Islam and its ethos. It is the responsibility of Muslim architects to possess the Islamic worldview and ideology, and support its own philosophy and value system. Such a system implements the value of many constituents including "life and its purpose, death, natural environment, man and his mission, time, space, history, and of course God and His relationship with man and the whole of universe" (Omer, 2010: 3).

The author maintains that the result of not recognising Islamic ideology in Muslim architecture nowadays "might lead to as far as confusion, lack of confidence, dangerous compromises, laxity in religion, repulsion and even irreverence in Muslim architects' mind which, in turn, will be extended onto the realm of built environment and will thus perilously affect both the mind and behavioral patterns of its users" (Omer, 2010: 3).

Omer argues that the worst scenario that could result from such a failure in adopting Islamic values in architecture "will be that Islam is discarded completely in favor of, or that it is made clearly inferior to, the adopted man-generated worldviews and ideologies. Unfortunately, many of today's Muslim professionals in built environment suffer from both maladies" (Omer, 2010: 3).

Islamic architecture is not only part of Islamic civilization, it is a container of it. In fact, as Omar declares, "Islamic architecture is formed in order to answer the demands of the notion of '*ibadah* (worship) which man, God's vicegerent on earth, is required to actualize in all of his lifelong actions so that his relationship with his Creator and Lord is maintained perpetually strong and sound" (Omer, 2010: 13).

For Muslims, Islamic architecture provides a place for both direct and indirect worship activities. The idea of universal worship in Islam is implemented in the field of architecture. The nobleness of Islamic architecture comes from being charged with the highest level of spirituality.

In a general context, design and architecture are multidimensional activities receiving lots of philosophical attention and expression. It would be such a great limitation for architecture to be assessed only on physical appearance without including deeper values. However, it would be considered a greater loss in a culture such as the Islamic world in which all the previously discussed values are facilitated in the society and architecture, to be easily demolished and replaced with a globalised style of living.

In this domain, a slight comparison between western and Islamic architecture may clarify the differences between the two, and justify the failure of the contemporary globalised architecture, which makes the city of Manhattan in the West not that different from Shanghai or Dubai in the East.

Ragette, the author of *Traditional Domestic Architecture of the Arab Region* (2003), in the latter part of the book, discusses the impact of the West on Arab architecture, trying to present a comparison between the roots of architecture in both societies. “When we talk in broad terms of Western versus Eastern ways we mean essentially the difference between investigative and contemplative attitudes” (Ragette, 2003: 239).

The author compares western and Islamic architecture, especially in regards with the effect of massing. The arranging of buildings’ masses to achieve interesting external spaces reflects the western architects’ focus on the quality of external spaces, because architecture was seen much as public art. In contrast, Muslim architects rarely conceived of architecture as a public affair. All types of buildings, including mosques, palaces and houses were seen to produce internal, sheltered spaces, hidden behind walls. In this comparison, Ragette maintains that the West is more interested in the meaning of structure, rationality and matter, while Muslims are more interested in internal space quality and decorations.

Furthermore, the author explains the impact of western architectural style on Islamic architecture, especially after the colonial period. The main characteristics of Arab Islamic cities, until the end of the nineteenth century, was a maze of narrow, shaded, dead-end and crooked alleyways, providing organic networks to connect the quarters with each other and with the main squares and public facilities. The city traffic was mainly created for goods movements by donkeys and camels, and roads used to be an exception.

However, after the colonial period, it seems that the Arab region was “westernised”. The government buildings, as well as some commercial and even residential buildings, took the colonial style.

It fact, the West, master and maker of the twentieth century, as Diba describes in his essay *What Islamic Architecture Is Not*, “has imposed its values and forced its superior methods of science,

technology, and production onto less-developed societies. Loss of independence and perhaps a perceived humiliating subjugation to Western ideas and values has brought about an identity crisis in Islamic societies” (Diba, 2002: 119).

Contrary to how the traditional layout of the Islamic city told stories and narrative about the culture and people’s everyday life, the contemporary layout is lacking the sense of cultural respect in its confusion and disorientation. The irrelevant western models, as Diba describes, destroyed the Islamic architecture features, while, in the modern life, the practice could benefit and learn from the old cities’ scale, environmental sensibility and communal life.

Diba recommends that people and practitioners establish their own priorities rather than copying the western models, in particular, that they should think of creating socially coherent and harmonious communities. He also declares that Muslim nations nowadays are generally isolated societies, and they pay more attention to politics than culture, and are more interested in the material world than the immaterial, intellectual and cultural discourse.

Islam as a religion, culture and civilization had built an environment that enabled Muslim societies to grow, think, reflect and elaborate. The responsibility of architecture was to create spaces in which people performed materially and immaterially. However, along with the challenges of contemporary architecture, it is worth questioning how the Muslim world as a whole is operating within the new alien framework that is imported from the West and how to consider the tradition of the Islamic civilization in the light of the “*shock of the future*”. How are Muslim societies going to express themselves through architecture over the coming decades?

In his essay *Spirituality and Architecture*, Arkoun argues that there is a “cultural gap and historical differences that exist between Islamic and western contexts when they confront spirituality and architecture” (Arkoun, 2002: 3). These are totally different ideologies in both contexts, and architecture acts as a translator for the main trends of the social and cultural representations, therefore, this should be read through the built environment. If contemporary architecture in the Muslim world is to be recognised, it will reveal the demand of a clear, specific cultural meaning. All contemporary Muslim societies suffer from the opposition between meaning and power, or, more clearly, the material and the immaterial – spiritual, ethical and cultural values opposing political and economic matters.

Articulating the spiritual significance and meaning in Islamic architecture cast special light upon the intellectual and social setting of Muslims’ society, as the spiritual dimension is not only confined to worship spaces, rather it includes touching all types of everyday use spaces. In his book *Islamic Art and Spirituality*, Nasr declares, “There are very few works which look upon Islamic art as the manifestation in the world of forms of the spiritual realities (*al-haqaiq*) of the Islamic revelation itself as coloured by its earthly embodiments” (Nasr, 1987: ix).

The author refers to the spaces and forms in the old Muslim town and city and explains that they act as extensions of the mosque, especially since these spaces are organically related to it. He also asserts that the spaces participate in a sanctifying and unifying character, as the whole city or town participates in the blessedness, which originates from religious spirit, including the chanting of the Quran and the call to prayer (*al-adhan*), which centres on the mosque.

The *qibla*² is the direction that Muslim's should face while praying, towards the *Ka'ba* in Mecca (see Figure 2.20). It is chosen by God as the direction of prayers, which in a universal sense creates an invisible set of "lines of force", as Nasr declares, and acts as a global central attraction point and determining the direction of the mosque, the whole city and the experience of space itself. This theme will be discussed within the semi-structured interviews with participants, explaining the way they experience their house.

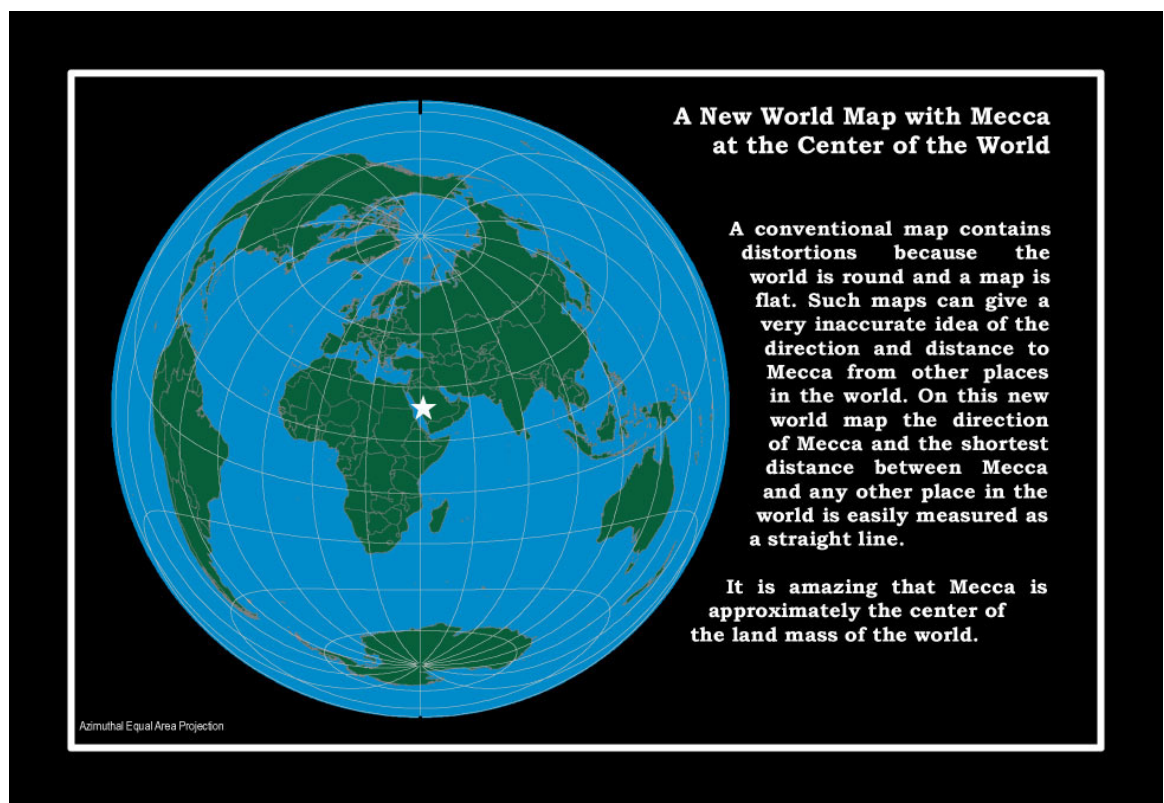


Figure 2.20: Mecca at the centre of the earth (Source: https://i0.wp.com/i189.photobucket.com/albums/z286/mfmml/4_mecca_world.jpg)

² *Qiblah*, also spelled *qibla* or *kiblah*, the direction of the sacred shrine of the Ka'bah in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, toward which Muslims turn five times each day when performing the *salat* (daily ritual prayer). (<http://www.britannica.com/topic/qiblah>)

The experience of domestic spaces in Islam draws attention to the *invisible*. When entering a traditional mosque or home, the very emptiness and holiness of space dictates that one cannot walk through it unless they remove their shoes. This reveals that every detail of the Muslims' spatial experience is connected in one way or another to their beliefs, and here is where the immateriality of Islamic architecture is valued and adds richness to the meaning of space and place.

On another level, in contemporary cities, modern technologies are rapidly removing all old restrictions, therefore, new concepts have emerged, with some of them contradicting traditional values of the Islamic way of life. For instance, petroleum and natural gas are providing seemingly limitless energy and wealth, which then encourages people to over-consume at the expense of the environment and sustainability. Furthermore, the concept of the central courtyard, which served material functions as well as immaterial qualities, just disappeared, with the strong promotion of the contemporary western "villa" concept. Add to that the technology of air conditioning, which led to a completely new layout of houses in Islamic societies, introducing a new way of life.

Some of the alterations that have been introduced in Muslim societies, especially in the Gulf region, have caused major changes, and modern technology has rapidly removed many of the old restrictions. Global trading and new concepts have introduced the climate-controlled environment and the use of high tech materials, which has made all the contemporary construction materials and techniques available and allowed for the possibility of having "huge steel-glass blocks" (high-rise buildings) in the middle of the desert. This has also led to vast changes in the human experience within spaces, such as with the increase in the number of motor vehicles, which in turn required an expansion in infrastructure and road systems. Obviously one of the main related phenomena, especially for coastal regions, is land reclamation, in order to satisfy the need to build more and more high-rise skyscrapers and the accompanied infrastructure.

Furthermore, the international media has heavily promoted the western lifestyle, from the urban planning of a city, to the concept of "villa", even including details such as furniture styles. All these players had a big influence on reshaping Muslim identity, for example by encouraging individualism and decentralisation of activities. The newly acquired cultural values need to reconnect with the heritage and socio-cultural values of the past, not just for the sake of reviving old traditions, but rather, for the sake of finding a way of life and forging an identity that is in harmony with contemporary needs and traditional values.

According to Ragette, the starting point in preserving Islamic identity in architecture is through the educational system. In schools, universities and from books, people learn about famous, well-known architects, their achievements in producing architecture, which in fact, could be recognised as works of art. However, an honest assessment of the long-term usefulness of the immaterial and

material qualities of architecture is rarely articulated. The only laudable exception is The Aga Khan Foundation, which gives awards to buildings after they have been used for at least five years, and “the users’ opinion is taken into account. Because architecture is not just an art, it also has to serve a purpose” (Ragette, 2003: 246).

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter introduces Bahrain as part of the bigger context of the Islamic world, in which the commercial, intellectual, social, cultural and religious frameworks operate within particular settings. It starts with giving a historical review of the city of Manama, as the case study to be examined later within the fieldwork. This overview is divided upon different historical eras and it is followed by a contextual background discussing issues related to the bigger context of Islamic architecture. The specificity of Islamic architecture and its characteristics reveal the originality of appreciating the immaterial aspects in architecture, since it is charged with cultural meanings and religious ideology.

This chapter also presents an outline of the gradual changes and evolution that Islamic city and its architecture has experienced over time, including the introduction of certain aspects that have led to a gradual decline of Islamic architecture, in favour of a more international style. This serves as a theoretical background and basis for the fieldwork research carried out in Bahrain as part of the investigation that tackles the understanding of the users’ spatial experience, in both private and public sectors.

The findings of this chapter inform the rest of the research as it establishes the former phase of identifying the contextual background of the research. This will be followed by a theoretical discussion articulating the immaterial aspects of the users’ spatial experience, which will be covered further within the coming chapters. It also shed light on the culture-architecture debate as a means to enhancing the understanding of the users’ spatial experience.

**Architecture
Between Theory and Practice**

Chapter 3: Architecture: Between Theory and Practice

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses some theoretical issues and how they affect architecture as a practice, through the lens of current theoretical debates. The existing body of theoretical research offers means of rethinking architectural theory and practice, in an age where the design and production methods have seen major changes and transformations, which reflect on the changing nature of the architectural profession nowadays.

Attempting to address the relationship between theory and practice within a twenty-first century architectural discourse may help in identifying some important issues that not only engage theoretical debates, but also extend to reach a broader cultural debate in which the users' rights are recognised.

This chapter starts with offering a theoretical framework that explains issues around the meaning of spatial experience, aesthetics and immateriality. Consequently, it delves into a discussion of architecture as a practice, with view to understanding its relationship with culture.

What needs to be revisited here is the idea of architecture as a practice and the nature of the boundaries that define it. A better way to articulate this is to borrow Leach's definition of architecture:

“Architecture is not the autonomous art it is often held out to be. Buildings are designed and constructed within a complex web of social and political concerns. To ignore the conditions under which architecture is practised is to fail to understand the full social impact of architecture.” (Leach, 1997: xiv)

The author, makes a call for what he named “an insightful observation on contemporary architecture” whose purpose is to rethink, reconfigure and reflect on architectural theory (Leach, 1997).

Within the current situation it is even more important to rethink, reconfigure and reflect on many aspects related to architecture, especially when defining the relationship between the different participants involved in the design process (i.e. architect, client, user). Based on the crucial impact of this relationship and process on people's lives, the result of such identification will enhance people's understanding of architecture in the first place, and the way they create and consume it in the second.

The way people perceive architecture may fall into two categories: it could be seen in terms of imagery as a figurative manifestation (configuration), as most star-architects do, especially when they think of their design as a “signature architecture”. On the other hand, there are those who see architecture in a context that responds to peoples’ needs, desires and aspirations within the bigger context of culture, society, economics, politics and religion (signification). In fact, this may position culture in relation to architectural practice, which the second section of this chapter articulates. Furthermore, the relationship between the *architect* and the *user* within the framework of the design process, along with the recognition of the practice’s ethics and rights will also be discussed within the light of the social and cultural context of design. The chapter will give an overview of some theoretical issues in contemporary architectural discourse, with a view to identifying how these can impact on contemporary practice, particularly with regards to users and ethics related issues.

3.2 Spatial experience

As previously stated, this study is undertaken to examine the relationship between architecture as a creative process, which conceives and creates spaces, and spatial experience as a way of consuming architecture. As opposed to the conventional way of looking at architecture from the architect’s viewpoint, this is an attempt to re-examine this notion and propose an alternative approach by focusing on the users’ experience as a means to describe the architectural qualities of the design. It is about the user in the space that is being created, rather than just the space as a container of activity.

“Space as experience has to derive from an Ur-feeling, an ability to imagine a dimension that projects above basic reality, an exposure to a reality greater than we are able to conceptualize. Sense of space is a mental construct, a projection of the outside world as we experience it according to the equipment at our disposal: an idea.” (Hertzberger, 2000: 17)

As a precursor to discussing spatial experience, there is a need to address the meaning of the spatial experience, with regard to both the building and the users. Therefore, we need to define both terms, “space” and “experience”.

Forty (2000) argues that, “Much of the ambiguity of the term ‘space’ in modern architectural use comes from a willingness to confuse it with a general philosophical category of ‘space’. To put this issue slightly differently, as well as being a physical property of dimension or extent, ‘space’

is also a property of the mind, part of the apparatus through which we perceive the world” (Forty, 2000: 256).³

Lawson (2001) suggests that space, as a human language, lies within the architectural structure, which then appears through inhabitation and activities. The author goes on to assert, “Because this language is not heard or seen directly, and certainly not written down, it gets little attention in a formal sense” (Lawson, 2001: 6). He further argues that the language of space is international, its roots can be found in a vital human condition, since inhabitants tend to notice this language only through living in a space and relating to it. It is global, yet it has “regional dialects” that specify certain spaces within certain cultures or society. However, it is sometime neglected (Lawson, 2001).

Lawson addresses the importance of this language as a mean of communication, which is powerful, subtle and complex. It is an everyday concept that configures our lives without even being noticed, and in order to understand it, one needs to dissect, observe, and analyse. One should engage with the senses and fully interact with the surroundings in order to determine the role of such language. In this regard Lawson states, “The fascination of non-verbal communication is that much of it is involuntary and even may reveal feelings or attitudes we would rather conceal” (Lawson, 2001: 129).

Lawson’s view about the meaning of space is acknowledging the role of architecture in organising and structuring spaces, however, he also explains the importance of the inhabitant who facilitates the everyday activities, by the way of using this language. The author also maintains that building could be seen in different ways: as artwork, as technical achievement, as wallpaper of urban space and as behavioural and cultural phenomena. This is illustrated in his argument when he “treats architectural and urban spaces as containers to accommodate, separate, structure, and organize, facilitate, heighten and even celebrate human spatial behavior” (Lawson, 2001: 4).

“One of the intriguing and endlessly fascinating things about the study of architecture is that one may come at it from so many different angles.” (Lawson, 2001: 4)

Accordingly, Lawson pointed out a vital concern that is related to the main objective of this study when he discussed the response of architects and architectural critics to this dilemma. He considers that concentrating too much on the purpose and function of a space is a mistake, leading

³ Forty states that the origin of the term “space” is German, and the translation into English was problematic. He maintains, “In neither English nor French can a material enclosure so easily be linked to a philosophical construct, and consequently “space”, as a translation from the German *Raum*, lacks the suggestiveness of the original” (Forty, 2000: 257). The process of translating is revealed with many issues, the main one is that the term loses some values articulated with conveying its accurate meaning. This occurs in various languages, as we shall see later in translation into Arabic.

to ignoring the human dimension. He writes: “I find that much architectural criticism does this by neglecting what we might call the human dimension of space” (Lawson, 2001: 13). He also compares the awareness of this dimension between the past and now by stating, “Before professionalism, the design and creation of space was a more social and vernacular process seamlessly integrated with all other aspects of a culture” (Lawson, 2001: 3). Furthermore, he writes, “Some commentators have argued that modernism inevitably led architects away from their consumers” (Lawson, 2001: 4).

Nevertheless, Lawson recognises that some “great” architects seem to be able to understand the language of space, like the Dutch architect, Herman Hertzberger, who shows high levels of awareness of the language of space through his designs, as well as his writings.

In his book *Space and the Architect: Lessons in Architecture 2* (2000), Hertzberger explains “space” by referring to two notions: physical and non-physical. “Physical space is shaped by what it is that surrounds it and otherwise by the objects within it and perceivable by us, at least when there is light” (Hertzberger, 2000: 15). On the other hand, the non-physical definition is changed with values and qualities that configure the experience of the space. Hertzberger introduces an interesting and simple method of recognising space experience by inviting users to “walk through it, film it, and the spatial image will unfold, yet the deepest impression is when even such acts fail to reveal what is exactly that brought the feeling of space” (Hertzberger, 2000: 17). This ambiguity relies on how one may individually experience a space and introduces an element of uniqueness, which means that everyone will experience a space differently since “spatiality is a feeling, a sensation we undergo, and particularly when the thing we see is impossible to take in at a glance and thus unspecified” (Hertzberger, 2000: 17).

The discussion of “experience” in relation to space starts with Sirowy (2010), who argues that in German there are two words for experience: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*.

The former is translated as “lived experience” and relates to the idea of an individual, isolated experience, “as we live through it and recognize it as a particular type of experience” (Van Manen, 1990: 177). The same author goes on to state that, “The notion of *Erfahrung* has different connotations. It is used to indicate the experience as ongoing and cumulative. It may be translated as “life experience” (Van Manen, 1990: 177). Arthos (2000) puts *Erfahrung* as “the experience of social interaction”, which means that it has a social and historical dimension in it and it connotes the experience of a community.

With regards to experience as related to space, Sirowy’s conclusion is “that in the case of architecture, most beneficial would be to combine the two modes of experience – *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* – in a vision reflecting a progression from an individual experience to a common world of human significations” (Sirowy, 2010: 100).

In the Arabic language, there is a distinction between experience as a test, trial and experiment, as compared to experience as an ongoing process that enhances the understanding and builds up solid thoughts, knowledge and relationships.

There can be no doubt that one may experience a set of thoughts, feelings and emotions that shape the depth of the perspective and give it an extra dimension that is not even seen, but sensed. Involving all factors influencing and affecting the way we perceive a space will give it meanings that are more than just the physical rigid formation. An interesting interaction between space and its users is introducing the spatial experience as an outcome, which the architect will not be able to configure through scale models or three-dimensional visualisations as “space is more like feeling stereoscopically than seeing stereoscopically: a fuller, more complete experience” (Hertzberger, 2000: 17).

The distinction between space and place is a concept that Hertzberger introduces. While the two overlap in meaning, they describe an interesting variance that relates to the core of the argument. He expresses the comparison in a quite configured way, stating:

“Place is where you recognize yourself, something familiar and safe, specially for you [...] place implies special value added to a space. It has a particular meaning for a number of people who feel attached to one another or derive from it a feeling of solidarity [...] Space, whatever its purpose, can come to mean place, whether for an individual or for small or large groups [...] The thing that turns space into place is the infill given it by its occupants/users [...] Space is longing, an expectation of possibilities, outside, on a journey, dynamic and open, away. Place is pause, inside, redemption, home, at rest [...] Space and place cannot exist without each other – each summons up the other. If place is heat, fire, then space is fuel.” (Hertzberger, 2000: 25–25)

Hertzberger is not the only one who discussed the distinction between these two expressions, in *Spaces and Places: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) the Chinese geographer Yi-Fu Tuan argues, “Space is transformed into place as it acquires definition and meaning” (Tuan, 1977: 136). He also states, “Abstract space, lacking significance other than strangeness, becomes concrete place, filled with meaning. Much is learned but not through formal instruction” (Tuan, 1977: 199). Here, the author is distinguishing between space that he describes as a form of openness, freedom and threat, and place where security and stability is found. He asserts that the main contributors lie in the meanings that emerge with the inhabitants experiencing the space and adding values to it. The user is the one who will create these meanings and convert these spaces into places by adding a sense of life to it. It is not necessary “concrete place” as Tuan says, because the users’ experience does not need boundaries to be housed, rather, experiencing is persuading sensation, perception and conception. Tuan explains “experience” by saying that, “To experience is to learn;

it means acting on the given and creating out of the given. The given cannot be known in itself. What can be known is a reality that is a construct of experience, a creation of feeling and thought” (Tuan, 1977: 9).

Explaining the process of experiencing a space may vary from one to another, because “experience is a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality. These modes range from the more direct and passive senses of smell, taste, and touch, to active visual perception and the indirect mode of symbolization” (Tuan, 1977: 8).

Space is articulated with psychological and philosophical encounters because it is engaged with and configured by the users’ experience. Furthermore, “space” is considered as the architect’s “production”, and it is the linkage between the creator (architect) and the consumer (inhabitant). Therefore, it is vital to establish a way of understanding these three axes of the dilemma.

Challenging the spatial experience could be through different perimeters that specify certain experience in certain space. These perimeters could be tangible or intangible. Although this study is not ignoring the role of the tangible spatial sequence, texture, material and light that are definitely involved in the architectural experience. It is more interested in intangible parameters. These intangible factors are considered through the philosophical and psychological attributes that would set an experience of inhabiting within specific social, cultural and economic settings. The way an individual would perceive a space, how it would look, feel and smell is not only influenced by specified rules set by the architect or the builder, it is also affected by memories, emotions and feelings that are set within the inhabitant’s background.

Sirowy (2010) discusses the spatial experience from a phenomenological and philosophical perspective. She points out the relational nature of understanding the phenomenological interpretations that ask for a consideration and acknowledgement of the social, cultural and historical context of architectural interventions.

She maintains that architects should consider the way people relate to space, and their specific lived experience within, which then would lead to a better understanding of space and how it should be created.

In order to examine the “spatial experience”, and present it with a clear definition, it has to be positioned, in this study, within the context of Bahrain and its well-defined geographic, social and cultural dimensions. In Arabic, the first formal language in Bahrain, there is no specific linguistic terminology that addresses or recognises the “spatial experience”. This had to be taken into account when collaborating with the participants who took part in a pilot questionnaire, which was used as a precursor to the primary fieldwork research (to be discussed further in the Methodology chapter). However, the people in Bahrain are aware of their experience and

understand their spaces and places, as this has been a part of human nature since the existence of architecture. Aspects of inhabitation and interaction with space are documented in the narratives of people's everyday lives, which help in establishing an understanding of the "spatial experience" before even providing a linguistic terminology. For instance, the layout of the traditional cities in Bahrain speaks of the traditional cultural values. The city used to consist of four main elements: the mosque, the governor's house, the inhabitants' dwellings, the central market (*souq*), and the café (*quahwa*). These main elements are connected through narrow pathways, which were constructed as defence against enemies, and with climatic and cultural considerations in mind. Experiencing the city through the wide and the narrow, the dark and the light, the private and the public, the spiritual and the entertaining, would reveal a poetic image that conceals the human mind and soul.

On the other hand, echoes of the original culture and facts of globalisation and the present conditions, surround the spatial experience in the contemporary city; therefore, the resulting experience is quite ambiguous and lacks focus. People are still aware of the sense of experiencing a space, apart from the huge transformation that is currently taking place; people changed, architecture changed, life changed and, of course, the experience changes accordingly.

According to Aljowder⁴, a Bahraini architect with 33 years of experience in practice, it is problematic to translate "spatial experience" into Arabic, due to a lack of research in this field, published in Arabic. Although the sensational experience exists, an accurate understanding is still ambiguous in the Arab world. He argues that architecture requires a specific language in order to transform it from a hidden and vague realm into a terminology of everyday life that people can interact with, feel and improve. He suggests that social activities and networking play a vital role in conveying the architectural sense, the space examination and determination for people, who can participate in establishing a rich ground where these terminologies could grow.

It is important to reveal the unknown and forgotten aspects of the spatial experience, which help in understanding the meaning of inhabiting. The sense, awareness, feeling and understanding of this experience exist in the consciousness and it needs to be elaborated, expressed and communicated in order to be obvious and clear. This will lead to a better understanding of architecture through the aesthetics that configure the narrative of the individual's life, within the human domain. Zumthor describes this better when he stated: "We all experience architecture before we have even heard the word. The roots of architectural understanding lie in our architectural experience: our room, our house, our street, our village, our town, our landscape –

⁴ In a trial interview conducted with him during the early stages of this research in summer 2013.

we understand them all early on, unconsciously, and we experience later on” (Zumthor, 2010: 65).

3.3 Architecture, aesthetics and immateriality

While this research is articulating immateriality in architecture, and as Chapter 2 discussed, immateriality within Islamic architecture, this section considers immateriality from the contemporary architectural discourse point of view.

In attempting to approach the subject of aesthetics in architecture, we start from a position relating architecture to space, as described by Schelling, after Winters (2011), who stated that: “Architecture is music in space, as it were a frozen music” (Winters, 2011: 61). In his argument, the author tried to explain the meaning of architecture by questioning, “If we are to think of architecture as inhabitable space, then we must ask how we can look at drawings of unbuilt and unbuildable works and judge them as pieces of architecture while adhering to the stricture that architecture is to be lived in” (Winters, 2011: 61). He goes on to admit that architects produce what he named “paper architecture” at some stages of work, especially during the design process and the idea development phases, however, this does not mean that we appreciate architecture as a visual artwork to be argued with certain kinds of thoughts. This direction is very important especially these days when architects can be increasingly obsessed with image-making, at the expense of producing designs that are user-oriented. Nevertheless, we cannot ignore that communication technology has had a massive role in changing the form of architecture in the last two decades, while architecture remains with its primary role of accommodating working lives.

Schumacher, in his essay titled *Aspects of the Work of Zaha Hadid* (2007) pointed at the proliferation of representational media and design process as one of the most significant features of architecture in the last two decades. In contrast to Winters’ vision, Schumacher is impressed by Hadid’s speculative designs and drawings, and classifies them as “innovative architecture”. He describes those dynamic and fluid designs as a world by themselves, with its own features of forms, compositional laws and spatial effects. However, he admits, “The translation from drawing to building might be problematic – at least under conditions of innovation” (Schumacher, 2007: 212). It seems that Schumacher believes that architecture, as a discipline should distinguish between the act of drawing and designing, and the act of building, in other words, to differentiate between drawing as a “tool” and the “material process of construction”. Schumacher considers the “medium of drawing as a medium of innovation”, which emphasises graphics that would not necessarily be translated into buildings at some stage. He also maintains that following this strategy, Hadid had made many contributions to architectural history.

From Schumacher's analysis of Hadid's designs and work strategies, it seems that the main element to be achieved is the form, or the beauty of the form, but he did not consider or give attention to the lives that are going to occupy these buildings. On the contrary, he goes even further and proposes promoting the idea of speculative buildings, "paper architecture", and claims that this approach will make a major contribution to the architectural discourse.

When discussing architecture, people make buildings the focus of their attention, the buildings that hold the narrative of their everyday lives, and the container of their memories, buildings that are part of their system of habits and reflect their spirit and identity. But the question here is, is Hadid's architecture the architecture that people are seeking?

Zumthor, one of the well known contemporary architects, also presents an argument against Schumacher's in his book *Thinking Architecture* (2010), where he states: "Music needs to be performed. Architecture needs to be executed. Then its body can come into being. And this body is always sensuous" (Zumthor, 2010: 66).

Aesthetic might be the expression that needs to be clarified here, which will enable us to answer such questions as the one stated above. According to *Aesthetic Theory: Essential Texts for Architecture and Design* (2011) by Gage, the term is not as implicit as it used to be: "It includes not only the assumed questions of beauty, value, form, taste, and appropriateness but also collective ideas such as nationhood, political influence, and global economics" (Gage, 2011: 7). If we are to classify according to this approach, Zaha Hadid's designs would be described as the former, since it emphasises the geometry and fluidity of architectural forms. Similarly, the latter will evolve in engaging people, since it emphasises human aspects related to the users' nature, interests and lifestyle.

In the same book, Gage explains the notion behind the aesthetic theory as it had been historically rooted. Throughout the book, the author presents the theoretical context of aesthetic as a branch of philosophy. He starts with expressing the ancient philosophical thoughts of the great Greek philosophers Plato, Aristotle and Vitruvius. Afterwards, he introduces the visions of many philosophers who appeared during and after the Renaissance, like Alberti, Kant, Fiedler, Nietzsche and others, until he reached the thinkers of the twentieth century like Geoffrey Scott, Susan Sontag, Alexander Nehamas and many others until the most recent, David Freedberg and Vittorio Gallese.

Although the subject has been well established since ancient times, and articulated by a large number of well known philosophers, thinkers and humanists, Gage's intention is to introduce "new, and sometimes merely forgotten" ways of understanding aesthetic through clarifying the "relationship between designed form and cultural value" (Gage, 2011: 20).

Gage also argues that during the decades around the millennium, architectural theory made a contribution that “revealed new social, intellectual and ethical territories for architectural influence and responsibility” (Gage, 2011: 15). He articulates the aesthetic theory as it focuses on the understanding of a building, space and object as it emerged from individual and societal values. However, Gage speculates that architectural design seems to be losing value whether be it cultural, economic, or political. He goes on to declare that, “Architecture and design can no longer be culturally relevant in a world defined only by bottom-line efficiencies, simplistic natural metaphors, or strict adherence to performance guidelines, sustainable or otherwise” (Gage, 2011: 18). He also asserts that the judgement of the success of a building should be through the qualities it introduces, which gives architecture its value in a society. Therefore, architecture is judged by the users, “who have accordingly and perhaps rightfully devalued our contribution to society” (Gage, 2011: 19).

“Architecture must be more than what it does, how little it costs, how quickly it was built, or how much energy it can save. Aesthetic theory offers us a way to the value of architecture in reconsidered terms without opposing those worthy pursuits.” (Gage, 2011: 20)

In his essay titled *On Aesthetics and Function in Architecture: The Case of the “Spectacle” Art Museum* (2011), Shiner maintains, “The aesthetic experience is not only about contemplation of visual form, but also multisensory and immersive, involving the volumes, textures, and sounds that determine how a building feels as we move through it”. Here, Shiner is supporting Gage’s argument on the idea of not explicating aesthetic on the basis of beauty only, rather, it should include values that elaborate and configure the spatial experience. He also expresses the notion of what he called “sculptural design” like the work of Gehry and Hadid, which should be judged upon aesthetic criteria.

Another view of aesthetic from *The Aesthetics of Architecture* (1979), by Scruton, who states, “In proposing an aesthetics of architecture, the least one must be proposing is an aesthetics of everyday life” (Scruton, 1979: 19). He also maintains, “the first task of aesthetics must lie in the correct understanding of certain mental capacities – capacities for experience and judgment” (Scruton, 1979: 1). His analysis makes it vital to refer to the experience of the users of building when evaluating and judging its aesthetics. Moreover, the aesthetic judgement will not be achieved unless the spatial experience is fully understood. “We understand a building only if our experience is persuasive for us: only if it occupies a place in which we can feel its relation to the working of the moral life” (Scruton, 1979: 205).

Reflecting on the above, the issue of aesthetics and immaterialities lies at the crossroads of a number of disciplines including psychology and philosophy. Consequently, it is significant to

point out that, “Psychology investigates facts, while philosophy studies concepts” (Scruton, 1979: 2). The use of such approaches in the exploration of this topic will enhance our understanding of the relationship between aesthetic immaterialities and user experience.⁵

When approaching the issue of immateriality in architecture and how it may relate to aesthetics, it would be useful to consider one of the main architectural philosophy writings of the nineteenth century, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1908) by the English art theorist and critic John Ruskin who defines architecture as:

“The art which so disposes and adorns the edifices raised by man, for whatsoever uses, that the sight of them may contribute to his mental health, power, and pleasure.” (Ruskin, 1908: 13)

Ruskin stated that it is important to distinguish between architecture and building. “To build – literally, to confirm – is by common understanding to put together and adjust the several pieces of any edifice or receptacle of a considerable size” (Ruskin, 1908: 13).

This clarifies that building and architecture is not synonymous, rather, they overlap in meaning. The former is charged more with structural and material aspect that maintain the stability, while the latter is charged with the values of life. Just like space and place, house and home, building and architecture share the ability of transformation, in other words, building can be transformed into architecture if it succeeds in achieving certain qualities with regards to the users’ experience.

According to Pallasmaa, in his book *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (2012), the task of architecture is “to create embodied and lived existential metaphors that concretise and structure our being in the world [...] buildings and towns enable us to structure, understand and remember the shapeless flow of reality and, ultimately, to recognize and remember who we are. Architecture enables us to perceive and understand the dialectics of performance and change, to settle ourselves in the world, and to place ourselves in the continuum of culture and time” (Pallasmaa, 2012: 76).

The task of architecture is to identify ourselves as users, through representing, structuring and engaging “actions and power, societal and cultural order, interaction and separation, identity and memory” (Pallasmaa, 2012: 76).

Ballantyne briefly discusses interesting aspects of architecture in his book *Architecture: A Very Short Introduction* (2002). The book is described as an excellent introduction to architecture. It

⁵ “If it were true that architecture was a language (or, perhaps, a series of languages), then we should know how to understand every building, and the human significance of architecture would no longer be in question.” (Scruton, 1979: 158)

contains three concise chapters, starting with how buildings are involved with our sense of who we are, moving to the way in which buildings are made to look like one another, so that they carry the right sort of messages to those “in the know” in a particular culture, and ended up with questioning what it is that makes some works of architecture come to be more culturally important than others.

Throughout his writings, Ballantyne acknowledges that every spatial experience is characterised by intangible aspects, either positive or negative, along with tangible ones. To take *home* as an example, one must admit that *home* is charged with meanings, which moves beyond the physicality of the building. *Home* may also take different definitions depending on how the term is contextualised. For instance, geographically it may refer to a certain location that identifies the individual’s place of birth. The term in here refers to the place the individual inhabits and pursues in his/her everyday life. The individual carries the immaterial part of their *home* experience around, while the building called *home* remains in one place. This explains the sense of *home* for the nomadic tribes, although they frequently change locations, they still experience these immaterial aspects and feel at home in surroundings that they do not actually own. Ballantyne also argues that few architects are sensitive to the audience response, and take risks, in order to obtain a conservative view of cultural change. Such architects will accrue no artistic kudos; however, they might be seen as reliable performers by the people who commission buildings (Ballantyne, 2002).

A similar approach by Tervo in her article *Is Anybody Home?* (2007), where she argues, “Instead of describing built environment with measurable dimensions, we could start to intentionally enhance vocabulary of emotions [...] we want to approach the essence of place with devotion by insisting on tangible sensation” (Tervo, 2007: 226). She refers to domestic buildings as an example to illustrate the idea of immateriality as an important part of architecture, which, in fact, is what transforms a building into architecture, through feelings, which she describes “as real and definite as the fact of the sun coming over the horizon tomorrow morning” (Tervo, 2007: 226).

In his book *Immaterial Architecture* (2006), Hill takes up the argument from a different angle, although his position acknowledges the importance of the user in creating the immateriality of the space, which then leads to the same conclusion, architecture as an element of sense and feeling as well as solidity and rigidity. He argues that, “Focusing on immaterial architecture as the *perceived* absence of matter more than the *actual* absence of matter, I devise new means to explore old concerns: the creativity of the architect and the user. The user decides whether architecture is immaterial. But the architect and any other architectural producer, creates material conditions in which that decision can be made” (Hill, 2006: 5). In a very comprehensive argument, Hill acknowledges the immaterial part of architecture, and considers it as important as the material. The book represents architectural practice as solid matter, however, it considers immaterial

concepts as aligned to that solid architecture. “Architecture is expected to be solid, stable and reassuring – physically, socially and psychologically” (Hill, 2006: 2). Hill also argues that architecture related to the varied experience of the user, and the everyday experience of the building is what configures the relationship between user, objects and spaces. He also describes the immaterial from two points of view. Firstly, he related the immaterial to the event, perception, memory and experience of the user, which are intangible aspects of the space that is designed by the architect in a way that will let the user interact, explore and perceive. Secondly, the immaterial is simply the drawings that carry the procedures of designing and the architect’s thoughts and ideas. Finally, he presents a series of examples that refer to elements of architecture, and he developed his argument about immateriality around them. The examples he selected are actually referring to material aspects, however, he then explains the immaterial idea based on an event, a sense, or some natural condition such as the weather. Hill then declares, “The user decides whether architecture is immaterial. But the architect creates conditions in which that decision can be made. Both are creative!” (Hill, 2006: 77).

Hill’s approach to immateriality leads to Karandinou’s, in whose book *No Matter: Theories and Practices of the Ephemeral in Architecture* (2013) carries an investigation into the different themes around the explanation of “immateriality”. She presents seven different approaches, which despite their differences are all charged with immaterial aspects; these aspects totally differ from one approach to another.

The first approach into the notion of immateriality refers to the way the material gets changed in terms of shape and quality, such as fluidity, transformability and reactive material. This approach explains some features, which are beyond the physicality of the matter itself, and explains how the matter could be changed. However, this is not the immateriality that this research is interested in.

The second approach is concerned with specific sensational elements like the sound and the smell, which, in fact, add another dimension to the space, not because of their existence only, rather, because of the way it affects the user and his/her spatial experience. Aspects such as sound and smell are also motivating and affecting another important immaterial aspect, that of the “memory”, which in fact plays a vital role in configuring the users’ spatial experience.

The third approach is very relevant to this study. It focuses on ideas and concepts that are related to the way of perceiving the space. The way the user perceives the space does not depend only on the space itself, nonetheless, the image will not be completed unless it would be automatically interpreted with other vital elements like the users’ background. These concepts of immateriality are shaped and influenced by the cultural, social and ideological schemes.

The fourth approach concentrates on the opposition of form versus matter, which contains underlying meanings that describe the relationship and interaction between form and material, which are influenced by other aspects like the function, needs, desires and aspiration.

The fifth approach is again related to this study because it is concerned with the way the user interacts with their surroundings. It emphasises the understanding of the activities that occur in the space, and this touches the past, present and future activities and aspirations. Thus, there are several immaterial aspects that could be defined here, such as happiness, anxiety, dreams, memories, feelings, senses, etc.

The sixth approach also defines immaterial descriptors that are related to the process of making the building, which, in fact, would be invisible after the completion. This is an interesting interpretation because this process has revealed a number of experiences, thoughts, narratives and achievements, which therefore configure part of the building history.

The seventh and last approach consists of stimulating the role of technologies that cannot be denied, however it is not the core of this study.

There are several texts that look into the theme of immateriality written by practitioners, which discuss the topic from a practical point of view. One of the key texts is *Towards Humane Architecture*, by Bruce Allsopp, who in the 1970s addressed the issue of understanding architecture, and emphasised the importance of the users' participation in the design process:

“Architecture is not for architects, it is for people, and whatever architects may think and whatever theories they may have, it is through the senses that people appreciate, that people feel architecture.” (Allsopp, 1974: 3)

It is of great importance to society to understand how architecture, as a creative industry and process, can be deployed to enhance our way of life, and have positive impacts on individuals. In fact, it is the architects' essential responsibility to negotiate among different perspectives and realities and to create an environment that is meaningful for those who live in it, an environment that is warm, comforting and pleasant to live in. This type of architecture will be achieved if it caters for man as he is, brought up in a living society, not for man as an abstraction, processed in a laboratory.

At the end of his book, Allsopp divides architecture into two kinds: one is aedicular, which is for people to live and work in, and the other is symbolic that has no necessary function other than to be symbolic. He concludes by suggesting that if the architect is truly to produce architecture for people he must always put them first in his professional work, and really study people in order to try to give them what they will enjoy.

One of the objectives of this research is to generate a greater awareness among architects, of the importance of considering the users' spatial experience as part of their design process. In his book *The Architect's Brain: Neuroscience, Creativity and Architecture* (2011), Mallgrave explores the role of the architect in the design process. He refers to some interesting concepts such as, "How is it possible that architectural forms are able to express an emotion or a mood?", which is a vitally related question raised by the art historian Heinrich Wölfflin in 1886, when he wrote his doctoral dissertation, titled *Prolegomena to Psychology of Architecture* (Mallgrave, 2011: 80). According to Mallgrave, Wölfflin motivated designers and architects to analyse, examine and test the users' behaviour and views before and after the space is created, in order to understand more about how such spaces should be facilitating the experience and interacting with users. Mallgrave also argues that exploring and understanding the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience such as memory, consciousness, feeling, thinking and creativity is reshaping the image of who we are and where we come from. On the other hand, he considers it a great limitation if architecture is largely appreciated visually and measured by "photogenic" qualities of its sleek, rather than a variegated experience particular to the senses. "Architecture not as phosphoric sheen but as flesh" (Mallgrave, 2011: 114).

It seems that acknowledging that the immaterial in architecture is just as important as the material, has now started to gain popularity. To understand the immaterial part, one needs to approach the space users in order to configure their spatial experience. Consequently, one of the effective means of this acknowledgment is through the users' involvement and participation in architecture.

3.4 Architecture as a practice

This section starts by discussing architecture from a theoretical perspective with a view to extending the discussion to the context of architecture as a practice.

In trying to understand architecture, one may need to understand the value of the material and the immaterial considerations of the built environment. In his book *What is Architecture?*, Ballantyne declares: "Architecture is part of the art of living, and is at its most successful when it seems to give expression to the life that inhabits it" (Ballantyne, 2001: 2). Therefore, it is important to maintain the balance of interacting and impacting between users and architecture. For instance, the practice that is responsible for producing buildings is at the same time being asked to create relationships between those buildings and people's lives.

In her book *Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning*, Psarra suggests an interesting way to connect narrative with architecture, which in fact reveals the meaning of architecture. She explains narratives as a form of representation, bonding sequence,

space, time and structure. She argues, “A narrative requires a narrator and a reader in the same way in which architecture requires an architect and a viewer” (Psarra, 2009: 2).

The author explains her approach by identifying similarities between narrative and architecture, as narrative is the content of the story, the way in which readers interpret it, and also the way in which it is structured and presented to the audience. Similarly, the perceived, conceived and lived experience of the user in a space, as well as the structure and representation of the architecture is what metaphorically makes architecture a narrative. In fact, different shapes and meanings in different buildings, as in different narratives, are normally generated through users’ experiences and the cultural mechanisms. The meanings that are generated by users are in dynamic networks of spatial, cultural, social, intellectual and professional practices, which are proper ties of the work and its formation and interpretation.

Correspondingly, in *The Architecture of Happiness*, De Botton asserts that architecture can make its distinctive contribution and give evidence of happiness, however, “A concern for architecture has never been free from a degree of suspicion” (De Botton, 2014: 11).

The author acknowledges that the significance of architecture is affected by the notion and fact that people are different and places are also different. De Botton declares that “Architecture may well possess moral messages; it simply has no power to enforce them. It offers suggestions instead of making laws. It invites, rather than orders, us to emulate its spirit and cannot prevent its own abuse” (De Botton, 2006: 20). Essentially, the role of the architect is to be responsible for creating an architecture that enhances people’s lives in their surroundings, and adds significant meanings to its original context. So what is architecture as a practice?

Understanding architecture as a practice starts by looking at the distinction between architecture and building. While the former tends to convey both the edifice and its wider context both in terms of material and immaterial qualities, the latter is usually confined to what is being constructed, through its material descriptors. This leads to the question, “What is architecture?” Is it an art? A product? A service? A subject or an object?

Many writers, theorists, thinkers and practitioners attempting to define architecture would start by saying, “architecture is an art”, “a social art” or “the mother of arts”.

Samuel Mockbee, an American architect and educator, argues that “Architecture, more than any other art form, is a social art and must rest on the social and cultural base of its time and place” (Mockbee, 1998).

While Mockbee perceives architecture as a social art, which by its extension reaches elements of humanity through the reflection of social and cultural norms, Peter Eisenman declares that his

“architecture” does not necessarily aim to house humans. After the post occupancy evaluation of his award winning design of the Wexner Centre for the Visual Arts at Ohio State University, and addressing some failures, Eisenman confesses, “My work is not about convenience –it is about art. I am not suggesting that people should necessarily live in art –I don’t live in art – and I’m not suggesting that people should necessarily live in my architecture” (Eisenman after Cuff, 1989: 66).

Architecture is always complex, as it addresses the quality of our surroundings and our two-way interaction with it. Thus, it is not only about a building’s appearance, as this aspect is only one way of affection, and not always the most important. Accordingly, the definition of architecture has many layers, especially if one wants to make a distinction between building and architecture, as architecture would be buildings with an acknowledgment of the general context in which they exist.

“In architectural practice it is often manifested as a poetic *illusion* of a dichotomy, advancing either the humanist view of a universe order by abstract relations or the romantic view of individual sensibility and freedom. It is argued that architecture orders experience through *space-time* relationships that interface the realm of the conceptual and the world of senses, away from the traditional binary model of abstract and physical.” (Psarra, 2009: 3)

The practice of architecture could be conceived as the production of societies and civilizations, which stands as historical physical expressions of existence like the case of great monuments.

“A building is not a work of art if it stands just anywhere, as a blot on the landscape, but only if it represents the solution of an ‘architectural problem’. Aesthetics acknowledges only those works of art that are in some way worth thinking about and call them ‘architectural monuments’. If a building is a work of art, then it is not only the artistic solution to a building problem posed by the contexts of purpose and life to which it originally belongs, but somehow preserves them, so that they are visibly present even though the building’s present appearance is completely alienated from its original purpose. Something in it points back to the original.” (Gadamer, 2004: 149)

In this framework, one could ask, what is the role of architecture in our modern era, where a huge technological digital revolution is taking over, replacing everything including man himself sometimes, and creating spaces that do not look any different either in the east or the west of the globe. In this time, it is important to assure that one of the main tasks of architecture is to help in establishing new possibilities of people’s existence, in regard to culture, tradition, environment and context. The role of architecture and the task of the architect are, as Heidegger emphasises in (1951), “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”. The main role is to create buildings that assist people to

live physically and emotionally, and establishing a meaningful relationship between people and their spaces, in order to help them to understand, interpret and impact on their lives.

In a more specific context, in many Arab countries, and particularly in Bahrain, there is a great division between architecture as an academic discipline and architecture as a practice. Asfour, the author of *Polemics in Arab Architecture: Theory Versus Practice* (2007), argues that even if the academics are trying to advocate traditional architecture, the belief in image and technology is what is governing the architectural market nowadays. The common practice in the Middle East today is characterised by building tall glass and metal towers, providing profitable enterprises for their owners. This new architectural language is what gives it its prestige and therefore attracts more investors. There are many examples of these kinds of iconic and large-scale commercial buildings, like the Bahrain Financial Harbour, completed in 2007, and the Bahrain World Trade Centre, completed in 2008 (see Figure 3.1). Nonetheless, there is a small number of projects that use traditional architectural features and elements in a way that creates an imagery representation of the vernacular architecture and culture. However, these approaches act as marketing tools and are not always successful, and some people consider them to be false representations of traditional architecture, which used to serve certain functions, while in these contemporary projects, it is merely for decorative purposes.



Figure 3.1: Bahrain World Trade Centre and Bahrain Financial Harbour (Source: <http://media.gettyimages.com/photos/aerial-view-of-the-skyline-of-manama-bahrain-on-thursday-sept-24-2009-picture-id97428054>)

It seems that the new Arab cities find their identity, public satisfaction and social aspirations with

a high-tech image of new architecture, which is mainly designed by architects who have not necessarily been in the context before. And even if the building is designed by a local architect, as in the case of the Bahrain Financial Harbour (see Figure 3.3), which is designed by Ahmed Janahi Architects, described by Asfour as an excellent example, is actually trying to achieve a collective character by making the project become like a small Venice, with plenty of waterfront to host leisure and business activities. Besides the idea of creating a little Venice, which may interest some people, while others may question it in terms of identity issues, Asfour also claims that the Bahrain Financial Harbour project is fully open to the public. It could be one of the authorities', including decision makers and architects, intentions from the beginning, to have a shopping mall along the waterfront and marina with other facilities like restaurants, coffee shops and an opera house, where those activities may integrate with the business oriented buildings. Yet, what is happening at this moment is slightly different, as the area became used for commercial activities purely for attracting investment. The mall project was cancelled, and what exists inland are only two towers, which are not even fully occupied.

Another example that expresses the implementation of a European character, is the Villaggio mall in Doha, the capital of the State of Qatar (see Figure 3.2). The mall is one of the largest in Doha, with an exquisite, luxurious architecture, representing the epitome of a typical Italian village, destined to transport visitors to its charismatic ambience by the sea. The mall is designed to attract an average of 42,000 visitors daily, and over 1.5 million people for every month of the year.

The sponsors of both projects, the one in Manama and the one in Doha, claim that they achieved some sense of success and that the local people are happy, as the population is keen to experience such luxury places, which they consider as a sign of progress, however, this raises a number of concerns. First of all, the public cultural awareness of heritage and tradition, as well as the importance of preserving both needs to be examined in a time where people are obsessed with globalisation and a contemporary imagery of architecture. Secondly, the region's ideas of hosting culture that would be associated with sustainable qualities are under question here, as well as the energy and the cost of such an architectural undertaking in such climatic conditions. Thirdly, the norm, nowadays in the Middle East, and the Gulf region specifically, is to create landmark projects, as if the authorities are in a competition to establish "who builds the tallest?", which is what happened in the case of Burj al Arab and Burj Khalifa.

Today's society's aspirations are different to what they used to be thirty years ago, and local people (including clients, designers and decision makers), are not necessarily concerned with implementing traditional design solutions, however, there must be a niche for traditional ideas that are still valuable for today's culture. Moreover, there is a need for raising greater awareness of the importance of maintaining the relationship between culture and architecture, which in fact, does not conflict with any type of progress. Such a relationship may encourage architects, decision

makers and people to come up with genuine ideas that reassure the specificity of this context, which in fact needs specific architecture.



Figure 3.2: Villaggio mall in Doha (Source: <http://static.qatarliving.com/post/2015/10/27/villaggion%20cover%20pic.jpg>)



Figure 3.3: Proposed project for Bahrain Financial Harbour and surroundings (Source: http://www.portland-design.com/sites/default/files/portland_bahrainfinancial_large_landscape3_0.jpg)

3.5 Practice and culture

3.5.1 Defining culture

Discussing the relationship between culture and architecture has been widely debated by a number of thinkers including Rapoport (2005), Sharr (2012) and Mahgoub (2011), and it has been gaining in popularity since the turn of the new millennium, along with the big debate around the impact of globalisation. The discussion of local conditions and identity frames the relationship between architecture and the users' culture. This relationship could be conceived as a multidimensional phenomenon, as it has to be observed through different points of view and methods of expression.

This section attempts to provide an overview of the relationship between architecture and culture as a way of re-examining the conventional way of describing space through material descriptors. Instead, the focus is on the users' experience both material and immaterial in order to describe the architectural qualities of the design.

Architecture displays values that involve the culture and the context of the building and inhabitants as well as the construction, procurement and design. The cultural values of any society inform the inhabitants' way of life and their behaviour, therefore it must have its impact on spaces where they live, interact, and pursue their everyday practices.

It is acknowledged that buildings are evidence of the cultures that made them, presenting values informing both the construction of the artefact and the lives that inhabited or are inhabiting it. A building could be considered as an organisation, as it absorbs ideologies and atmospheres, as well as recording evidence for societies and generations. In the case of historical buildings and artefacts, they act as sources of information that convey meanings associated with the way they were procured and inhabited over time. In some cases, buildings could be the best indicators of society's own intellectual positions, recording human relationships with each other and with the world.

In fact, the role of inhabitants in configuring and reconfiguring, shaping and reshaping, and framing and reframing spaces is just as valid as the role of any architect and professional. Based on this, the impact of the inhabitants' culture takes an important role in the process of configuring, shaping and framing spaces.

Everyone, in everyday life, would engage with architecture in one way or another, which, in fact, suggests a certain interaction between the two, the architecture and the inhabitant. Some scholars argue that buildings are never finished, as the architect is not the only one who is involved in the building. Over time, people's lives leave their imprint on buildings.

At this point of the discussion, it is worth considering the question of, “What is culture, in relation to architecture?”

Kokot, in his article *Culture and Space: Anthropological Approach* states that culture is a set of actions, beliefs and structures, which are determined and governed by space as a constant factor. He goes on:

“Until the nineteen-eighties, ‘space’ was not a matter of theoretical debate, but became more or less implicitly equated with the physical environment in general. Consequently, as a part of ‘nature’, ‘space’ was juxtaposed to ‘culture’.” (Kokot, 2007: 13)

The term “culture” has multiple connotations and dimensions. One way of thinking about defining culture could be associated with art and sculpture shown in galleries, or literature, opera, plays and classical music as others might believe. However, another way may consider that “culture” is much bigger than being exclusive to fashion, arts, cinema, novels, and architecture. In the academic discipline of cultural studies, “culture” “is something that surrounds us all the time, which influences us – which ‘constructs’ or ‘produces’ our habits and values – at least as much as we influence it” (Sharr, 2012: 5).

“Culture” also includes one’s behavioural modes, which establish his or her coexistence in a society, including how to dress on a daily basis or on certain occasions, how we facilitate our sense of humour, how we interact with others, males and females and many other details of daily life. One should admit that culture is in a dynamic and continuous process of change and amendment. The culture of a community is not necessary exactly the same as how it used to be many years ago, or how it will be some years ahead. These shifts and changes in cultural values could be imposed or inherited, controlled, verified and altered in a society. This point will be further explored in the fieldwork in Chapter 6.

In his writing, specifically his book *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism* (1989), Raymond Williams, one of the founders of British cultural studies, maintains that, “Culture is ordinary, in every society and in every mind”. Williams’s work is animated by lived culture, and he perceives it, from an anthropological point of view, as synonymous with everyday life, in other words, a whole way of life, and forms a significant circulation within a society. Williams describes culture as an active cultivation of mind, where it could embody a sequence of emerging procedures starting with a developed state of mind, then the process of this development, followed by the means of these processes leads to the most common general meaning that indicates a whole way of life of an individual community or a social group.

In his other book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1985) Williams asserts that, “Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language” (Williams, 1985). The word has been through a number of historical developments throughout the history of European languages. Furthermore, it has been at the centre of intellectual debates around important concepts and disciplines. The term covers a number of meanings including: inhabit, cultivate and worship. Williams also maintains that the relationship between *culture* and *civilization* is very complicated and they even used to be synonyms.

It is significant that the notion of *culture* contains a range of overlapping meanings across disciplines and conceptual frameworks, which indicates a complex argument around the relations between human development, their way of life and architecture, especially since culture includes specific and variable values of social and economic groups and nations.

“It is especially interesting that in archaeology and in *cultural anthropology* the reference to culture or a culture is primarily to material production, while in history and *cultural studies* the reference is primarily to *signifying* or *symbolic* systems.” (Williams, 1985: 89)

Williams, in his book *Culture and Society* (1983) clarifies that a number of words that are considered important now had actually gained popularity by the late eighteenth century and in the first half of the nineteenth century. These words were either newly introduced into common English use, or had already been generally used in the language, and then developed new and important meanings. The author mentions five words that are the key points: *industry*, *democracy*, *class*, *art* and *culture*.

The word *culture* changed over time, it had meant initially and primarily the tending of natural growth, and then, by analogy, a process of human training. However, “latter use, which had usually been a *culture of* something, was changed, in the 19th century, to *culture*, as such, a thing in itself. It came to mean, firstly, ‘a general state or habit of the mind’, having close relations with the idea of human perfection. Secondly, it came to mean ‘the general state of intellectual development, in a society as a whole’. Thirdly, it came to mean ‘the general body of the arts’. Fourthly, later in the century, it came to mean ‘a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual’. It came also, as we know, to be a word that often provoked either hostility or embarrassment” (Williams, 1983: xvi).

The author also clarifies that the development and change of the term *culture* could be seen as a record for a number of important and continuing reactions in the people’s social, economic and political life. It could be also seen as a special kind of map that leads to exploring nature.

In the conclusion of the book, Williams explains the historical background of the idea of culture as a record of people's reactions, in thought and feeling, and their meaning of culture is a response to the events that define their meanings of industry and democracy.

The way in which society embraces, communicates, reproduces, experiences and explores its own cultural practices and productions has its special connection with the way this society designs and builds spaces where such activities would occur. In this sense, culture reflects and constitutes a particular social order, with its values, habits and behaviours and obviously all of this would be mirrored in architecture. "Then architecture is more than a rarefied intellectual pursuit or the subject of merely aesthetic interest" (Sharr, 2012: 6).

3.5.2 Culture-architecture debate

The building, as an outcome of the design process will not fully satisfy any architectural standards unless it is inhabited and organised by people's lives, with their powerful relations and aspects. Architecture inscribes social relations and mirrors culture, while it constitutes its physicality. In fact, the documents that are used to describe and anticipate architecture, including drawings, photographs and specifications, are associated with the cultural, economical and political patrons and specificities of the time and place where they were made and the people who made them. However, the social and cultural boundaries of architecture are normally neglected, given that architecture nowadays so often follows the signatures of the architects.

For Vesely (2004), architecture is well established in people's signifying system of culture, as it sits within their understanding – and pre-understanding – of their layered experience in their world, developing through their involvement in the events of their everyday life. People need to learn how to appreciate architecture through their cultural values in the same way as they appreciate appearance and organization.

Kokot (2007) suggests that a fully-formed anthropological theory of "culture and space" does not exist yet, although there have been lots of valuable attempts. He declares that since the 1980s, publications articulating the meaning of "space" in anthropology have increased due to the big globalisation argument. These publications mainly discuss the relationship between human populations and local cultural ties. He also argues that there has been ongoing research aiming at reuniting the concept of space and culture, where "space had more or less been taken for granted as a constant factor governing, or even determining, the set of actions, beliefs and structures anthropologists have called culture" (Kokot, 2007: 13).

The idea of culture and its relationship to space or place has been the subject of critical argument in anthropology, including the boundaries of local culture and global culture. It is acknowledged that culture is a transitional corporation that has essence of flow, flux and mobility, and this is what makes “culture” specific to certain people or a geographical region. Culture also has its big impact on constructing local identities within national and international fields and relations.

There is a theoretical debate around the role of place in culture, which has been articulated in *Siting Culture* (1997) edited by Olwig and Hastrup. The book argues that rich ethnographical studies are the only way to “explore the significance of place in the global space of relations”, in which everyday lives would exist throughout the world. The book examines the concept of culture through a number of case studies from around the world, which provide methodological and theoretical implications. The use of case studies as a methodological approach will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

The structure of a space is a vital factor in assessing and understanding past human civilization and culture, and in preserving and sustaining the remaining and current fragments of that culture. Unfolding people’s thoughts and social organisation through understanding their way of structuring their spaces suggests phenomenological and cultural approaches to appreciating architecture. The close reading of buildings as cultural artefacts developed by Sharr in his edited book *Reading Architecture and Culture: Researching Buildings, Spaces and Documents* (2012), indicates that, “Architects have a distinctive capacity to read the anatomy of buildings and the nuances of their details, and to appreciate the influence of professional conventions over the world. They are well placed to put their abilities to forensic use, deducing cultural insights from architectural fabric and from the documents employed to anticipate architecture” (Sharr, 2012: 2).

The main thrust of Sharr’s book is to encourage and help practising architects to appreciate the context in which they are designing, in a way that would lead them to think about design more incisively.

In the introduction of his book, the author started with defining the term “culture”. As “culture” contains multiple and underlying connections, it has different meanings in different contexts. However, in the academic discipline of cultural studies, he argues that “culture is something that surrounds us all the time, which influences us – which ‘constructs’ or ‘produces’ our habits and values – at least as much as we influence it” (Sharr, 2012: 4).

The book suggests that reading architecture could be done through three methods linked by culture and attitudes to architecture. These methods propose that contemporary buildings’ concepts are as powerful and effective as those to be found in historical structures, and that architecture by non-experts can be as meaningful as the work of expert architects.

The first method implies that buildings are evidence of the cultures that made them, and they act as artefacts that establish values informing inhabitant's lives. The ideologies involved in design, procurement, construction and habitation of a building is, in fact, embodied in its organisation, atmosphere and details. Therefore, this suggests that it is important to think about the individuals and their involvement in their culture, where the buildings act as records of culture and society.

“This suggestion that buildings can be read is not to say that architecture is text – the presence of built fabric is too material for that analogy to stretch meaningfully – but rather that the architect-authors of buildings, and critics awed by authorship, seldom offer the most reliable accounts of them. Instead, a building is the best indicator of its own intellectual position.” (Sharr, 2012: 3)

The second method of metaphorically reading architecture is through acknowledging that buildings could have multiple authorships, which involve the inhabitants' contributions to their built environment. The relationship between physical spaces and human activities is an important part set out by social, cultural, behavioural, intellectual and political configurations. The physical organisation of architecture acts as a container for the organisations of human activities. In this case, the role of inhabitants in reconfiguring their spaces is as vital as the role of the professionals who created them in the first place.

“Indeed, expert professionals can learn much from the architecture of non-experts. This appreciation that authorship is not decisive, and that all buildings have multiple authors, serves to undermine the hero myth of the genius-designer still promoted by many architects, journalists and critics.” (Sharr, 2012: 3)

The third and last method deals with the technical processes of design, including drawings, models, documents and contracts. The media in which those processes were made will have an impact on the outcome of the built fabric, as professionals may set outlines for the sensuous atmosphere in the proposed future building. As those processes remain important in creating buildings, “the gaps between their abstract conventions and people's sensuous appreciation of the material world can yield important insights into the professionalised cultures of architects and others in the construction industry. It is important to appreciate the ideologies contained in, and around, the professional habits of building description, and the traces that they leave to be read in built form” (Sharr, 2012: 3).

In fact, what the design speaks of is actually the architectural expression, which is not only set by the architect and designer, rather it reveals social and cultural messages that contribute to the meaning of buildings and places. The signification of architecture is what it refers (architecture) to beyond its own pattern of space; like power, religious structure, and social or political ideology. Designers need to think about how people occupy and experience the spaces, “how to arrange and use the objects that fill them in a way that enables us to recognize who we are as individuals,

(culture/identity) and how we are related to others, as well as creating the many other intangible qualities that make us successful through the success of our environment. This is not only limited to a single room (of any scale), but also to the narrative of the experience created in the transition between interconnected volumes (with or without literal walls or ceilings)” (Caan, 2011: 8).

The question to be asked in this era of globalisation is: How is it possible to approach the practice of architecture with a better awareness of its relationship with culture?

Perceiving architecture as a formal, spatial and cultural mechanism gives the opportunity to explore a greater potential of rich meanings, which then leads to architecture that respects social and cultural norms.

“This era of global communication is a time, ironically, when many unique cultures are threatened; practitioners of rare arts are aging, young people are being integrated into larger communities, languages are disappearing, and cultural memories are being lost.”
(Gebert and Gibson, 2013: xi)

3.6 Users’ rights in architectural practice

How do architects position themselves in relation to the client, the user and the public in the twenty-first century? Do architects deserve privileged positions or are they servants to the society? Does the professional relationship between architects and clients have a place in the twenty-first century? What are the responsibilities of architects to the public at large? (after Ray, 2005: 1–2)

Architecture as a practice involves sets of relationships in ever-changing conditions that constantly include new clients, teams and people. The perspective of the user within these relationships is mostly neglected as Sirowy and Sailer maintain. Sailer mentions that this neglect is partly due to the nature of the industry and partly because of the architectural profession and their character and culture.

In their paper *Changing the Architectural Profession: Evidence-Based Design, the New Role of the User and a Process-Based Approach*, Sailer *et al.* argue “that the architectural profession needs to make a double turn: firstly, the needs and wishes of the user need to be in the centre of the architectural business. Secondly, the whole industry may change from a project-centred one into a process-based one where the process of finding out what the client needs, of engaging the users, proposing a design solution, managing the project, and evaluating its use and appropriation in the end in order to learn from it, is nearly as important as aesthetics, form and function” (Sailer *et al.*, 2007: 1) (See Figure 3.4).

The paper also suggests that architectural theory and research may play a new role in architecture as a practice if it involves more aspects of cultures and characteristics of the client. In this case, the practice will not be seen as *architecture of decorated sheds*, which is a reflection of art and artistic practice. The focus of aesthetic concern nowadays is just a decoration and a shed that could be judged subjectively, while the problem of aesthetics in architecture goes beyond this approach and relies on the ability to view buildings with consideration of dwelling in combination with aesthetics.

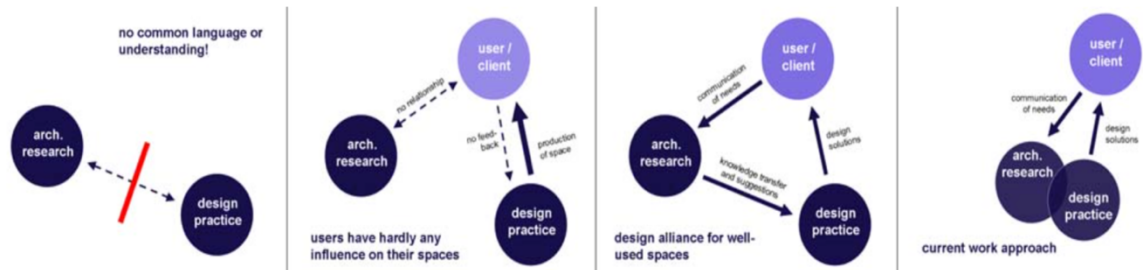


Figure 3.4: Re-defining the relationships between architectural research, design practice and the user (Source: Sailer (2007) paper submission at conference “Ethics and the Professional Culture” p.7)

In the contemporary understanding of architecture, there is a strong connection between the concept of beauty and the ethical dimension, and this is what Sirowy declares in her interpretation of Harries’ (1983) concept of beauty, which suggests that the concept of beauty presented by modern aesthetics is very limited where an important dimension of ethics is lost.

“In a phenomenological framework, there is no need of opposing ethical and aesthetic concerns. On the contrary, the concept of art and possible ethics are dimensions of the same phenomenon. A central issue for both is the reference to the ontological conditions of our being-in-the-world.” (Sirowy, 2010: 137)

Hence, the architect’s design statement has to satisfy the user, as it is part of the users’ right that needs to be considered when identifying design problems and debating it. Fellow in the American Society of Landscape Architects, Chris Degenhardt, who points out the issue, “If design becomes so selfish and so arrogant that it does not and will not respond to a client’s needs, then we are not serving the client properly” (Degenhardt, in Nasar, 1999: 144).

There is also a long debate of defining the “user”, where the implication of this approach is not necessarily related to the way of thinking in architectural practice. However, designing for the average person/user, which is widely used as a design choice, means that designers make assumptions and arbitrary choices.

It is the responsibility of the architect to take greater care and make sure that the design brief is *human*, as if the average person does not exist. “It is too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that as one does not necessarily know the building user, one must therefore make a nondescript building in order that it may suit everybody, and in its characterless way offend no-one by being easily adapted to the ‘average’ person” (Aldington and Craig, 1980: 29). Who is the average person? This is an important question to be asked, and it would be most likely answered with: *The average person doesn’t exist*. Therefore, if an architect is designing for the *average person*, he/she would be designing for non-existent people.

Such an approach could be considered as an abstraction, especially if the architect uses terms like “man”, “the human being”, “citizen” etc. and passive voice “is needed” “is decided” etc., which acts as *escaping* from the obvious social and political context of architecture. In this case, one would ask simple critical questions like “which man?”, “who needs?” and “who has decided?” These questions are enough to reveal this pretence, and such an approach could be applied to different types of design, including structural design, urban planning and urban architecture.

In their essay *Understanding People and Developing a Brief* (1980) Aldington and Craig explain the brief as the starting point for any design process as it determines potentials and addresses limitations. However, it should contain both the normal data and the psychological information. The former tackles the material aspects, all the measurable issues such as dimensions, materials, costs etc., while the latter targets the immaterial aspects like feelings, moods, sensational experience to be created etc. The authors argue that, “Brief is not a brief unless it not only *states* the problem but also *understands* it. This is the first stage of the creative process- UNDERSTANDING” (Aldington and Craig, 1980: 27). Thus, understanding peoples’ needs, desires and aspirations is the key towards creating an environment that will be meaningful and purposeful for its users.

The design brief is also the starting point toward stabilising the designer/user relationship, and understanding the immaterial aspects of the – to be created – users’ spatial experience. One way of conceptualising various degrees of user connections in the design brief is through categorization that perceives design as for users, with users or by users.

- *Design for users*: The design will be based on data about the users, general theories, and models of users’ behaviour. This approach often includes interviews or examination of focus groups.
- *Design with users*: This approach focuses on the user, utilising various data on user preferences, needs and requirements. It often includes the users’ reaction to the design solutions within a demonstration of different solutions or concepts.
- *Design by users*: The users are involved actively and taking part in the design of their own product.

The next step is acknowledging the importance of user involvement in shaping and reshaping their environments, which could start during the construction of the project. In most cases, the process of user involvement takes place after the completion of the project, and extends to take part in evaluating designs and solutions after inhabiting buildings, intentionally and unintentionally. This involvement could be recognised in several ways and depending on the nature of the project. It may range from a mere consultation process to a heavily involved role on projects such as self-build or semi-publicly funded housing projects.

It is acknowledged, as Sharr (2012) mentions, that expert professionals can learn much from the architecture of non-experts. Therefore, all buildings have multiple authors, and the genius-designer is a product of the multi-authorship collaboration. In other words, the consultation between the abstract briefs and users' sensuous appreciation of the material world could be valuable, especially with their insight into the culture and the appreciation of the ideologies contained within it, including the professional habits of building description.

Tackling and understanding the cultural context of architecture, architectural ethics, the role of tradition, the challenges of globalisation and many other paradigms are important to be understood to formulate a solid ground for architectural practice. In the contemporary architectural discourse there is a need to adopt a paradigm that could support a more user – and context – sensitive architectural practice.

Therefore, re-examining the role of users in architecture and its implications needs addressing in specific contemporary contexts, including the entire relative social, cultural and globalised conditions, and this is what this study is aiming at in order to establish a framework for understanding the user, the practice and the culture.

3.7 Immateriality and cultural considerations

As discussed earlier, architecture is not a purely artistic activity, however it is more “a science-based profession that is concerned with problem solving” as Rapoport declares in his book *Culture, Architecture, and Design* (2005). Problem identification and solving should formulate the first priority of the design, where the purpose will be to create environments that suit the user on a number of levels, responding to the understanding of humane characteristics, including being culturally specific. The social, cultural, along with the physical aspects, should be considered when creating an inhabited environment, where the result would be physiologically adopting comfort, meaningful in terms of anthropological aspects of cognition, affect and affected by emotions, feelings, moods, etc., and which are socially and culturally supportive.

The importance of cultural considerations in place making means the importance of understanding specific user groups, their situations, backgrounds, language, religion and many other habits that configure the possession of culture, which makes us all human and defines us as kinds of people.

In traditional settlements where vernacular design is used and user-driven, users get to be involved in the design and building of their environments, something that is a rare occurrence in contemporary architectural practice. Nowadays, users move into or use already existing dwellings, and the most they can do is to try to personalise their space.

However, Rapoport “suggested that *design is for users*. Therefore, designers are surrogates for users, doing what the latter can not, or do not wish, to do. Users’ preferences are paramount, and the choices users make are the best way to identify revealed preferences; other researches identities expressed preferences. [...] There is, however, a second more fundamental reason to approach design this way. This is that *design itself can be seen as a process of choosing among alternatives*. In this case, as when users choose habits, design also involves trade offs, i.e., ranking components of environmental qualities” (Rapoport, 2005: 64–65).

As design currently is not user-driven, the contribution of culture in design has been little, as Rapoport states, and he gives two main reasons for that:

“I think that there are two major reasons why ‘culture’ has not been used in design, and these are related. First is that the nature of the concept of culture has been very unclear and not discussed explicitly. It is, therefore, necessary to review and discuss definitions of culture and clarify which definition(s) might be useful in environmental research and design. [...] the second reason, [...] leads to the suggestion that a new and different approach to ‘culture’ is needed in order to make it possible to *use* culture in research, programming, design, and evaluation.” (Rapoport, 2005: 76)

The definition of culture itself is really complex and comprehensive, where knowledge, arts, beliefs, morals, customs and many more aspects are included. If one asks what culture does, the answer, according to Rapoport, will mainly be inclusion into three main indications. Firstly, the main purpose of culture is to provide “design for living”, at it is concerned with how things should be done, the author suggests that culture acts as a blueprint for assembling components. Secondly, culture provides a framework that gives meaning and purpose for almost everything. Thirdly, one of the main purposes of culture is to define groups “the many groups (‘pseudospecies’) of which our single biological species is composed. In that sense, its purpose is to separate groups, to make them distinct and different from one another” (Rapoport, 2005: 78).

“The first thing to note is that ‘culture’ is not a ‘thing’ but an idea, a concept, a *construct*: a label for the many things people think, believe, and how they do them.” (Rapoport, 2005: 77)

“The main reason, I suggest, why it has seemed impossible to establish relations between culture and environment (in this discussion, mainly housing) is due to the very high level of generality and abstraction of the term ‘culture’.” (Rapoport, 2005: 92)

The relationship between culture and environment is difficult to grasp as Rapoport states, because, on one hand, culture is a vast domain consisting of small parts, while, on the other hand, environment is embedded in culture. The author also implies that “culture” is not useful in either research or design, and he argues that “to be asked to ‘design for culture’ is, I would suggest, an impossible task” (Rapoport, 2005: 93).

The author agrees with other thinkers in his definition of culture, and he describes it as a definitional concept and a label that contains a vast range of human phenomena, and could be dismantled into components such as world views, values, images, norms, lifestyle and activities. However, and according to Rapoport’s suggestions, it seems that there is a gap between the understanding of culture and its implementations in design and architecture.

The future of architecture is much more determined by who looks at what and who walks where, more than who designs and constructs. Consuming architecture may reveal a number of technical and aesthetic values, which are as important as the social and cultural characters. The humanistic conception is what values architecture, and gives it a sense of liveliness through the architectural and spatial experience. The spatial experience expressed in the current stylistic development of the skyscrapers is very physical in terms of its existence. It’s a new type of architecture that lacks the humane element to a certain extent. The articulation of human need is required to evaluate the architectural condition nowadays, especially since architecture plays an important role in configuring people’s identity.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter explores the making of architecture from a perspective that considers theoretical issues in architectural practice. It starts with giving an overview of both concepts; *spatial experience* and *immateriality and aesthetics*. This discussion is based on the contemporary architectural discourse framework, and it helps in establishing a solid base on which the thesis argument could evolve. The chapter also discusses some linguistic limitations within the Arabic language in regards to the translation of *spatial experience* as a well-established term in English,

as will be discussed in the next chapter. This issue had its effect on the semi-structured interviews conducted with a number of people in Bahrain as part of the fieldwork research.

While exploring the relationship between theory and practice, this chapter identifies gap in addressing immaterial aspects in the relationship between architectural theory and practice on one hand, and the cultural implementation and the users' rights in design on the other. The chapter looks at many aspects in order to identify this gap. Firstly, the literature review shows that the immateriality of architecture is acknowledged within the theoretical discourse, however, when it comes to practical implementations, it seems that architects and designers rarely use these descriptors to set their design intentions. The meaning of architecture has changed, especially within modern Arab cities, in which the impact of increasing wealth seems to have influenced people to value both size and spectacle. The glossy architecture in these cities is mainly an outcome of the desires of both decision makers and architects. The local identity is challenged by this new architectural approach, as well as the spatial experience of the people inhabiting and using these new buildings. Therefore, there is a need to address the material and immaterial aspects of architecture, particularly those that relate to the users' spatial experience. Architecture is not just building design and space making, rather, it includes creating a solid ground for people's lives where their cultural values play an important role.

Furthermore, there is also a need to enhance people's awareness regarding the importance of appreciating their culture and heritage, especially when the society is keen to adopt imported western architecture. It seems that the public cultural understanding of heritage and tradition needs to be examined in a time when the region as a whole is obsessed with the idea of creating landmark projects, as in the case of Burj al Arab, Burj Khalifa, and the new Louvre in Abu Dhabi.

The chapter also defines the terms architecture and culture, and then discusses the relationship between them. Culture consists of a collection of patterns of behaviours, beliefs, ideas, values and social habits that distinguish a human group from another. This incorporates all achievements, embodiments and interpretations that human populations made throughout history, including articulating the meaning of "space" and its ties with culture. Thus, space is considered as a constant factor determining the set of actions, beliefs and structures that are formulating culture.

What makes "culture" specific to certain people or geographical regions is the fact that it is shared between these groups, and it is what distinguishes them from others. Culture is continually changing; it has an essence of flow, flux and mobility, and has a big impact on constructing local identities within national and international fields and relations, and such a notion is represented through architecture throughout history.

In the contemporary architectural discourse there is a need to adopt a paradigm that could support a more user-oriented and context-sensitive architectural practice, in which the cultural impact of

architecture is acknowledged. This means raising greater awareness among authorities, practitioners and users regarding the importance of maintaining the relationship between culture and architecture. Such a relationship may encourage architects, decision makers and people to come up with genuine ideas that reassure the specificity of this context, which needs specific architecture.

Re-examining the role of users in architecture and its implications is part of understanding the cultural context of architecture and architectural ethics, in which the role of tradition and the challenges of globalisation are considered. Such an approach would lead to formulating a solid ground for architectural practice and establishing a framework for understanding the user, the practice and the culture, as this is one of the aspects that this study is aiming to explore.

Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.1 Overview

As mentioned in the previous chapters, it is of great importance to society to understand how architecture, as a creative industry and process, can be deployed in order to enhance our way of life and have a positive impact on individuals. In fact, it is the architect's essential responsibility to negotiate among different perspectives and realities and to create an environment that is meaningful for those who live in it (Allsopp, 1974).

Therefore, combining theoretical design concepts and practical approaches, this study seeks to explore, identify, investigate, study and evaluate the immaterial aesthetics of the users' experience using non-objective methods and values rather than objective descriptors, and suggesting ways and techniques of implementation.

Thus, this study is undertaken to examine the theoretical context of the spatial experience; including related psychological and philosophical aspects. Identifying non-physical aspects that impact on the individual experience of a space through exploring different models and case studies.

In order to situate the discussion of the users' spatial experience in a specific context, Bahrain has been chosen as the fieldwork context, as an example of a specific geo-cultural, historical, climatic and economic setting. In this part, the research will try to clarify how the economic transformation impacted on the practice of architecture in Bahrain.

The study will tackle the subject through an interdisciplinary mapping, which will approach social science research methods like semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

There is a need to rethink the ways in which we understand "architecture", so as to reappraise its "humane" dimension in an economically driven design process, through a review and analysis of the literature and conducting primary research. One way of doing this reappraisal is through reconfiguring and redefining the relationships between the space as an outcome of design proposal and the users' experience of it. A better understanding of that relationship would help in rethinking the conventional design process with a view to creating space that reflects the social and cultural values of the society. Such an exploration will re-examine architecture both as a practice and as an academic discipline.

In *Architectural Research Methods* (Groat and Wang, 2013), the authors explain the fundamental characteristics, principles and applications of research in architecture. The book presents an

approach towards an interdisciplinary discourse of researching in architecture and design domains, along with a conceptual framework underlying the research process. The intention of the book is to provide an understanding of the multiplicity of research processes and standards in the architectural field. It shows that there is an overlap between architectural discourse and other disciplines – among them psychology and sociology. The study focuses on this as a way of conducting research in architecture. Furthermore, new knowledge can emerge through the relatively stimulating combination of distinct approaches, as the authors argue, “We believe that much innovative and needed research in architecture will require integration across such apparently discrete topic areas” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 11–12).

With the intention of answering the question, “What is architectural research?”, the authors present a historical overview, which proves that “architectural research has been conducted throughout the history of architecture. The development of particular structural forms or building materials over the centuries is the outcome of trial and error experimentation, systematic observation, and application of such building principles to other building projects” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 6).

According to this overview, during the 1950s, the main research studies were around investigating the physical or material side of architecture, such as the climate, product development and building systems designs. Conversely, “The research enterprise in architecture emerged more broadly across a range of topic areas – including socio-behavioral issues, design methods, and energy conservation – in the 1960s and early 1970s” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 7). This indicates that interest in the immaterial side of architecture, which mainly focuses on the users’ experience, started to gain attention more than 40 years ago, although, practically, this aspect is often neglected, as Sirowy states:

“The conducted analyses indicated that the main reason behind the neglect of user’s perspective in positivist frameworks is their predominant emphasis on quantitatively measurable phenomena and scientific knowledge, resulting in a neglect of subjectivity as well as a reductionist approach to the sphere of human meanings and significations.” (Sirowy, 2010: 263)

At the initial stages, the published literature within the subject domain has been reviewed in order to understand the context of the research and all related issues and challenges. This review helped in identifying the key areas and ideas of the research, and assisted in positioning the proposed study within the wider context, with a view to identifying gaps within the literature, which this research attempts to address.

This review also includes shedding light upon various historical aspects, such as describing the users’ spatial experience within the traditional settlement in Bahrain and Islamic architecture.

This includes considering stories and narratives of the people's way of life and habits, especially the ones documented by Charles Belgrave, the British advisor to the rulers of Bahrain from 1926 until 1957. Such documents are supplemented with a rich imagery database, maps and photographs that document the changes and transformations of people's way of experiencing architecture.

This approach helps in answering questions related to the roots of the relationship between the users and architecture, in both a private and public context. Furthermore, it also helps in excavating the literature, which is not readily available or being suitably dispersed across the sector. Such literature discusses the history of architecture and urban growth in Bahrain, and how it was informed by cultural and lifestyle changes. They also remark on a major "socio-economic" transformation during the era of oil discovery. This is of vital importance in establishing a rich base on which this study could exist.

4.2 Qualitative research

This study is most generally characterised as qualitative research, mainly because its aims are integrated with immateriality and seek to identify and clarify underlying meanings. For instance, the definition of immaterial descriptors of architecture mainly relate to aspects, qualities and values that describe the users' spatial experience, thus, it would be identified through using qualitative methods. These methods will also be used to discover how people tend to experience a space, and explore the features that are related to people's everyday lives. "If you are concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behavior, then qualitative methods may be favored" (Silverman, 2010: 1).

"Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions into the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiences, and imaginings of our research participants, the way that social process, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate." (Mason, 2002: 1)

Groat and Wang clarify that the qualitative research involves "gaining an understanding of how people in real-world situations 'make sense' of their environment and themselves; and it depends on, rather than rejects, the researcher's interpretation of the collected data. Finally, it achieves this understanding by means of a variety of tactics, employed through a primarily inductive process" (Groat and Wang, 2013: 222).

The book suggests that through the qualitative research study, the questions may evolve in an iterative process.

“The analysis of the one- to two-hour interviews required a long, interactive process of identifying key themes, the development of an elaborate coding scheme, and eventual synthesis into the textual narrative for their article.” (Groat and Wang, 2013 : 222)

The qualitative research strategy is mostly characterised as exclusively inductive, however, this depends on the degree of emphasis. While, other research designs, like experimental or logical argumentation, rely more on deductive logic, qualitative research tends to highlight a holistic exploration of complex situations and environments, and generates tentative conclusions that could be tested out in more deductive sequences.

Groat and Wang produced a summary of various aspects of qualitative research based on a number of references. This summary is reproduced in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Additional attributes of qualitative research (after Groat and Wang, 2013)

<p>Holistic. Qualitative research typically aims “to develop a complex picture” that “involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the large picture that emerges” (Creswell, 2007: 39).</p>
<p>Prolonged contact. With its emphasis on fieldwork, qualitative research typically entails “investment of time sufficient to learn the culture, understand context, and/or build trust and rapport” (O’Leary, 2010: 115).</p>
<p>Open-ended. Qualitative research tends to be more open-ended in both theoretical conception and research design, such that “the initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and that all phases of the process may change or shift” during the fieldwork or data collection (Creswell, 2007: 39).</p>
<p>Researcher as measurement device. Since there is relatively little use of standardised measures such as survey questionnaires, the researcher is “essentially the main ‘measurement device’ in the study” (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 7).</p>
<p>Analysis through words or visual material. Since an emphasis on descriptive numerical measured and inferential statistics is typically eschewed, the principle mode of analysis is through words, whether represented in visual displays or through narrative devices (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 7).</p>
<p>Personal or informal writing stance. In contrast to the typical journal format of experimental or correlational studies, the writing style of qualitative work is typically offered in a “literary, flexible style that conveys stories ... without the formal academic structures of writing” (Creswell, 2007: 40).</p>

According to Groat and Wang, the research in architecture involves methods that seek to describe and explain socio-physical phenomena within complex contexts.

“The qualitative studies in the architectural research nowadays tend to focus on contemporaneous phenomena, while the historical research by definition focuses on environments or contexts. Furthermore, the data sources and collection techniques are also likely to be different [...] Whereas qualitative researchers more often incorporate data sources that involve people through interviews and observation, historians more routinely rely on written documents and physical sources.” (Groat and Wang, 2013 : 223–4).

In this study, the questions to be answered are mainly concerned with how people experience a space, why the experience differs from one person to another and from space to space, in what way “immateriality” configures such an experience, how people can reflect their culture when creating their spaces, how and why culture affects the spatial experience and the users’ interaction, and how people/space affect and are affected?

As the qualitative research proposes, this study is concerned with opinions, experiences and feelings of the space user, and describes the social and cultural phenomenon that shapes one’s experience. This will help in creating a holistic perspective and understanding of the whole dilemma; therefore, it will lead to the identification of certain variables that address the immateriality of architecture. Qualitative research methods are best for evaluating and testing the validity of existing theories, leading to an inductive approach to developing concepts that will enhance the understanding of the user needs. The data/information will be collected through direct encounters with individuals, through interviews, observations and focus group discussions.

According to Hancock, it is important to outline four major types of qualitative research design: phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory and case studies. On the other hand, in coherent descriptions of the basic characteristics of each approach, supported by examples from the architectural discourse, Groat and Wang acknowledge “three relatively distinct schools of thought common to qualitative research in architectural and environmental research: ethnography, phenomenological inquiry, and grounded theory (sometimes known as the constant comparative method)” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 224). While Groat and Wang deal with the approaches of schools of thought in architectural research, Hancock referred to the use of case studies as a strategy, rather than a way of designing qualitative research. The discussion below will tackle the explanation of a number of qualitative research design approaches, which inform the methodological approach of this thesis, using phenomenology, ethnography and the use of case studies.

4.2.1 Phenomenology

“Phenomenology literally means the study of phenomena. It is a way of describing something that exists as part of the world in which we live. Phenomena may be events, situations, experiences or concepts. We are surrounded by many phenomena, which we are aware of but do not fully understand. Our lack of understanding of these phenomena may exist because the phenomenon has not been overtly described and explained or our understanding of the impact it makes may be unclear.” (Hancock, 1998: 4).

The research proposed here refers to the phenomenological approach in order to seek understanding and explanation the users’ spatial experience. Hancock’s definition is simple yet general, and gives an overview of what “phenomena” and “phenomenology” mean, however, and from an architectural point of view:

“Phenomenological inquiry is arguably the most well-known and established strand of the qualitative research utilized in architectural research. It derives from both the phenomenological tradition of German philosophers (e.g. Husserl and Heidegger, among others) and more recent versions of influential phenomenologists in the social sciences. Among these, the sociologist Alfred Schutz, who attempted to develop a ‘phenomenological sociology’ that would serve as a bridge between traditional sociology and Edmund Husserl’s philosophical phenomenology.” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 227)

Groat and Wang agree that the quality of phenomenological investigation plays a vital role in clarifying experiential essential and underlying meanings. They argue, and based on the arguments of other authors like Creswell and Schwandt, that the main aim of phenomenological enquiry lays on the understanding of an experience from the points of view of the ones who actually live it or experience it, and this is exactly what this study is seeking, an understanding of the spatial experience from the users’ point of view.

A number of classic phenomenological texts have been influential in architecture and allied disciplines, among these, Norberg-Schulz’s (1980) *Genius Loci* and subsequent books, Thiis-Evensen’s *Architectypes in Architecture*, and Edward Relph’s *Place and Placelessness*. and within the hermeneutic category, Gaston Bachelard’s book *The Poetics of Space*, first published in 1958, represents a truly classic work.

According to Groat and Wang, methodologically, two main aims will be crucial and the phenomenological research will struggle with: “the prejudgments to arrive at an understanding of the ‘essence’ of the experience that transcends individual subjectivity” and “the paradox of how to develop an objective interpretive science of subjective human experience”.

“The challenge is even more complicated when architects and designers, as the researchers, apply their subjectivity to illuminate the ‘essence’ of a given place experience. A considerable body of design research has demonstrated critical differences between expert and lay experiences in a variety of settings and contexts. Similarly, people who experience a building or landscape with different purposes in mind (an errand versus recreation; or a business meeting versus building maintenance) are likely to experience the setting in fundamentally different ways. So, for purposes of design practice, first-hand phenomenological studies may well spark an imaginative design concept, but they may not yield sufficient insight for designers faced with the dynamics of a complex, multifaceted design project.” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 229)

In a conclusion of this section, the authors summarise phenomenological research as it “derived from cultural studies and human sciences provides a complementary foundation for research in architecture and design” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 229). The phenomenological research requires in-depth analysis of gathered information and focuses exclusively on potential interpretation of meanings and actions. This is what the proposed study intends to achieve through studying people and culture in Bahrain and the Arabian Gulf region in order to formulate a deep analytical interpretation of understanding architecture in this particular context.

4.2.2 Ethnography

According to Hancock (1998: 4), ethnography that means a portrait of people, is concerned with the descriptive studies of cultures and peoples and has its origins in anthropology.

As Bahrain as the context to be examined (fieldwork), data will be collected from a particular region with specific geographical, cultural, social and religious dimensions. In the ethnographic studies, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and participants’ observations, along with focus group discussions.

“Ethnographic studies entail extensive fieldwork by the researcher. Data collection techniques include both formal and informal interviewing, often interviewing individuals on several occasions, and participant observation. Because of this, ethnography is extremely time consuming as it involves the researcher spending long periods of time in the field. Analysis of data adopts an ‘emic’ approach. This means that the researcher attempts to interpret data from the perspective of the population under study. The results are expressed as though they were being expressed by the subjects themselves, often using local language and terminology to describe phenomena.” (Hancock, 1998: 5)

Groat and Wang acknowledge the role of such research by arguing that the active and thorough observation is an effective method in ethnographic research, which emphasises in-depth engagement with site-specific settings. Observation is the ethnographical primarily mode of data collection, which is an active role that requires understanding of the embedded meaning in the cultural life, along with the actions and behaviour of the people studied. It is also important to note that the participant observation can encompass enormous variation in how the researcher chooses to observe and participate in the phenomena being studied.

“Although ethnographic fieldwork was initially and primarily associated with the discipline of anthropology, it has also been adopted by a number of other disciplines, including sociology, human geography, organization studies, educational research, and cultural studies.” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 224)

The authors also explain that through approaching these disciplines, the ethnographic studies will include observing the daily lives of members of a cultural group. Accordingly, this study will look into the way that people perceive, interact with and use public spaces within the context of Bahrain. This observation acts as a pilot study preceding the workshop and focus group discussions, and it includes having a general background about the space and the users’ spatial experience, which will help in gaining a comprehensive understanding of the matter.

An example of observing and ethnographic research can be seen in the work of Nanta (2009), a PhD thesis titled *Social Change and the Thai House: A Study of Transformation in the Traditional Dwelling of Central Thailand* (2009).

The main aim of that thesis was to examine the extent to which people’s place experience of their traditional vernacular homes in a rural region of central Thailand had been transformed through the changing socio-cultural environment.

The researcher interviewed two members of each family living in fifteen vernacular houses in a rural village area of Baan Krang. She was trying to understand the temporal transformation of each home. She indicated that most respondents were elderly, but they were assisted by a younger family member who was interviewed as well. Furthermore, she also interviewed five master house builders and two master carpenters. Her semi-structured interview with the families discussed aspects related to the history of the house, daily activities, occupants’ perceptions of their homes and historical and contemporary social changes. All her interviews were video recorded and later transcribed.

These interviews served as a foundation for subsequent observation and artefactual documentation. The researcher took careful note of physical modifications made to the home to accommodate the families’ changing life patterns, as well as observing the lifestyle and the

experience of home. The artefactual documentation involved photography, videotapes and annotated plan layouts of the interior, exterior and immediate landscape.

Nanta's research is a classic example of the ethnographic approach to qualitative research, which focuses on the active role of observation, while also employing interviews, artefactual documentation and historical archives. It depends on the general characteristics of qualitative research, particularly the way the researcher has layered her in-depth analyses of the families' daily life and routines, the meaning and interpretations of home and the house form as it evolved over generations. She concluded by stating that "The experience of place in these vernacular homes has evolved from a hierarchical to an integrated space; from being a container for ancestral memory to a physical structure that symbolizes status; and from constant family interaction to trans-spatial family relations – or, in summary, from the house as the centre of the social group and rice production, to the house as a sanctuary" (Groat and Wang, 2013: 227).

Nanta's approach will inspire the fieldwork of this research, where a number of different types of Bahraini dwellings will be recognised and studied through interviewing the inhabitants. An in-depth analysis of the relationship between people and spaces in daily bases will structure an understanding of how people experience both private and public spaces.

4.2.3 Case studies

While Groat and Wang referred to case studies as a research strategy or method, Hancock classifies case studies as a qualitative type of research design. There is no big difference between the two approaches, as they both use case studies as a qualitative approach, which contributes in-depth analysis of either a single unit, like a building, or number of units, like urban developments, or sometimes a series of related cases.

"As a research design, the case study claims to offer a richness and depth of information not usually offered by other methods. By attempting to capture as many variables as possible, case studies can identify how a complex set of circumstances come together to produce a particular manifestation. It is a highly versatile research method and employs any and all methods of data collection from testing to interviewing." (Hancock, 1998: 6–7)

As a secondary research method, using case studies provides a systematic understanding of the cultural and social values, which help to clarify the immaterial part of the users' spatial experience. Because there is a common concern about what constitutes the immaterial aspects of architecture and how to implement them through the design process, through case studies, this study uses examples that illustrate the problem both negatively and positively. Furthermore, because this research attempts to investigate and seek to understand the cultural impact on

architecture, this is best investigated through case studies, as argued for by Al-Ansari: “This research attempts to understand the phenomenon within its real-life context and aims to discover the full spectrum of the complexity which, again, is best approached through case study” (Al-Ansari, 2009: 70–71).

Models of case studies will include the work of architects from various cultures, the west and the east. The main criteria will be illustrating lifestyles and narratives through architecture, and trying to gauge to what certain extent users are involved. Studying examples of architecture will clarify how the theories of the spatial experience would be applied in real practice.

Examples of proposed case studies are:

- the work of Samuel Mockbee, the father of “socially responsible architecture”
- the work of Hasan Fathy and his “architecture for the poor”

Analysing such case studies will remain one of the important parts of the research; it will articulate the acquired knowledge from such an investigation and will present it in a coherent manner. However, the structure of the analysis might vary from one case study to another as articulated by Stake who describes his way of analysing the case study evidence:

“In my analysis, I do not seek to describe the world or even describe fully the case. I seek to make sense of certain observations of the case by watching as closely as I can and by thinking about it as deeply as I can. It is greatly subjective. I defend it because I know no better way to make sense of the complexities of my case. I recognize that the way I do it is not ‘the right way’. Methods books like this one provide persuasions, not recipes. Each researcher needs, through experience and reflection, to find the forms of analysis that work for him or her.” (Stake, 1995: 76–77)

4.3 The methodological approach of this thesis

4.3.1 Overview

The starting point of the methodological approach of this thesis was closely related to Sirowy’s (2010), whose work presents a comprehensive theoretical base. She provides multiple interesting methods and concepts such as the ideas of *lifeworld*, *lived experience*, and *interpretation*⁶. These concepts examine the role of the user in architecture. Sirowy acknowledges the social, cultural

⁶ According to Sirowy, *lifeworld* and *lived experience* in a design process means creating architecture that is for its users, and at the same time responds to contemporary social, cultural and environmental conditions. *Interpretation* refers to the way of reading and analysing a case.

and historical context of designed artefacts through the perspective of Gadamer's and Heidegger's philosophy. She argues that from these perspectives, the design process is not limited within the boundaries of the abstract objectives; rather, it is more associated with the users' way of life. For example, Sirowy declares that through "using Gadamer's terminology, the creation of buildings can be considered as *the fusion of horizons* i.e. even though the act of making takes place in the present, it is determined by the horizon of the past and the horizon of the future possibilities" (Sirowy, 2010: 123).

Furthermore, the author's familiarity with the case context is an important feature of the qualitative research as stated by Lofland and Lofland (after Al-Ansari, 2009: 71), who highlighted that familiarity could "provide the necessary meaningful linkage between the personal and emotional, on the one hand, and the stringent intellectual operation to come, on the other". Familiarity not only as architect, but also as user within the social and cultural boundaries of Bahrain will impact vitally on conducting the fieldwork, interviews and observation.

Therefore, reflecting on the users' spatial experience will play a vital role in identifying and understanding the non-physical aesthetic of architecture. Assessments of the users' spatial experience could be achieved using different primary research methods, particularly within the context of Bahrain, like the effective design and use of questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions, followed by strategic data analysis. On a trial basis, a questionnaire was used to engage groups of Bahraini people, in order to gauge their reactions towards their spatial experience and their built environment. As a result of this trial, it was decided to replace the questionnaire with semi-structured interviews, in which the participants could be more engaged in explaining their spatial experience through expressing their daily narratives and stories.

The importance of these methods lies in the data needed to shed light on the research questions regarding the users' spatial experience, and the impact of culture on architecture, within the specific context of Bahrain and the larger one of the Gulf region. This kind of data is best obtained through talking with the individuals themselves, encouraging them to express their ideas, thoughts and opinions regarding both matters.

4.3.2 Primary and secondary research

It is important to clarify that the aim of this study is to examine the "spatial experience" of users through both the primary and the secondary research. In the secondary research, the study refers to three examples and case studies from the literature that illustrate the immateriality of architecture within various settings and types of users. On the other hand, conducting the primary research by means of interviews, observations and focus group discussions would be more

effective if it targeted specific types of space and users. Because this research was conducted within the context of Bahrain, the examination will be targeting groups of people representative of the Bahraini population. The question which remains here is, which space to examine?

It was not easy to decide, and there were lots of factors affecting such a decision. First of all, the chosen space needed to address specific, rich and noticeable experience, however, this experience had to be available for a large number of people, if not for everybody. Furthermore, the space needed to be assessable and the information recordable.

In order to gain a holistic understanding of the spatial experience, the fieldwork sought a wide range and variety of experiences to be examined. Therefore, and to be more systematic, it had been decided to examine more than one type of space, through different methods. The first method used was the semi-structured interviews, targeting quite intimate and private spaces, where the user could express personal narratives. The second method used focus group discussions, along with observations in an open public space, conducted by the researcher.

Different types of spaces came into the discussion, offices, shopping malls, schools ... etc., which in fact, address various spatial experiences to be examined. However, the chosen space was more effective in formulating a unique experience by everybody, everyday and everywhere. A space that is created by immateriality more than materiality, where there are underlying meanings to be excavated, and senses beyond the physicality to be investigated. A place where its users are interactive to the most, facilitating the narratives of their everyday lives, and reflecting on their own personalities, spirits and souls, and simply who they are. All these features then configure an intimate and special spatial experience of the first chosen space to be examined by the researcher – private space – which will be “*home*” – while the other, public space, will be the “*city*”.

Therefore, the secondary approach targets case studies from the literature, while the primary approach is mainly be divided into two sections, semi-structured interviews tackling the private space (home), and focus group discussions with observations, focusing on experiencing the public space (city). Both approaches have to start with a preliminary trial, in order to estimate and test the validity of the method in answering the research questions.

4.3.2.1 Pilot questionnaire

As a part of the initial methodological approach, a trial questionnaire had been conducted in the summer of 2013, targeting a group of Bahraini people in order to gauge their awareness of their domestic spatial experience. It was hoped this would assist in seeking to identify the immaterial

descriptors of this experience from the inhabitants' point of view. The intention was to get some feedback, points of view and opinions regarding the users' understanding of the impact of culture on "architecture" as a way of creating and consuming space and information about the users' needs, desires and aspirations.

It is vital to mention here that this process had some weaknesses, which then impacted negatively on the participants' interaction. Unfortunately, the participants found the questions quite difficult to answer, ambiguous, time consuming and requiring too-detailed information. The participants preferred to talk about their home experience rather than writing about it, as it seemed to be a difficult process to step back from a daily experience and try to think about it, reflect on it and then write it down. Having been through this process, the decision was taken to replace the questionnaire with semi-structured interviews, where the interviewer could explain the questions well to the participants and try to help them more in reflecting on their experience.

4.3.2.2 Semi-structured interviews

Establishing the meaning of *home* is not an easy task, especially as it is influenced by personal views, narratives and feelings. In considering the form of the semi-structured interviews, Marcus's approach was considered. She studied people's attachments to their homes, as she clarifies in her book *House as a Mirror of Self* (2007), by providing a comprehensive analysis of the interaction between people and their domestic contexts. In the foreword of the book, James Yandell argues that the "subject of overwhelming importance [...] has been neglected in both architectural and psychological circles" (Marcus, 2008: XVI).

In order to examine the individual relationship to where s/he lives, Marcus presents stimulating interview material, which articulates various expressions of the experience of home by getting the interviewees to participate graphically in expressing those notions. She started interviewing a wide variety of people in the mid-1970s, from different age groups and genders. The author also introduces her own personal stories and experiences of moving and settling, along with valuable reflections "of what house and home mean to the human heart".

Why one would be so attached to his/her home? Why would one buy what seems to be the perfect dwelling, then spend as much time as possible away from it? What is behind the feeling of home or house?

With such questions, Marcus starts her argument by explaining why studying the experience of home is valuable. She argues that "a home fulfils many needs: a place of self-expression, a vessel of memories, a refuge from the outside world, a cocoon where we can feel nurtured and let down

our guard” (Marcus, 2008: 2).

To contextualise her research, Marcus develops her new approach acknowledging both the physical and non-physical sides of *home*, specifically by declaring that “psychologists whose domain is the study of emotional development view the physical environment as a relatively unimportant backdrop to the human dramas of life. Those who *are* interested in people – environment relationship-geographers, anthropologists, architects, and those in the newly emerging field of environmental psychology – have for the most part ignored issues dealing with emotional attachments” (Marcus, 2008: 2).

Therefore, Marcus’s approach “is a very simple yet frequently overlooked premise: As we change and grow throughout our lives, our psychological development is punctuated not only by meaningful emotional relationships with people, but also by close, affective ties with a number of significant physical environments, beginning in childhood. That these person–place relationships have been relatively ignored is partly due to the ways in which we have chosen to ‘slice up’ and study the world” (Marcus, 2008: 2).

“I searched in the library but found little guidance: psychologists, anthropologists, architects, planners – few had delved into the deeper emotional meaning of home. Novelists and playwrights, filmmakers and poets had more profound insights.”
(Marcus, 2008: 3)

“Did professional appraisal and resident experience coincide?” Marcus was searching for an answer to this question through various books that gave her a lot about house, in terms of functions, component, layout ... etc., but little about home, as she states, which makes her “vaguely unsatisfied”. Therefore, this was her main intellectual purpose that motivates the investigation.

Explaining her fieldwork, Marcus states that it was not necessarily comfortable for people to talk to a stranger about their feelings, however, two things made the process easier: the first is that people volunteered to participate in this research after having heard about it either from a friend, or through a lecture or an informal chat by the researcher; the second is because of the method the researcher used – “pat talk”!⁷

⁷ “Each story in this book was told to me while sitting in the person’s own home. I found this to be a necessary part of putting people at ease. In order to have them begin to focus on their emotion, I first would ask that the person put down his or her feeling about home in a picture [...]. For most people, it seemed that this experience of beginning to explore feelings in a visual image while I absented myself from the room was extremely helpful in allowing them to focus before starting to talk. [...] I would return and ask the person to describe, somewhat objectively, what they had put on paper [...] I would ask them to speak to the drawing as if it were their

In her context, Marcus' approach acts as a good model of semi-structured interviews, where the interviewees are encouraged to express verbally and graphically how they feel about their homes, using her own invented techniques, which enabled her to succeed in driving these particular participants in informing dialogues. It is important here to mention that due to cultural and social differences, each interviewee should be treated according to their context and perspectives. Therefore, it is vital to study the cultural, social and religious norms of the selected context before starting the fieldwork.

The two main elements to be sought through these semi-structured interviews are: the users' spatial experience and the level of knowledge and appreciation of the impact of culture on architecture, including design/construction/procurement process.

In his book *Social Research Methods* (2012), Bryman explains the vital characteristics of what he called "qualitative interview", which has two main types: unstructured interview and semi-structured interview. These interviews are not well structured with "an emphasis on greater generality in the formulation of initial research ideas and on interviewees' own perspectives" (Bryman, 2012: 470). In other words, the greater interest will be in the interviewees' ideas, thoughts and point of view. The interview is very flexible, both parties are encouraged to ask new questions, vary the order or even the wording of the questions in order to achieve rich and detailed answers. It is preferable if the interviewee may be interviewed more than once, which will bring in opportunities for more discussions, elaborations and comments.

In the semi-structured interview, "the researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply" (Bryman, 2012: 471).

It is important to prepare an interview guide that will work as a reference to list the issues to be addressed, or questions to be asked and prompts of areas to be covered. Furthermore, creating a certain amount of flexible order will lead to achieving an interview with smooth and reasonable flow. Interviewing is very demanding, so it is ideal to conduct a pilot interview in order to practise and gain experience in such a skill.

According to Bryman, after the interview, the researcher should make notes about:

house, starting with the words, 'House – the way I feel about you is...' At an appropriate moment I would ask them to [...] speak back to themselves as if they were the house. In this way I facilitated a dialogue between the person and house." (Marcus, 2008: 5-6)

- how the interview went (was the interviewee talkative, cooperative, nervous, well-dressed/scruffy, etc.?)
- where the interview takes place
- any other feelings about the interview (did it open up new avenues of interest?)
- the setting (busy/quiet, many/few other people in the vicinity, new/old buildings, use of computers).

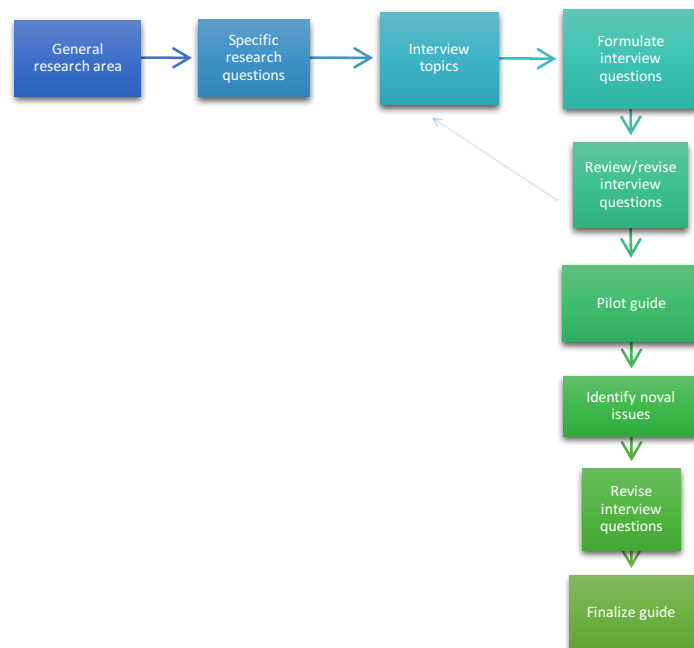


Figure 4.1: Formulating questions for an interview guide (Source: Bryman, 2012)

Kinds of questions:

- Introducing questions: “Please tell me about when your interest in *home* first began?” “Have you ever *thought about your relationship to your home*?”; “Why did you go to...?”
- Follow-up questions: getting the interviewee to elaborate on his or her answer, “What do you mean by that?” Repeating significant words can stimulate further explanation.
- Probing questions: “Could you say more about that?”
- Specifying questions: “What did you do then?”
- Direct questions: “Are you happy with *your home/house*?”
- Indirect questions: “How do you feel when you change *home*?”

- Structuring questions: “I would now like to move on to a different topic.”
- Silence: allowing the interviewee to reflect and amplify an answer.
- Interpreting questions: “Do you mean that your participation...?”

Elaborating on the way people understand, perceive and interact with their spaces, along with their level of satisfaction with the spatial experience is at the core of these interviews.

According to Hancock, the semi-structured interviews involve a series of open-ended questions, which may lead to define the topic under investigation while providing the chance for both the interviewer and the interviewee to discuss related concepts and thought in more detail. In this type of interview, the interviewer has the freedom to ask more questions or to seek more clarifications.

Hancock introduced the unstructured interview, where the interviewer starts the interview with the aim of discussing a topic, and frames the questions on the basis of the interviewee’s response. The interview should act as a normal, free conversation or discussion rather than a formal question and answer situation.

“In a semi structured interview the interviewer has a set of broad questions to ask and may also have some prompts to help the interviewee but the interviewer has the time and space to respond to the interviewee’s responses.” (Hancock, 1998: 10)

The collected data will be stored confidentially in a database, which will contain all the information gathered, such as notes, documents, audio-visual material... etc.

4.3.2.3 Observation

Observation as a methodology has been discussed in the qualitative methods section, under the heading of Ethnography. This method is going to be used as part of the fieldwork investigation in examining the users’ spatial experience.

As a type of space to be observed, the city of Manama represents a rich model that reveals both the old and the contemporary. Observing how people use the urban space in the city will enhance the understanding of the immaterial side of architecture, which has been through major transformation throughout history, especially during the period from the twentieth century until now. Now, the dense, old urban fabric exists in contrast with the adjacent contemporary skyscrapers, displaying a major change in lifestyle, which undoubtedly, will influence both the architecture of the city and the people who live and work in it.

City planning

“Cities have one crucial resource – their people.” (Landry, 2000: xii)

“Like a piece of architecture, the city is a construction in space, but one of vast scale, a thing perceived only in the course of long spans of time.” (Lynch, 1960: 1)

One of the main aims of this study is to discuss the importance of considering the non-physical aspects of the users’ spatial experience as being as vital as the physical aspects in the architectural design process, by looking at space through the users’ perspective. Since the city is one category of space, it is important to reflect on the concept of immateriality and user experience within this domain. To think about people means to think about providing them with adequate living places, where they can experience “sense of place and belonging, continuity, safety and predictability” (Landry, 2000: xii).

“To understand the role of environmental images in our own urban lives it was necessary for us to look carefully at some city areas and to talk with their inhabitants.” (Lynch, 1960: 14)

Kevin Lynch is a significant urban planner and author whose books establish the classic underpinning of modern urban planning and design. His ideas focus on the human purposes and values in designing and planning projects. A complete record of his theories and human philosophy in environmental design is presented in *City Sense and City Design: Writing and Projects of Kevin Lynch* (1995). The book provides a critical analysis of Lynch’s travel journals where he documents his observation of different American cities. Lynch’s method is to be adopted in investigating the city of Manama, the capital of Bahrain. Throughout the observation, the process will try to record the perception of different places within the urban fabric, through note taking, photographs and sketches, where thoughts of what makes the city good or bad, liveable or not, in a way of reflecting on the city life. This experimentation will lead to ideas that will contribute to the understanding of the users’ spatial experience of Manama.

Experiencing the city is a crucial routine process that informs a big part in the people’s everyday lives. Therefore, addressing the perception and the use of this environment is of great importance. Understanding how people see and interact with the volumes, activities and all life aspects will help in situating the relationship between people and their surroundings, in other words, the relationship between the user and architecture.

Lynch’s theory is concerned with what he called “the total environment”, meaning that he is concerned with the use and the meaning, as well as the “sensuous forms”. This approach will elaborate in filling the gap between materiality and immateriality.

Lynch's methodological approach will contain recording "the actual perception of people as they walk through [...] and compare their immediate perception with later memories of that experience. What do people notice, and how do they structure their observations?" (Lynch, 1990: 99). This approach could be adopted to evaluate people's awareness while experiencing the city of Manama.

It is interesting here how Lynch explains designing cities and environmental planning: "[It] is not secondary to economic development and should not be a luxury reserved for wealthy countries" (Lynch, 1990: 100). Although even in wealthy countries, with high oil income like Bahrain, consider town planning to be the process of providing an area of multiple housing blocks with organized passages in between, as in the case of Isa Town and Hamad Town, which were built in the mid-twentieth century. The main aim was to fulfil the desire of accommodating, ignoring the fact that the people who were being accommodated had more aspirations, which may go beyond the materiality of these housing blocks. These desires and aspirations may extend into social and cultural activities that would establish a healthy foundational scheme of the community if it exists.

Along with this discussion, Lynch explains that "'aesthetic' must be related to how people actually use and perceive their environment and should not be imposed upon a place from the outside" (Lynch, 1990: 100).

This is directly related to the argument of this study, that aesthetic is not only about beauty and the taste, but rather it is more about the people experiencing the space, about their feelings and emotions, thoughts and aspirations, and their social, cultural and behavioural structure. These aspects inform the image in which the user perceives and experiences a space, which we may call "aesthetic".

"While the notion that designers and planners should take into account the environmental conceptions and needs of those who would be affected by those designs and plans is usually – but certainly not universally – acknowledged as important, few professionals actually do this, or even know how to do it, in a meaningful way." (Lynch, 1990: 101)

To observe people in Manama, one would need to:

- approach urban design in analytical way
- record urban activities and forms: video/photos/maps
- monitor the flow of human activity
- walk through the city
- describe how the "street" as the level of experience changed during different periods of the day
- add idiosyncratic abbreviations.

Through adopting Lynch's method of observing, research journals will be used to document and record the flow of urban activities and experiences. Through a variety of tactics, including mapping, sketching and journal entries, keys of spatial features that contributed to each town's character will be identified. Videos, photographs and maps illustrating sets of qualities that contribute to a sense of place will be also included.

4.3.2.4 Focus group discussions and participatory research

One of the most common types of participatory research and action is the focus group discussion, where basically different types of participants and group members are given the chance and opportunity to get involved in a research conversation. It is about "planning and conducting the research process *with* those people whose life-world and meaningful actions are under study" (Bergold and Thomas, 2012).

This process helps mainly to discuss or question a particular issue, with reflection upon certain investigations, and it might result in developing an action plan or implementing and defining a certain scheme.

This kind of research helps with investigating everyday practices, where the participants can introduce their own perspectives and points of view, in order to understand and explain "the existential challenges of everyday life".

In this process, the participants are given the chance to be co-researchers, and to be involved in the research by stepping back from their familiar routines, interactions and relationships, and critically reflect and question established situations, providing interpretations and analysis. In the case of this thesis, the participants were asked to reflect on their understanding of the *city*, *heritage*, *culture* and their relationship with *architecture*.

Thus, a focus group, as a type of participatory research is, "quite simply, a small group discussion focused on a particular topic and facilitated by a researcher" (Seale, 2004: 194).

The key feature of the focus group research is being interactive, where it could be considered as a "distinctive method for generating qualitative data on the basis of group interaction and discussion" (Seale, 2004: 194).

In his book *Research Society and Culture* (2004), Seale mentions that focus groups could be used in a number of settings, such as exploring issues of audience reception, like in media and communication studies, or to examine user demands and responses to services and agencies, like the case of consultation and evaluation research. It could also be used to look at views and

opinions of staff in the case of organisational research, or, in a more general sense, it could be used to study social and cultural attitudes on a range of issues as in the case of interpretive study.

It is important to clarify that the focus group discussion is not simply a group interview, or an interview for several people at the same time; rather, participants in the focus group discussion are mainly focusing on exploring and negotiating certain information within a group context. It is like when a group of people try to define and discuss certain issues through social interaction.

Another feature of the focus group is the transparency in discussions, where participants articulate and justify their opinions and ideas in relation to each other in a visible group context.

“Beyond their status as a practical strategy for generating data, then, focus groups involve a stronger methodological assertion that the group context is important (and not just handy) for exploring the way social and cultural knowledge and meanings are produced.” (Seale, 2004: 194).

The discussion in the focus group could take multiple forms and may range between more and less structured. It could take the form of a fixed schedule of questions, a topic or guide theme for discussion, an exercise or visual cues. The number of people participating in the discussion should ideally range between six and ten people, to allow space for variety in perspectives and views, and to ensure that everybody participates at the same time. These discussions are usually video or audio recorded, or sometimes both, to allow the researcher to articulate and analyse the data gathered afterwards, as she or he would be busy facilitating the discussion and would not be able to take note of everything.

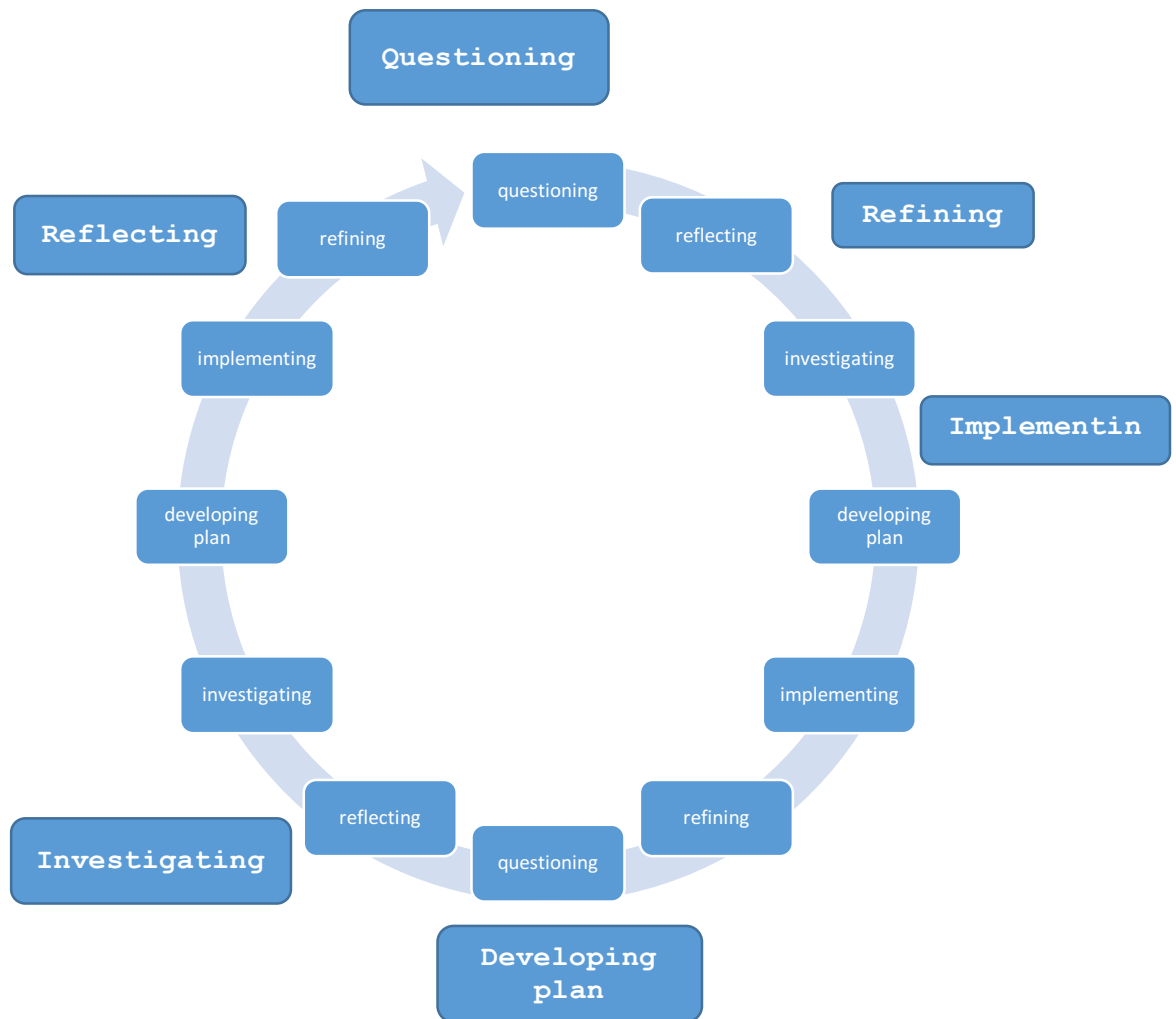
The focus groups method could act as a tool in designing the research, as it helps in refining and clarifying the study concepts and language, and also could help in evaluating and interpreting the research findings. As a method, it could be considered as the core of the research, or used together with other methods to produce different forms of data.

In the case of this thesis, the focus group discussions were used mainly to explore meanings in relation to the participants' own understanding and terminology, where this could “shed light on how respondents make sense of research problems or topics, helping to spell out key terms, issues and questions” (Seale, 2004: 195).

“The unity and justification of participatory research are to be found not so much on the level of concrete research methods, rather, participatory research can be regarded as a methodology that argues in favor of the possibility, the significance, and the usefulness of involving research partners in the knowledge-production process.” (Bergold, 2007).

It is worthwhile mentioning that in participatory research, because of the individuality and self-determination in the strategies, it needs a supportive methodological approach, in order to gain deeper and more meaningful insight into the research subject matter.

However, “methodological design that can be classified as a *participatory design process* in the narrower sense, represents an attractive and fruitful knowledge-generating option when it comes to researching the social world in the sense of habitualized practice” (Bergold, 2007).



The recursive process of PAR

Figure 4.2: The recursive process of *Participatory Action Research* (Source: McIntyre, 2008: 7)

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced and discussed a number of qualitative research methods with a view to choosing the most suitable to undertake this study. The reason behind the choice of such methods is that they have been shown by other researchers to be suitable for such studies that delve into the human aspects related to experiencing the built environment, including issues

associated with the socio-cultural dimensions of architecture and how it affects people's everyday lives.

In this respect, the research methodology relies on a range of "tactics" used to investigate the research questions. These include case studies, semi-structured interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Such tactics tend to be more open-ended, which make the flow of the fieldwork and data collection flexible.

Three types of qualitative research design were discussed in this chapter: phenomenology, ethnography and the use of case studies. The use of methods applied in each approach in this study has been explained with a view to recognising the process of interpreting and making sense of that data, which will contribute to embracing interpretation and meaning in the research context.

The methodological approach of this study comprises primary research and secondary research. The latter is mainly associated with discussing three case studies from the literature and analyses them in the light of the research questions and aims, and this will be articulated in Chapter 5. The former explains the fieldwork, including all methods and stages. The aim of the fieldwork is to understand the users' spatial experience within, both the private space, that of the dwelling, and the public spaces. In the "primary research" section above, the discussion highlighted the importance of using a pilot data collection to test the research methods. The pilot questionnaire that was conducted helped in editing the method and refining the questions, while the observation acted as an outline that helped formulate the workshop and the focus group discussions. This approach assisted in obtaining a higher level of confidence in the research method, and led to gaining more information related to the way that people understand, experience and interact with their private and public spaces. Aspects related to the primary research will be discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Architecture for the People

Chapter 5: Architecture for the People

5.1. Overview

As explained in Chapter 4, case studies have been used, as one of the qualitative methods, to undertake this research. There are numerous ways to define a *case study*, one of them is Yin's (1994):

“A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” (Yin, 1994:3)

In order to accommodate the explicit inclusion of historic phenomena in both historic and contemporary settings, Groat and Wang, in their book *Architectural Research Methods* (2013), present a slightly different definition that would make Yin's one more applicable to architectural research: “an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon or setting” (Groat and Wang, 2013: 418).

According to Sirowy (2010), “a case study is an empirical inquiry that deals with a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident [...] the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Sirowy, 2010: 210).

Through the use of case study as a methodology, multiple sources of evidence and benefits are required. More specifically, case study research has many stages. First of all, observation, reconstruction and analysis of the case study are crucial in order to obtain alternative viewpoints, perspectives and even rival interpretations. Another important characteristic of the case study research is that it leads to a holistic understanding of the social and cultural systems of actions, since it refers to interrelated engaged activities. It is crucial to note that case studies have boundaries that specify their objects and processes, consequently this is not a quantitative way of sampling, rather, it is a qualitative way of maximising understanding and learning. Therefore, in order to understand the system being examined, the case study has to be focused. Furthermore, the use of case studies has been selected as one of the research strategies for looking into how the practice of architectural design and place making can take into account issues relating to immateriality and users' spatial experience.

5.1.1 Types of case studies

According to Yin (1994), there are three basic types of case studies: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. The work described in this chapter falls within the explanatory type of case study, since it is concerned with the explanation of links between architectural practice and the lives of users. This study is interested in approaching the debate of immateriality in architecture from a practical point of view, which will bring evidence and examples as a means of reaching users' satisfaction.

Describing the types of case studies design, Yin (1994) introduces two types, *single-case* and *multiple-case* designs. According to this approach, this study would be classified as *multiple-case* design, since it intends to study more than one case that would contribute to substantial analytical findings. Yin maintains that the *multiple-case* design is more powerful and could lead to a more analytical conclusion.

5.1.1 Identification of the main issues

The various case studies from different cultural and social backgrounds, will explore the way the architects attempted to design buildings with the users in mind. In some cases, the architect has a direct relationship with the users. A better understanding of this relationship will contribute to the understanding of immateriality in architecture. The case studies will present a comprehensive explanation of processes and conditions involved in the production certain works of architecture that relate to the users' socio-cultural backgrounds and economic aspirations. Thus, they will help in answering the research questions, with regards to identifying the immaterial aspects that surround the users' experience of a space, on one hand, and gauging the impact of culture on architecture within different settings, on the other. The aspects to be discussed are as follows:

- immateriality in architecture
- the users' spatial experience
- importance of acknowledging social and cultural norms.

To support the aims of this research, case studies will discuss how the users' spatial experience is as vital as the physical aspects in the architectural design process, by looking at space through the users' perspective. Moreover, this method will assist in situating the relationship between theory and practice within the wider context of architectural discourse with a particular reference to immateriality and the users' experience. This approach can help understand a user-oriented practice on one hand, and on the other hand to reflect on the concepts of immateriality and user experience within architectural design teaching as a discipline.

5.1.1 Rationale for the selection of case studies

Two case studies are to be examined here: the work of two architects, the American, Samuel Mockbee, founder of Rural Studio; the Egyptian, Hassan Fathy, winner of the Aga Khan Award in 1980. In the two cases, architecture was deployed to creating environments that are meaningful for those who live in them, and which reveals the immateriality of architecture, presenting a lived case of architecture for the people. This discussion will describe details of the users' spatial experience within special social and cultural settings, in the two assigned cases.

5.2 The work of Samuel Mockbee

This section introduces the work of the American architect Samuel Mockbee by focusing on the Cook House and Barton House projects, as they seem to offer an interesting approach to socially responsible architecture with a view to acknowledging the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience.

5.2.1 Mockbee and the Rural Studio

Mockbee is an American architect, educator and artist, who was born in Meridian, Mississippi in 1944 and passed away in 2001. He enrolled at Auburn University and graduated from the School of Architecture in 1974. At the beginning of his professional life, Mockbee and his classmate and friend Thomas Goodman founded Mockbee Goodman Architects.

In his work, Mockbee was known for expressing regional flair and using vernacular elements. It soon led to the creation of Mockbee Coker Architects with his friend Coleman Coker. The utilisation of local materials to create vernaculars is what quickly established the firm's reputation for innovative design. During a period of six years, the firm won more than twenty-five state and regional design awards.

The work of Mockbee and Coker maintains the principle of combining their ideas with references to local identities, narratives, landscapes and forms. They offered a new way of interpreting Southern traditions and the local culture, which contributed well to their architecture, which is deployed beside the global culture.

In 1993, and as part of the architectural curriculum at Auburn University (Alabama, USA), Mockbee founded the Rural Studio, a non-commercial, non-profit orientated, and in many ways experimental design-built practice. It is interesting that in this practice, the undergraduate students were actual designers working on real projects under the supervision of experienced practitioners. The main idea behind establishing this educational programme in one of the poorest parts of America, where one in four citizens live in

poverty, was to encourage the students to use donated and recycled materials to build homes and community facilities. The programme also generated wide discussions of architecture's role in addressing issues of poverty, class, race, education, social change and citizenship. In order to create an "appreciation of place", the Rural Studio programme presented a different architectural approach, which was dependent on the use of salvaged, recycled and curious materials, as a way of encouraging social welfare as well as architectural education.

In one of his interviews, Mockbee states that: "Goodness is more important than greatness". This statement summarises the framework of the client–designer relationship, which the architect is trying to establish within his curriculum in the Rural Studio. Through establishing this academic project, his main aim was to encourage younger generations to make a difference in their community and this is what he called "moral sense".

5.2.2 Examples of Mockbee's work

As explained earlier, Mockbee's main mission was to preserve the traditions of the context and the special identity of the southern American region, through building upon the community's truths and mythologies, which are not easily forgotten (See Figures 5.1 and 5.2). According to Ryker (1995), to date, the masterworks of both architects are the Barton and Cook Houses. Both houses are located in the South, where the land is charged with the mystery and historical legacy of its social and cultural traditions. It is argued that the life of the Southerner is so difficult to grasp objectively because of these traditions and their contradictions. This extended community has its strength and uniqueness, which made it necessary for Mockbee and his partner to question the value of and necessity for a regionally defined architecture.

There is a difference between the political boundaries and the region, as the former is easily set, while the latter "is a dialectical condition of place, complex and approximate, without distinct boundaries" (Ryker, 1995: 24-25). The region's identity could be found in the culture, which is influenced firstly by geographical elements like climate, water, vegetation, landform and soil. The transformation of such geography, in terms of creating agriculture, urban developments and economic exploitation, depends on the basic conditions of culture and community, and that is why Mockbee and Coker tried to emphasise culture in order to distinguish their regional practice.



Figure 5.1: An example of Mockbee's work, Shiloh Falls House, 1994 (Source: samuelmockbee.net, 2016)



Figure 5.2: Barton House, 1991 (Source: samuelmockbee.net, 2016)

In the Barton House, Mockbee-Coker's work is enriched with meanings based on personal narratives. Addressing the individual experience and perception right from the first impression, as one would approach the house along a winding drive through large, groomed oaks, dripping with Spanish moss. The traditional mode developed here creates a feeling of movement in and out of the trees as they lead the way to the shadowy figure of a home. The

actual volume of the house also reveals a traditional element adopted to a more modern idiom by the use of plinth to reveal a shaded and sheltered screen porch.

Mockbee states in one of his interviews that the Southerners' heritage is part of their character; therefore, in his practice as an architect/teacher/painter he always tries to combine and layer the personal concerns and interests of the Southerner. Even in the case of projects with very limited resources, Mockbee's challenge would be to create architecture with economic means, while not neglecting the spiritual life of the occupants. He was against purely profit architecture with the concern of what he calls "the day-to-day getting of money". "What is necessary is a willingness to seek solutions to poverty in its own context, not outside it. What is required is the replacement of abstract opinions with knowledge based on real human contact and edge personal realization applied to work" (Ryker, 1995: 99).

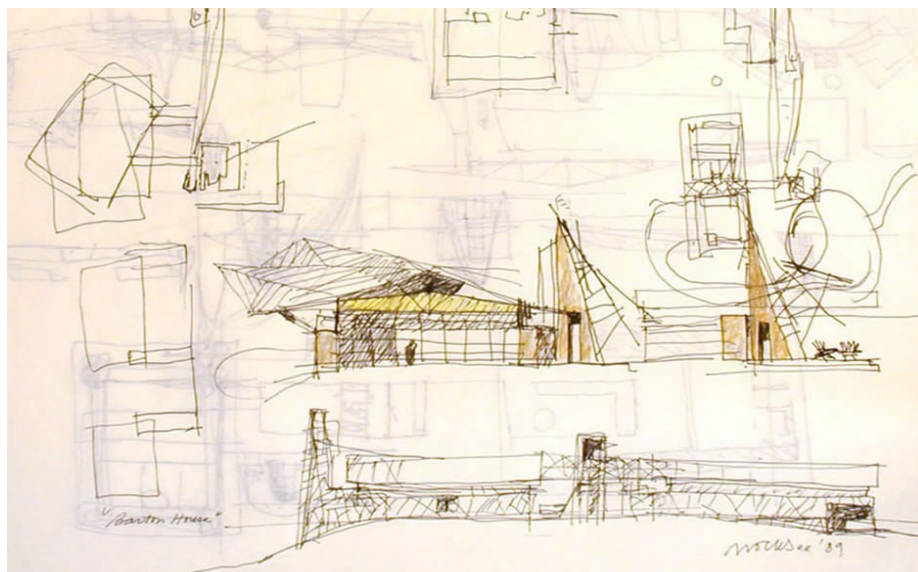


Figure 5.3: Mockbee's sketches for the Barton House (Source: samuelmockbee.net, 2016)

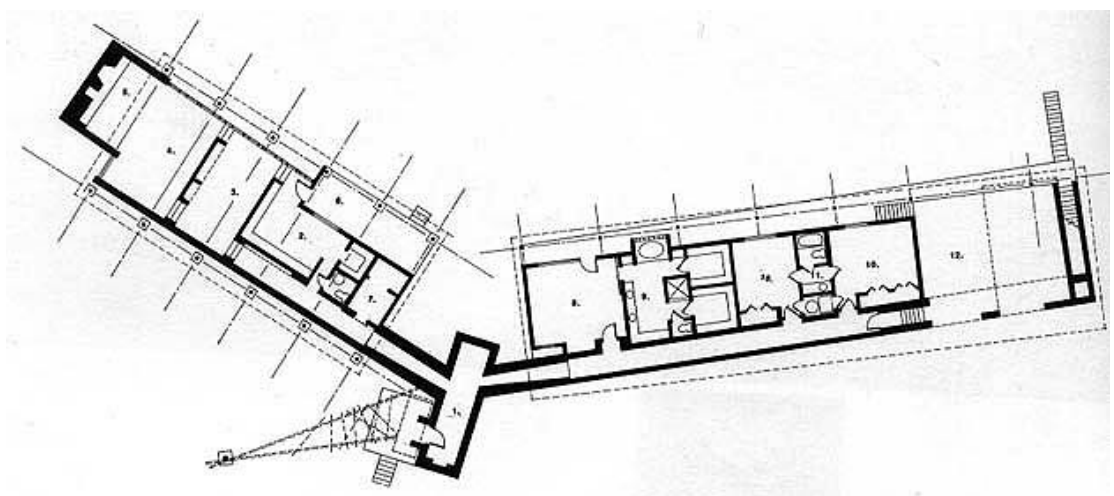


Figure 5.4: Barton House, floor plan (Source: samuelmockbee.net, 2016)

In the Barton House, (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4), the Mockbee-Coker design is a combination of what exists on the site and what is added, as a way of connecting local forms, the landscape and mythologies. The spatial arrangement and expression of the house is spread across the land in two directions, and the house is anchored in the middle by an entrance gallery. In order to create the experience of night and day, the tight and low halls leading from the entry gallery made of exposed concrete blocks are opposing wings creating darkness and light. The rooms in the wing cascading down the sloping land are bright and expansive during daytime. Every single detail is looked after, including the fireplace, which acts as a spiritual locator, held in womb-like rooms of protection, becoming instigators and collectors of memory. “In the Barton House this room provides an experience of density found in an otherwise expansively illuminated place” (Ryker, 1995: 35).

On the other hand, at night, the sleeping wing recollects the evening cool with views to the outdoors, through specially designed openings. Ryker argues, “Moving out and upwards along a switch-back walk one arrives at a screen porch, allowing visual and tacit exploration of the expansive experience of the countryside” (Ryker, 1995: 35).

The poetic view of the site’s trees and sky along the horizon registers an integration with the architecture, providing a natural vista of the countryside, as Mockbee-Coker’s work relies on the connection between architecture and the narrative drawn from Southern imagery and context, in a world influenced by the expanding global culture and manifestations.



Figure 5.5: Cook House, 1991 (Source: samuelmockbee.net, 2016)



Figure 5.6: The interior of Cook House, 1991 (Source: samuelmockbee.net, 2016)

Cook House (see Figures 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7) sits on a 340-acre farm, with views through a densely wooded landscape over hills. The main volume of the house is constructed out of concrete block walls with wood frame construction for the interior, and sheltered by an open-ended and floating metal roof, supported by steel columns. The house has various entrances and windows that make the rooms active places and full of life. The hearth represents an important part of the house – a place for collecting dreams and memories – as it is designed to be housed within the entrance, which is a massive volume of concrete block.

The whole spatial experience of the house is designed to create special emotional involvement throughout, with well-studied movement. Playing with the house volume, openings and views, the architects create narratives communicating a collective language that merges actions, culture and challenges. Even the selection of materials and structures creates space that serves as a guardian of and intercessor into a world of dreams and spirit. “It is a place for registering the changing phenomena of day and night, upon varied surfaces and rooms. Through its perceptible offering and one’s subconscious, the Cook House provides a constructed experience of the built world and passes beyond its physical confines” (Ryker, 1995: 47).

The main concept in Cook House is to create a feeling of protection, and this justifies the architects’ form selection. Influenced by the American’s nomadic culture, these forms responded to the prevalence in the rural South, of homes like the trailer, which is not seen as something temporary in the rural South.

It seems that Mockbee's paintings act as narratives that inspire his architecture, of which the Cook House is borne. In his paintings, he communicates local traditions and mythical visions. Through these paintings and sketches, Mockbee suggests a language that intends to reinterpret cultural and social values, challenging global influence and creating a sense of meaning in architecture. Mockbee believed that modern technology and contemporary culture alienated the people of the rural deep South, with its coexisting moral, social and political conditions.

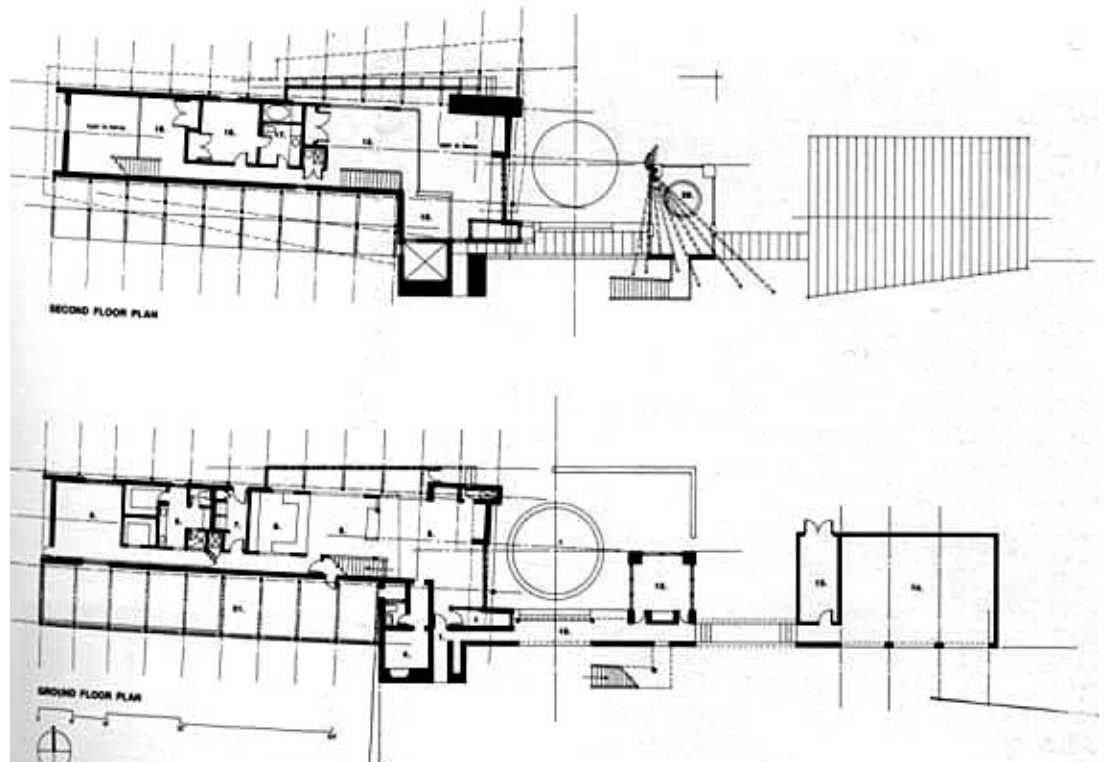


Figure 5.7: Cook House; floor plans (Source: samuelmockbee.net, 2016)

5.2.3 Discussion

Through those two examples of his work, Mockbee shows that he is keen to create architecture that acknowledges issues related to social responsibility, stewardship of land and nurturing of culture, which come into play against the more contemporary concerns of aesthetics and profit. He convinces his audience of the success of an architecture that is supposed to be based on time-bound knowledge and experience.

In both projects, the Barton and Cook Houses, the architects have developed an architectural language that combines meanings of local forms, the landscape and mythologies, and forms holding universal meanings. While concerned with the

appearance and visual pleasure, the design does not neglect the quality of experiencing place, site and the built environment. Through the embodiment of new interpretations of local traditions, the proposal developed new ways of limiting the influences of the expanding global culture on a local community's particularities.

It seems that there was an investigation of appropriate means to consider and focus on the complex reality of modern society, while trying to identify the boundaries of an architect's responsibilities. The main responsibility lies beyond the confines of economic exchange; it has to extend to society and its potential culture, to communicate thoughts and beliefs, and to challenge the current cultural conditions. Mockbee and his partner, show through different forms of their work, that the main responsibility of an architect is to construct, reconstruct and preserve a regional culture, especially if it is struggling to survive both in spite of and through greater universalisation, as is the case in the Arabian peninsula these days. Architectural practice has to offer a means of discovering, finding and nurturing the community in a multitude of ways. "Through the scrutiny and mediation of reality, Mockbee-Coker has found a voice as practitioners who refuse to ignore the conscience of their culture" (Ryker, 1995: 19). There is a choice to be made now, between an architecture of a significant quality and an architecture for a significant scale. Mockbee, throughout his work, represents a model of an architect who is more concerned with goodness than greatness, where there will be a true opportunity for pride, joy and dignity.

The new identity promoted by profit-driven architectural development all around the world, constructing new cities and urban developments, might be familiar and accepted in communities in North American cities, however, it should not overshadow regional cultures like it does in the case of Middle Eastern cities.

The cultural heritage and privilege of vernacular architecture nowadays challenges the perceptions and definition of architectural practice. One could clearly articulate Lefebvre's concepts of creating space (will be discussed further in Chapter 8) in Mockbee's work; perceived, conceived and lived. In the conceived space, the main concern is around the material side, with all mathematics, measurements and physicality of the space, while the perceived space is mainly about the movement of the body (human) and his/her gestures within it. Therefore, the balance between space as a combination of idealism and materialism is what the French thinker refers to when he explained the "lived space", which means all the inner subjectivity including experiences and feelings would add another dimension to the space and would result in what the space means.

Caring about the lived experience right from the initial stages of the design process was key in Mockbee's work. His main focus was providing the clients or users with a suitable home that does not alienate them. He was also keen to get the users' direct feedback

regarding their lived experience, which revealed his role as an architect in considering the users' perspectives within his designs.

The voice of the local inhabitants enabled them to realise their potential and aspirations. Consequently, this helps in addressing the limitation of architectural practice by viewing it as a process of interpretation that could be negotiated among different perspectives, meanings and objectives. In this respect, architectural form and visual appearance is not an autonomous invention, but an embodiment and integration of both a client lifestyle and an expression of culture, and this what could be called individuality of design solutions. As the father of socially responsible architecture, Mockbee always believed that architecture is a social art; a socially responsive activity. He was keen to provide everyone in the rural South with a warm space to eat, sleep, play and live in dignity. Furthermore, he always believed that the role of architectural education is crucial in developing architecture as a socially and culturally responsible, human-centred activity, as he was always into answering such questions as: How do we make architecture more humane? How do we increase architects' sensitivity towards users' perspectives?

5.3 Gournia by Hassan Fathy

This section introduces the work of the Egyptian architect, Hassan Fathy, focusing on the New Gournia project, which seems to offer a good overview of a user-oriented architectural approach.

Hassan Fathy, one of the well-known Arab architects of the twentieth century, had a clear vision in response to sustainability and social and cultural responsibility. His works and ideas had an influential role not only on the architecture of the Islamic world, but it extended as far as the western world as well.

When Le Corbusier announced in his book *Toward a New Architecture* (1931), that the new architecture is reflected by the use of steel, glass and reinforced concrete, which represented the new technologies that would lead to a better future, Fathy was one of the first few architects who broke ranks with modern architecture and found a new approach based on a concept of designing with reference to traditional architecture. He thought that humans, nature and architecture should coexist harmoniously in a balanced environment that reflects the personal habits and social and cultural norms. He was not against the new technologies, however, instead of changing the heritage of customs and habits to fit within the new buildings, he thought that the new technologies should be adopted according to social habits and needs.

5.3.1 New Gourna

According to Steele (1997: 61)⁷, the success of Fathy's use of mud brick as building material brought him to the attention of the Egyptian Department of Antiquities, who were about to relocate the village of Gourna and were looking for an inexpensive way to do it. Fathy viewed the project of Gourna as a chance to test his ideas and thoughts of how the traditional architecture could be revived (see Figures 5.8 and 5.9). His main aim was not only to minimise the project cost, which he succeeded in achieving through the use of local traditional material, and dispensing with the cost of labour by training the villagers to build their own houses. Furthermore, despite all the difficulties and challenges, he wanted to propose a model of urban design that could be implemented everywhere.

Fathy decided on the locations of all parts of the village on the basis of a number of factors, and most importantly, the cultural and social ones. The village included a large market located close to the railway station, at the main entrance, where many arched gateways were located. These gateways provided different circulation paths to people and goods, given the fact that Gourna is very close to the historical site of Luxor, and expecting visitors and tourists.



Figure 5.8: A view of Gourna (Source: martiamigo.com, 2016)

⁷ "The inhabitants of the existing village were tunnelling into the slopes near their houses and robbing the tombs. The artefacts that they found were then sold privately, or even worse, the gold was melted down and sold as crude ingots. After the complete removal and sale of a large stone bas-relief from one of the tombs came to the attention of the Department, it was decided to put an end to the destruction, and relocate the entire settlement. Fifty acres of agricultural land near the Nile was acquired from a local landowner by compulsory purchase as the site for the new village which was intended to rehouse seven thousand Gournii" (Steele, 1997: 61).

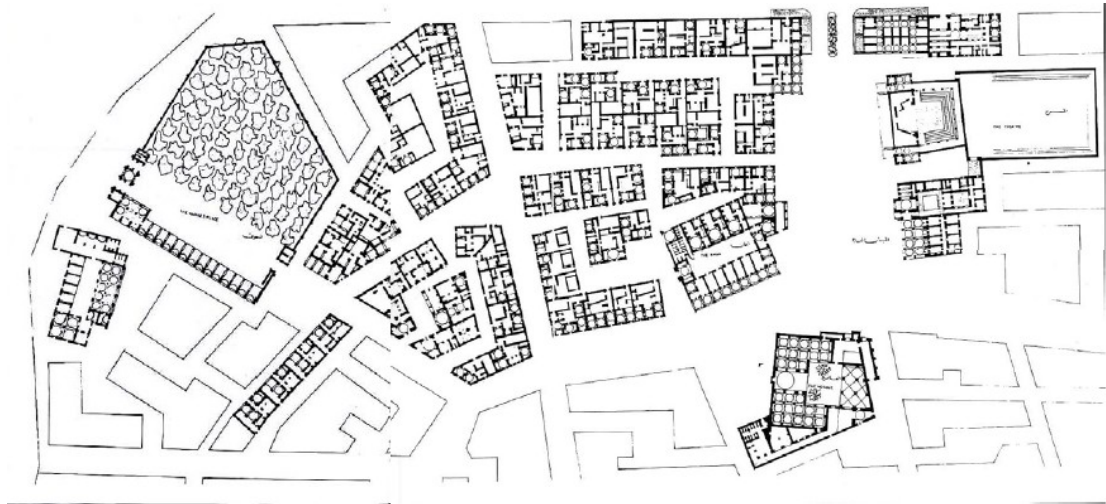


Figure 5.9: Fathy's proposed layout for new Gourna (Source: martiamigo.com, 2016)

Around the market square were the mosque, the khan, the village hall, theatre and the permanent exhibition hall. The village layout includes a small artificial lake and a park. Other public buildings are located away from the centre of the village like the boys' primary school, the girls' primary school, a little Coptic church, a Turkish bath, a police station and the dispensary.

The layout of the residential units is divided into four "quarters", each quarter being intended to house a different tribal group of old Gourna. With this division, Fathy tried to achieve the tribe grouping that made up the original population, by keeping this physical distinction in the new settlement. Moreover, the distribution of the tribal communities around the four quarters was not done randomly. Fathy had his analytical reasons for allocating the residential quarters to the tribes and he justifies this in his writings (Fathy, 1973: 70–71)

Fathy appreciates the difference between designing a village, a whole town, quarters, squares and streets. He illustrated that in his writings and lectures, where he explained his ideas and thoughts with regard to achieving what he called "beauty, civility and culture". His approach to the design of New Gourna was to focus on the needs of the users who would live in the houses he was designing. He proposed houses that varied in size according to the area of the original houses they were replacing, and to suit the people who would live in it. He was thinking carefully about the design of each house, in order to produce a village in which the playing modulations would have a demonstrable existence.

Building Gourna

In building Gourna, Fathy insisted on training the peasants to use the local materials and gave them the fullest information to be the “future do-it-yourself builders”. He was keen to supervise and participate in making every detail, starting from making the bricks and mortar, digging out the earth, quarrying and refining the lime, and including plumbing insulation and carting. In this approach, Fathy was not merely building a village, rather he was preparing a solid ground for the new life of the Gourniis. He was upgrading the peasants’ knowledge by teaching them a new craft, which they might then use to pursue a better income, instead of the illegal trading of antiquities. On the other hand, the architect was establishing a special connection between the individuals, the land and their new houses. Of course it was not going to be easy for the Gourniis to leave their old houses, however, Fathy’s strategy of involving people all the way from the early design stages to the construction, was intended to increase their sense of ownership and belonging to those houses. Fathy believed that if the village was to be built by its own future inhabitants, then they must be given the necessary skills. As he had to teach the Gourniis all the building processes and techniques, right up to furnishing their houses, his intention was to preserve the traditional design and furnishing, and modify it at the same time to suit the current situation and houses. Therefore, his role was mainly to supervise the project, while ensuring that his aims would be fulfilled. Fathy’s practice was different from other architects of his time. He was paying attention to the inhabitants’ individual concerns and personalities, which was certainly novel at that time. To enable him to review and supervise the work in Gourna in a continuous manner, Fathy built his own office/house, located to the centre of the neighbourhood. As Steele describes, “This charming house, which is still occasionally used by researchers coming to visit the village today, allowed the architect to be in the middle of the action during the construction process” (Steele, 1997: 64). (See Figures 5.10 and 5.11)

This proves that Fathy was not dealing with this project as an outsider, rather, he was involved in all aspects of the project and people, which then enabled him to justify his decisions and support his choices.

As a case to support Fathy’s position against the many parties who were opposing his method and claimed the failure of his approach in Gourna, Steele argues, “References have been made in the past to the architect’s failure to provide for running water in the houses here. He explained his concern about disrupting the pattern followed throughout rural Egypt of using a communal well. He was also aware of the subtle social effects that such a change would have, such as removing the only opportunity that young girls of marriageable age might have of being seen by the prospective husbands who gather to watch the parade to the well each day. Centralised water sources were placed, instead, in the middle of each neighborhood” (Steele, 1997: 65).

Fathy's approach is to pay attention to the details of the social life of the future inhabitants and to propose an architecture that is meaningful to those people and responds to their social needs and cultural values.



Figure 5.10: The architecture of the New Gourna
(Source: <http://www.touregypt.net/featuresstories/newgournaupdate.htm>)

The courtyard house

The main feature of the house in Gourna is the courtyard, which Fathy supported with a philosophical approach in his book *Architecture for the Poor* (1973). He argues that the sky for the Arabs is “the home of the holy”, which was one reason for having a courtyard in their dwelling, apart from the climatic and environmental response. So the courtyard then becomes the home owner's private piece of sky. The courtyard helps in creating and bringing serenity and holiness into the house, as it is associated with its relationship with the sky, as well as being an important element in surviving in the hot desert climate. Providing a sense of calmness and security like no other architectural feature, the courtyard succeeded in creating an intimate contact between the sky, the house and its inhabitants, in a way that would the feeling of spirituality at home. Thus, the courtyard is not only an architectural device to obtain physical comfort, nor is it only for obtaining privacy and protection, although one should admit that these elements are highly appreciated. However, as Fathy maintains, “It is, like the dome, part of a microcosm that parallels the order of the universe itself. In this symbolic pattern, the four sides of the courtyard represent the four columns that carry the dome of the sky” (Fathy, 1973: 57).

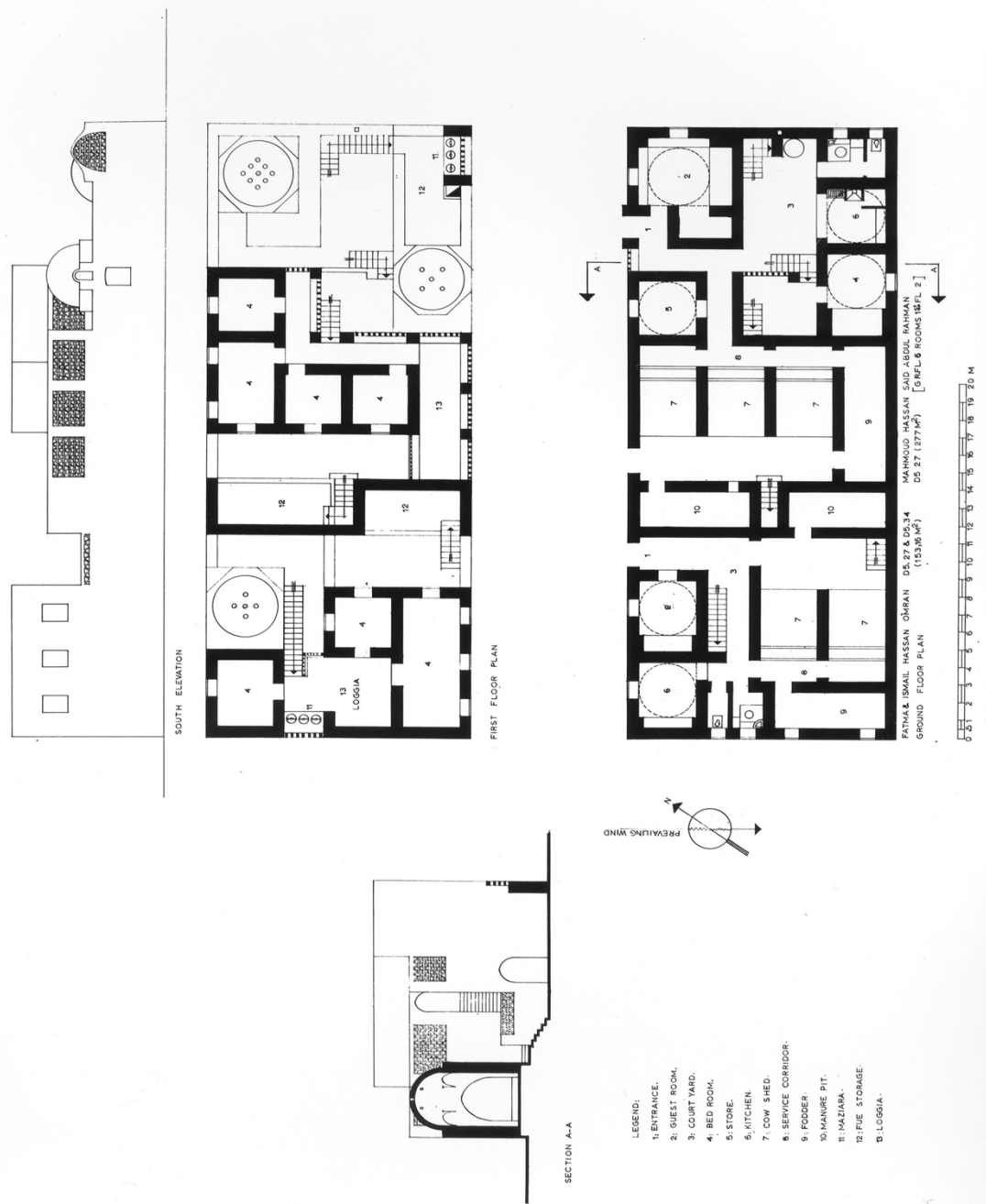


Figure 5.11: Typical layout of houses in Gournah, proposed by Fathy (Source: https://dome.mit.edu/bitstream/handle/1721.3/73780/157522_sv.jpg?sequence=2)

5.3.2 Discussion

According to Steele, Fathy was anxious and curious to see the 7,000 people in Gournah coping with their new housing and new life, where as any other architect would only be interested in achieving the functional distribution of spaces. Fathy was deep into offering the immaterial aspects – from social and cultural norms to individual thoughts and aspirations,

which then led to friendships between Fathy and the people of the village, as he declares in his personal diary.

Unfortunately, the project faced a number of difficulties, mainly due to two reasons. The first is that people did not want to leave their original houses, which was holding the secret of their income, as explained in the beginning of this analysis. The Gourniis were earning money from stealing artefacts, melting down the gold and reselling it, which was not easy to abandon. According to Steele, the second reason was due to the success of strong competitors in convincing the government to stop the project, which was, in their opinion, an inadequate architectural approach. However, even with the criticism he faced, Fathy was convinced that his approach was successful, and could be implemented globally. As he argues, “My findings could be applied to any future project, and at long last we should bridge that mysterious gulf – which swallows so many millions of pounds – between the plans of national planning authorities and the visible buildings that result from those plans” (Fathy, 1973: 113).

In traditional settlements, building is a communal activity, as is a wedding or a funeral, and this is what Fathy adopted in building the project of Gourna. He trained the local inhabitants to use the local material to build their own houses. On one hand, this succeeded in reducing the project budget and in teaching the Gourniis a new craft, which they could pursue for a better income. On the other hand, the whole process of self-building established a strong connection between the inhabitants and their new house, which is mainly what Fathy wanted to achieve. This is officially documented in a film produced by the World Monuments Fund in cooperation with Community Consortium after sixty years of building the village. In the film, there are interviews with the village inhabitants, who expressed their attachment and strong connection to their houses and place.

It seems that by approaching a project in the countryside, Fathy was challenging a dominant ideology at that time, which he argues, most professional architects and planners would adopt when dealing with rural communities. This ideology mainly suggests that these communities have nothing worth professional consideration. In this case, most architects would be interested in clients who would have high budgets and prefer dealing with contractors and concrete. On the contrary, Fathy asserts that one of the architect’s main responsibilities is to revive rural, agricultural communities with a strong response to its culture. One way of doing this is through proposing a design that harmonises with the natural environment and landscape, where architecture would be accommodated both visually and practically. With this approach, Fathy was aware that he was proposing a new architecture. His main aim was to begin to revive traditional architecture, and start an approach, which others might take up later and experiment with more. Such architecture would establish a cultural stronghold that could challenge the slide into meaningless architecture, which was gaining popularity around the world.

“You must start right from the beginning, letting your new buildings grow from the daily lives of the people who will live in them, shaping the houses to the measure of the people’s songs, weaving the pattern of a village as if on the village looms, mindful of the trees and the crops that will grow there, respectful to the skyline and humble before the seasons.” (Fathy, 1973: 45)

In general, Fathy’s philosophy was mainly based on critical attributes such as community architecture, sustainability and self-build. He was against international architecture, which is imported, with no connections to the local community, and focusing more on technology than humanism. Rather, Fathy was questioning the modernist solutions and its relevance to the eastern society. Furthermore, he was seeking more practical, affordable architectural solutions that would not alienate neither the people nor the site. Thus, he researched the traditions that became his inspiration afterwards. These were the main concept of Fathy’s book, *Architecture for the Poor*, first published in Arabic in 1969, in which he calls for the integration of nature and the industry.

One of the main ideas that Fathy expresses in his book, is the role of the architect, which had been hotly debated. In modernism, the architect acts as the inventor and the creator, who in an artistic way creates forms of huge scale, as sculptures or “machines for living” as stated by Le Corbusier (1931).

If architects are busy designing according to their tastes or aspirations, this will give results of alienation. As Fathy describes, “Every people that has produced architecture has evolved its own favorite forms, as peculiar to that people as its language, its dress, or its folklore” (Fathy, 1973: 19). Instead, he was trying to figure a common language that will transform a common modern architectural language into a social metaphor, evoking social responsibility, efficiency and availability.

Treating the users as an abstraction is the most common mistake that the architect may make, even well known names in the architecture world still fall victim to it nowadays. Fathy’s approach is very close to that of Bruce Allsopp, the British architect, historian and theorist, who strongly opposes such an approach in his book *Toward a Humane Architecture* (1974):

“People want architecture which is warm and comforting to the senses, architecture which is pleasant to live with, which caters for man as he is and not for man as an abstraction, architecture which is seen to be appropriate to its purpose, bearing in mind the habitual attitudes and responses of people who have been brought up in a living society, not processed in a laboratory” (Allsopp, 1974: 4).

In building the New Gurna housing project, Fathy’s approach was similar to postmodern architecture, in that it was both concerned with vernacularism, contextually,

metaphorically and symbolically. He, in the 1950s and 60s, proposed an architecture, which later on gained popularity internationally as a revival movement for earth architecture.

Fathy did not adopt his approach by coincidence; he undertook research and fieldtrips, looking for suitable building techniques and materials, which would combine both the social and the architectural realms. He was seriously thinking about the suitability of the existing materials and style – the Islamic-Arabic style – , which led him to building the courtyard house with mud and bricks.

Fathy demonstrated through practical examples, that typically adopting modern style without any adjustment, is a great loss on both levels – materially and immaterially – while resorting to learn from traditional techniques is more efficient and sustainable. He considered modernity to be a waste of money with no effective solution to such climatic and cultural problems.

5.4 General reflections on the case studies

In the two different architectural approaches discussed above, there are differences in frameworks and ideologies, however, all fit into the bigger picture of the immateriality in architecture debate. In this section there is an attempt to present a competitive approach that challenges the findings of all case studies against the main theoretical background of this thesis.

To start with, the idea of architecture for people was well established within the traditional settlements. During the early twentieth century, this approach had faded, especially with the emergence of the modern architectural movement. However, what Fathy came up with in the 1940s was similar to the architectural movements and tendencies witnessed during the 1970s, including sustainability and earth architecture. Later, during the 1980s, in the last decade of Fathy's life and career, the world witnessed the emergence of the community architecture movement and public participation, which then played a key role in the contemporary architecture debate.

Fathy's main focus was to establish a new architectural approach based on local traditional techniques, which contributed to improving housing and the living environment of the poor. In the middle of the twentieth century, he shared a similar philosophy to Mockbee, whose work existed after Fathy's death in the 1980s.

Through the analysis of the two case studies, one can articulate the findings supporting the main argument of this thesis. The first point that can be addressed is concerned with immateriality and human values in architecture. Fathy particularly focuses on the element of individuality, where even in housing projects with more 7,000 people living in them, he insisted on studying each unit separately. This method conflicts with that of Le Corbusier's

project in Marseille, France, which mainly dealt with building housing blocks – a method adopted worldwide. With his approach, Fathy not only proposed a new method of housing the poor in the third world, but rather one that could be adopted globally.

Fathy views architecture as a comprehensive art containing all kinds of human activities and sciences. His works combine theology, philosophy, history, sociology, sciences like physics and arts like music, dance and literature. Through his writings, Fathy integrates his vast knowledge in a way that helps him produce his architectural views.

Mockbee also asserts the importance of valuing humanity while practising architecture. He believes that all architects should expect and hope that their work will act in some sense as a servant for humanity, in a way that expresses the main aim of architecture: “to make a better world”. Mockbee also acknowledged the element of individuality in dealing with clients, which reveals the initial aspect that helps in understanding the user and the context. Mockbee says, “The role of architecture should be placed in relation to other issues of education, healthcare, transportation, recreation, law enforcement, employment, the environment, the collective community that impacts on the lives of both the rich and the poor” (Mockbee, 1998). Both architects, Fathy and Mockbee, perceived that the role of architecture is not be concerned with just practice on its own, but that architecture should be integrated with other knowledge and sciences, since its main aim is to house, create and maintain lives. Nonetheless, both of them viewed the related sciences from different points of view. Fathy appreciated more conceptual and intellectual knowledge, while Mockbee tended to be more oriented toward practicality and applied knowledge.

Reflecting on the time of his practice, Fathy was distinguished from the other modernist architects, as he believed that architecture needed to be compatible with new technology. In Fathy’s opinion, technology had to be adopted in a way that suited both the environment and the user, and should be controlled by common sense or unconsciousness. It should maintain the balance between the material and immaterial/spiritual aspects of the built environment.

Although Mockbee’s works exist in the postmodern era, which has a greater awareness of valuing heritage, community and culture, he also emphasised the danger of the influence of technology and economics in architecture. He argues that the professional challenge for an architect is to avoid being overwhelmed by the power of modern technology and economic affluence to the point of losing sight of the fact that people and place matter.

The importance of appreciating “architectural heritage” appeared as a common theme across both cases. Based on traditions, the social criteria could contribute in engaging individuals and gives the architect’s creativity a chance to be unleashed, while the architectural roots remain as an enrichment of experiences over the years.

On another level, Fathy’s intention was to awake the sense of cultural pride among his people, which would make them aware of and value their rich architectural heritage.

Similarly, Mockbee argues that if architecture is to be meaningful and inspire communities, academics and practitioners are required to be 'subversive' and remind students with the responsibility to shape the environment and break the status quo.

The works of both architects show their respective approaches to acknowledging the importance of the immaterial aspects, as well as the material ones in their designs.

Reflecting on the context of Bahrain

While the contexts of the two case studies are, to varying degrees, different to that of Bahrain, the approaches of Fathy and Mockbee, may offer a way forward to deal the country's two dilemmas: the loss of identity and heritage, and the great demands for housing provision.

Addressing Bahrain's Housing Needs (2013), an essay electronically published on *dilmunia.com*, the official weblog of the residential real estate "Dilmunia", discusses the current situation of housing in Bahrain.

According to estimates by Bahrain's Ministry of Works there are currently 53,000 Bahraini citizens on the Kingdom's social housing waiting lists while at the same time over 85% of the Bahraini population is estimated to earn less than BD 1,000 (£1,600) per month (*dilmunia.com*, 2013). Therefore, affordability is one of the key issues for the market profile. According to the same essay, to meet the growth expectations set out in the government's vision 2030 plan, Bahrain will need to build over 20,000 additional housing units over the next ten years.

In summary, involving people and taking both their material and immaterial needs into account is likely to lead to a better architecture that identifies and acknowledges the role of social and cultural appreciation in improving the people's way of life. Such an approach will be explored further through the fieldwork research in Chapters 6 and 7.

**Exploring Users' Spatial Experience
Beyond the Material**

Chapter 6: Exploring Users' Spatial Experience: Beyond the Material

6.1 Overview

This research focuses on immateriality in architecture, particularly on the subject of looking at spatial experience from the users' point of view, and how the cultural and social norms could contribute to creating better architectural outcomes that are more responsive to users' needs, aspirations and cultural values.

Using both the place of dwelling, as a private space, and public spaces in the city, this thesis attempts to look at the spatial experience of city dwellers with a view to considering how that experience relates to the culture in which these spaces exist. This will elaborate on the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience in particular, which is often either overlooked or naively assumed to be part of the design brief. This chapter presents the collected data and information from the fieldwork, using the methods explained earlier in Chapter 4. The chapter will start with a section that explains the process and outcomes of the pilot questionnaire. The second section will present the data collected from forty-four participants using semi-structured interviews, in which the participants contributed to informal conversations and freely explained their spatial experience, expressing their ideas and thoughts. The third section describes the observation study that acted as a preliminary stage before delving into the focus group discussion. This discussion came in a form of a workshop organised with a view to introducing participants to different ways of experiencing the city of Manama, through an organised walk and a facilitated group discussion. The workshop enabled the participants to be actively involved in the research through the expression of their thoughts, opinions and points of view regarding the city and its relationship with culture, heritage and architecture, as a way of reflecting on part of their daily life.

It is worth mentioning here that the Research Ethics Committee at the University for the Creative Arts has granted its approval to conduct the research work including the questionnaire, interviews and focus group discussion. The committee has considered the researcher's ethical self-evaluation for the proposed project and confirmed that the rationale and informed consent of participants is well detailed and meets the criteria for approval. The logistics of securely generating, storing and processing data both electronically and in hardcopy is ensured and follow the Data Protection Act, and all data used in this research were ethically obtained and legally permitted.

6.2 Pilot questionnaire

The research refers to Bahrain as the context of study, in which the theoretical basis will be explored and examined. This required the fieldwork to establish specific information and gather data to inform the development of the main argument. Three fieldwork trips have been conducted during the research project period. These trips have helped in establishing the research framework, which eventually informed the research methodology, data collection and analysis as well as developing the arguments. The first part of the fieldwork consisted of conducting a pilot interview.

A number of texts explain the importance of pilot work in undertaking qualitative and ethnographic approaches, prior to conducting the actual fieldwork. It offers a range of options regarding the design of research methods, uses and settings. The pilot is mainly used to refine the research instruments and methods, as well as highlighting gaps and avoiding unnecessary wastage in data collection.

As a part of the methodological approach, a trial questionnaire had been conducted in the summer of 2013, targeting a group of Bahraini people in order to gauge their awareness of their domestic spatial experience. Moreover, it was a tool that would assist in seeking identification of the immaterial descriptors that configure this experience from the users' point of view, since they are the ones who experience these descriptors. The intention also was to get some feedback, thoughts and opinions regarding the users' participation in "architecture" as a way of creating and consuming space. Any additional information about the users' needs, desires and aspirations was welcomed.

Prior to filling in the questionnaire, the participants were asked for their consent by way of a consent form. They were also informed of their rights as participants in this research.

The trial questionnaire is in four parts and each part consisted of a number of questions. Firstly, it started with asking the participant some general questions about their occupation, age group and type of dwelling. The second part asked about the meaning of *home* from the participant's point of view, while the third part looked into the issue of user involvement in the design process and tried to gauge their awareness, desire and acceptability of this particular matter. The fourth and last part of the questionnaire invited the participant to provide a description of the *ideal home*.

The questionnaire was formulated to test the users' spatial experience, however, this was not exactly obtained. Some of the participants found the questions quite difficult, long and time consuming, while others did not understand the questions, as they were not clear and precise enough. As some of the questions needed detailed answers, some participants thought that these questions were too vague.

Examples:

- What does your home mean to you?
- Does your home reflect your identity? How?

The pilot questionnaire process had some weaknesses, which is evident in the low level of engagement of the participants. Unfortunately, the participants found the questions quite difficult and ambiguous, and in order to answer them they required both time and detailed information. The participants preferred multiple choice questions rather than the open-ended qualitative questions. As a result, this suggests that the participants tended to talk about their spatial experience more than write about it. In fact, it is not easy to step back from such an experience and think about it, reflect on it, and write this whole process as a series of answers on a questionnaire.

It is worth mentioning that nineteen participants, among three different age groups were approached with trial questionnaires. Nine participants were aged between eighteen to twenty-five years, six were aged between twenty-six and forty years, and four were between forty-one and sixty-five years. These participants were living in either privately owned or rented dwellings.

The description of the participants' spatial experience and some material elements are likely to lead to some immaterial descriptors, for instance, when most of the participants, in describing their ideal home, said that they were seeking more spacious, well illuminated rooms and private swimming pools. This shows that behind these material descriptors, there are immaterial ones that can lead to describing the inhabitants' certain experiences.

On the level of participation and involvement in the design process and decision making, most of the people proved that they are fully aware of the importance of their involvement in creating their own spaces. Moreover, some of them called for participation and they wanted their voices to be heard.

The information gathered from the questionnaire clearly indicated that people were keen to talk about the issues rather than write down answers to predetermined questions. This led to the conclusion that the use of semi-structured interviews would be more engaging and relevant to the interviewees taking part in the study.

6.3 Users' experience of the domestic space: interviews

The second phase of fieldwork was divided into two parts: semi-structured interviews and

observations. During the trial questionnaire, a sense of the context of the work was obtained, which then led to some amendments and revision of the interview questions. This approach has broadened and deepened the scope of resources for this research. Consequently, the second fieldwork trip during the winter of 2014 included conducting semi-structured interviews with local Bahraini people, which acted as informal, free conversations taking narratives from the participants' everyday lives.

6.3.1 Overview

Before moving into the investigation, one needs to recognise what is *home*, and to realise the distinction between *house* and *home*. According to Lawson (2001), the former is an architectural concept and the latter has some "overtones of humanity".

For Read (1996), *home* is a mental construct and a focus of memory for which the physical size, nature and extent can vary from a plant in the garden to a room in the house, to an area of the city.

In his book *Returning to Nothing: The Meaning of Lost Places* (1996), Read introduces an interesting approach to define *home*, which he described as mentally constructed. He debates that *home* can be an area as big as half a city, it could be the inner city, a suburb, a house, a room in a house and even a single plant in a garden.

"Home' can be a focus of memory, a building, a way of mentally enclosing people of great importance, a reference point for widening circle of significant people and places and a means of protecting valued objects" (Read, 1996: 102)

As explained earlier in Chapter 4, this research could be thought of as an ethnographical study, as it is engaged with cultural and human aspects of people's lives. This study is interested in the spatial experience from the users' point of view, which asserts phenomenological concepts on the investigation. According to Bachelard (1992), *home* is the best model of space to be examined in such a case.

An artistic approach to explaining the notion of *home* was published as part of the exhibition at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, in December 2001. The exhibition presented a particular sense of "home", which is described as "an internal space defined by memories and the passing of time, by glimpsed intimacies and fugitive hopes of fulfilment and perfection. *Home* is also intended to recall the beauty of ordinary things, and to trace some of the connections between wholeness and fragmentation" (Hutchinson, 2002).

What is special about this approach is that it clearly addresses the spatial experience using total immaterial descriptors, like intimacy and security, memories and mind images, desires and fear. This will contribute to the understanding of experiencing spaces in general, and therefore, understanding architecture as the process of generating an outcome that will act as a container, catalyst and condenser for these descriptors.

“Reflection on home removes us from the concrete characteristics of a house and leads us towards an inner space that is fluid and luminal. We are faced with symbols and traces of intimate aspirations, subconscious desires, and culturally conditioned responses. A home, whether it is inhabited by one or many people, is fundamentally about interrelationships. It is continually shifting, either expanding into new forms of intelligence and generosity of collapsing into distance and fragmentation” (Hutchinson, 2002: 8).

The description of *home* given by Hutchinson (2002) is very important in addressing one of the research questions: “What are the immaterial and non-physical aspects that affect the users’ spatial experience?”

He describes *home* as the manifestation of personal notions, especially the ones that address a sense of security and intimacy. So it is the place that protects its inhabitants against the outer world. It also consists of the users’ thoughts and feelings, both conscious and unconscious. The author also explains that a *home* is not necessarily a *house*. He describes *home* as a complex condition that integrates many immaterial descriptors including memories and images, desires and fears, the past and the present. He continues to include that *home* is also the private place where inhabitants share rituals, personal rhythms, and common routines. It is interesting that Hutchinson argues “a home cannot be produced all at once; it has time dimension, a continuum, that is the gradual manifestation of a personal or shared response of the world” (Hutchinson, 2002: 8).

Through investigating *home* as part of the fieldwork, the study will be able to identify the immaterial aspects of the users’ spatial experience and in doing so, acknowledging that the immaterial part of architecture is as important as the material one. Thus, this should contribute to creating space that will generate thoughts and feelings, interfere in reliving the past, shaping present and influencing the future. It will also trace the intimate aspirations, subconscious desires and culturally conditioned responses.

6.3.2 Process description

The process involved thirty days of continuous work and meetings, in several locations around Bahrain. The interviews acted as an informal discussion, in Arabic, tackling various aspects of the interviewees' daily lives. The actual process of interviewing people required a few months of preparation, starting with reading about the use of such a method and familiarising oneself with the skills needed. Subsequent to the reading period, preparatory work on the ground was needed, like contacting prospective participants and making arrangements to meet them. Each face-to-face interview started with personal introductions, then the introduction of the research and getting the participant's consent before starting the conversation. The average time for each interview is around one hour, however, some of them lasted for almost two hours, while some did not exceed thirty minutes. The meetings took place in the participants' place of dwelling. All the interviews were audio recorded, after getting the participants' consent. During some of the interviews, notes were taken and quick sketches of the dwelling layout were drawn.

The use of semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in terms of formulating the questions and their sequence, for example, changing the sequence of the questions according to the flow of the conversation. This procedure is exactly the opposite of that using a questionnaire where all participants have to answer the exact same set of questions in the same sequence. The interviews also afforded the researcher the opportunity to explain the questions in a way that would suit the participant. This is something that made it easier for the interviewees to express themselves, reflect and engage more in the discussion around their home experience.

Each interview acts as a source of different information and material unique to a particular participant. In order to carry out a thorough analysis, the interviews were first transcribed into Arabic and then translated into English. The next step was to compile all the information gathered, and to cross-reference it within the participants' responses and the written literature. During the analysis, the main question to be answered was "What do the data and information tell us in response to the main research questions?" This will be explored further in the data analysis Chapter.

A sample of the questions that formed the basis of the semi-structured interview is shown in Appendix A.

It is worth mentioning that the people I was in contact with were very resourceful and helpful, to the extent that they were willing to extend my networks by introducing me to some of their friends and relatives. Although some had reacted to me with doubt as to how the notion of immateriality could possibly be acknowledged within architectural practice, this reinforced my research aims, and the specific value in doing the research. All information and recourses obtained through the semi-structured interviews will be discussed further in Chapter 7. Examples of interview

transcripts are shown in Appendix B.

6.4 Users' experience of the social/public space: observation

Observation is a part of ethnographic fieldwork, which is mostly used to study native cultures and lifestyles. It is mainly used to study dynamic situations and to preserve the interrelationship of a person and a situation. In this project, two types of observation were used: the non-participant observation and the participant observation. In the former, the researcher (observer) is an eavesdropper who attempts to observe people without interacting with them, while in the latter the researcher is actively involved as a member of a focus group discussion.

Firstly, this section will explain the non-participant observation. The process included taking notes and sketching anything interesting that happened, still photographs and videos were taken and recorded, including noting down any ideas or feelings about the situation. The researcher was open to all possibilities and was fairly aware of the observational and interpretive skills required, and this technique was really useful, particularly in the thesis context.

According to Bryman (2012) "one of the most striking developments in qualitative research in recent years has been the growth of interest in the use of visual material" (2012: 455), which he refers to as visual ethnography. Within this subject, there is an explanation of the role of using photographs that are research driven and concerned with meanings and significance. Along with the use of sketching and note taking, the observation carried out as part of this research has been informed by the extensive process of taking photographs, which acted as one of the main components of the fieldwork and a source of data.

This observation research is interested in the way people in Bahrain experience their public spaces. Two types of public spaces were observed, the Manama *souq* and the Bahrain City Centre shopping mall (BCC). This choice was made based on the interest in exploring the impact of cultural and social change on the way Bahrainis experience the changing urban spaces. The introduction of shopping malls as an alternative to the traditional street market is of particular interest.

The observation carried out was unstructured, but it was informed by the research questions, aim and objectives. Notes were taken to record what describes the environment and the users, as it was considered as open-ended narrative data. This was done using either written notes or tape recording of comments. This processes also included describing the activities and interactions that occurred during the observation period.

As social life is normally complex and in constant flux, with multiple dimensions, and its

activities are diffuse, non-coherent and excessive, photography acted as a good method to capture the scene and get a sense of the users' spatial experience that could be described later within the analysis phase. An example of a collection of photographs transcript is shown in Appendix F.

The first part of the non-participant observation took place in Manama market, *souq*, at a location close to Bab al Bahrain, between the old and the new parts of the city. The process took around one hour of being in the same place, followed by a walk around the city alleyways taking photographs. The people's reactions to such behaviour varied, from those who were seemingly not distracted by the camera, to those who seemed uncomfortable with being photographed. The action of tape recording the description of the city while walking was also looked upon as being strange and curious.

The second part of the observation that took place within the shopping mall was very different. The observation location was within a coffee shop seating area, where large of part of the mall was within view. People again found it strange to see a researcher tacking notes, sketching and taking photographs of the whole setting. As a cultural matter, people also did not like to be photographed.

It is worth mentioning that street life is not definite and static, nor fixed and simply organised matter that is easily observed, but continuously changing. Therefore, it was not easy to understanding the immateriality of the users' spatial experience within the settings observed.

The second observation process undertaken with the participants, was conducted during the third and final fieldwork trip, along with the focus group workshop, which consisted of a walk through the old city of Manama, followed by a facilitated talk and round table discussion. The observation was unstructured and participants were asked to record anything specific that they noticed during the walk, by noting it down or taking photographs. This process was conducted live during the workshop and was followed up with a screening of the video recorded during the walk. This acted as a useful document to refer to for more detailed information. These notations served as a vital recording device, which helped in designing the coding system later on in the analysis phase, to be discussed further in Chapter 8. (See Figures 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3, and Appendix F)



Figure 6.1: Bab al Bahrain, point of observation (Source: Author)



Figure 6.2: Part of Manama souq where the observation took place (Source: Author)

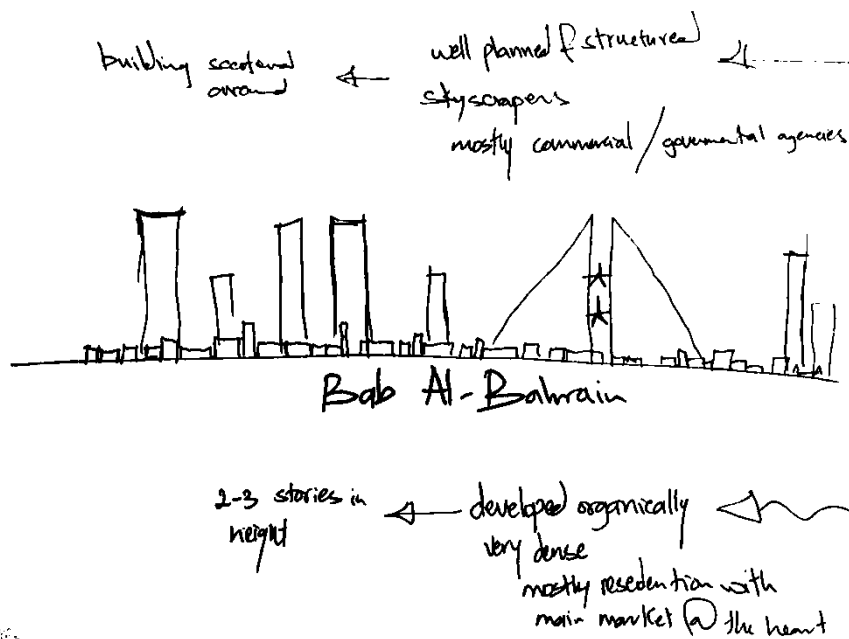


Figure 6.3: Sample of sketches during the observation of the Manama street life (Source: Author)

6.5 Social/public space: workshop

In order to enable Manama dwellers to see Manama in a different way, a workshop consisting of an guided walk, followed by a talk was organised. The workshop enabled people to experience their city while trying to explore what Manama means to them. What do they find important about it? What ideas/thoughts/feelings come to their mind when walking in Manama? What would they miss about Manama if it did not exist anymore? What would they miss about it if they were away from Manama? What's special about Manama? Is it just about buildings, roads and malls or is it about something else? If Manama is important to them, why is it so?

Throughout the workshop there was an opportunity to reconsider, recognise and rethink the everyday experience of the city by making a link between the city, its architecture, its people and their culture. It's a different way of experiencing the city and its heritage. It could be a means to reclaiming Manama for its citizens, dwellers and admirers.

6.5.1 Aims of the workshop

This workshop introduced participants to different ways of experiencing the city. It provides the opportunity for them to be actively involved in the research through the expression of their thoughts, opinions and points of view regarding the city as part of their daily life. Furthermore, it helps in establishing a new way of describing the city as a lived experience, which is full of life and energy and which engenders emotions. Hopefully, the workshop will help to generate greater awareness among people regarding the importance of appreciating the city, its culture and heritage.

6.5.2 Structure of the workshop

The workshop took place over two days: Manamawalk on 21st February 2015 and Manamataalk on 25th February 2015. Firstly, around 6th February a call through Instagram was opened up for participants to enrol (see Figure 6.4). The enrolled participants were sent brief information about the workshop and a short questionnaire asking non-specific personal information (gender/age group/town or city where they live/how often they visit Manama). After obtaining participants' consent, the walk and the talk were audio and video recorded.

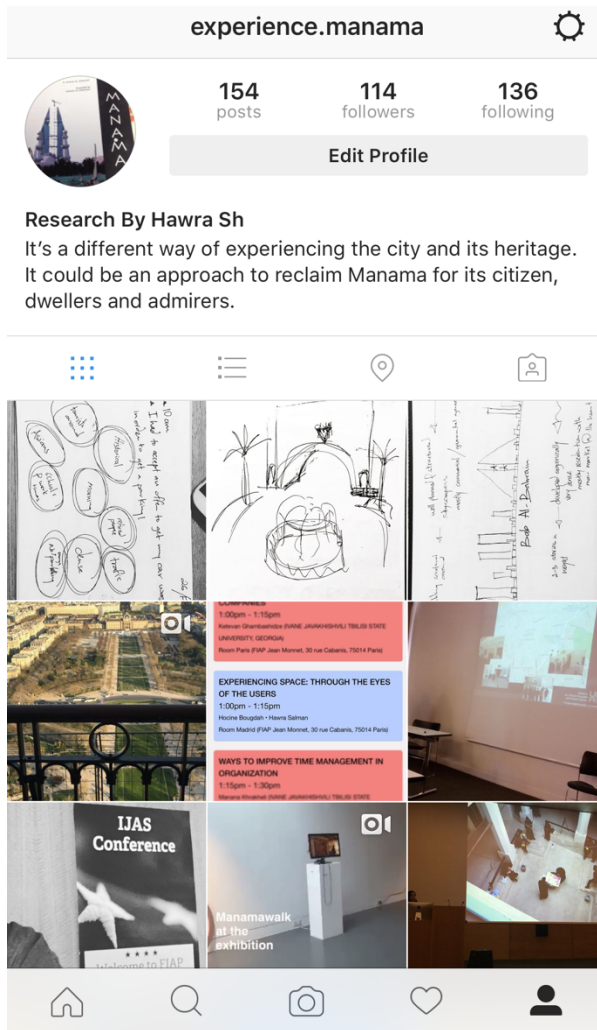


Figure 6.4: Snapshot of the research project *Instagram* page

6.5.2.1 Manamawalk

The participants met the researcher at a prearranged meeting point to be briefed verbally and to get their consent for their collaboration before the start of the walk. Sketchbooks and pens were provided in case they were needed, and the participants were highly encouraged to bring their own cameras. The walk followed a predefined route around old Manama (see Figures 6.5 and 6.6). The party stopped at the following points:

1. Khalaf House as the starting point
2. Sacred Heart Church and School
3. Mo'men Mosque
4. Synagogue, Jewish Temple
5. Commercial quarter/*souq*
6. Hindu Temple
7. Bab al Bahrain

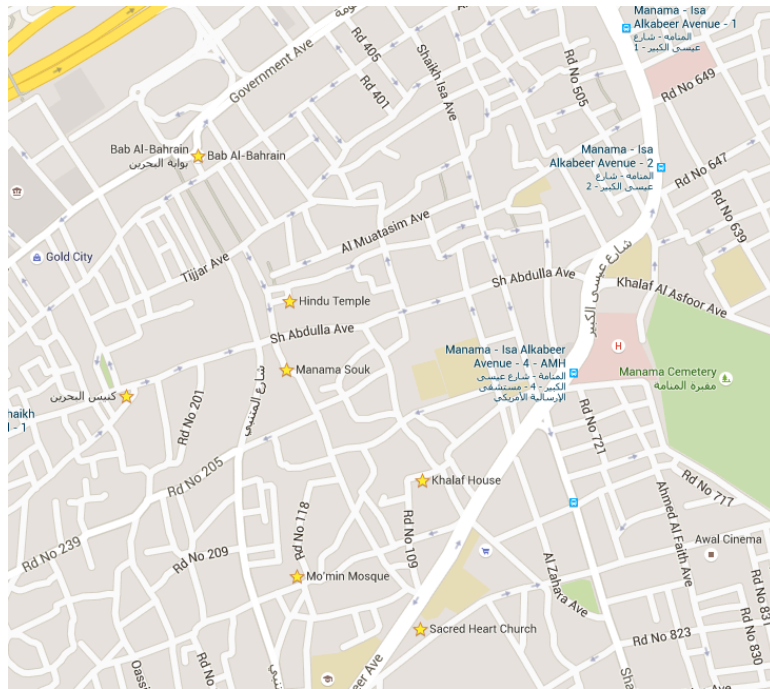


Figure 6.5: Map of the city where Manamawalk took place (Source: Author)



Figure 6.6: The predefined route around the old city of Manama (Source: Author)

The walk took around two hours, from about 10 am till 12 pm, and the weather was dry and sunny with air temperature recorded around 20° C. The group started from Khalaf House within the residential quarters and finished at Bab al Bahrain at the heart of the commercial quarters within the old city of Manama. The participants were taking photographs, sketching, taking notes, looking around and discussing various aspects relating to the city. Within the residential quarters the street life was quiet despite the density of the built-up area. The old quarters consist mainly of houses, which are normally of one or two storeys in height and attached to one another so that sometimes one cannot distinguish the boundaries between adjacent houses. Each neighbourhood has a small mosque, named after the head of the family, like Khalaf mosque and Dhaif mosque, which we passed by during the walk. The alleyways are very narrow within this old part of the city; in some cases, it is not even wide enough for a car to pass. While walking within these quarters there were smells of typical Bahraini food coming from some of the houses, while other houses looked abandoned with broken glass windows and generally dilapidated appearance. Most of the old buildings in the old city were built using stones and mud; the predominant colours being shades of beige and grey.

Throughout the walk it was noticeable that in some parts of the old city there were wider alleyways and taller buildings reaching three or four storeys, where small retail outlets, tailors, laundry shops and the like can be found. These quarters seem to have had more additions that make them look newer compared to others. The participants enjoyed looking at the traditional architectural features of the city, including the ornamentations around the doors and windows, *mashrabiyyas*, mosque façades and other decorative elements. They also enjoyed the special sounds of *athan* (call for prayer) and the reading of scripts from the holy Quran coming from different mosques and *ma'tams*. Such sounds are typical of the old city, and they are not always heard in other Bahraini cities, especially the contemporary ones.

After walking through the narrow alleyways we reached the edge of the *souq*, the traditional market, where the participants immediately noticed the difference in terms of people's movements and life activities. The *souq* was full of local people and foreigners, from visitors, workers, and the locals. The variety of goods displayed at the frontage of each store created a unique commercial integration, along with the attitude of the sellers who verbally motivated people to come in and have a closer look. The view of the textiles, spices, electronics, cosmetics and many other goods displayed along both sides of the passages created a special atmosphere in the space. Some of the participants stated that this had reminded them of their childhood, when they used to go there with their mothers to buy their school uniform.

During the walk within the *souq*, we passed by the *qahwa*, which is the traditional version of what we nowadays call a coffee shop. The *qahwa* is still functioning well and serves a reasonable number of clients, although its traditional main role faded along with new technology and the new

lifestyle. The *qahwa* used to be the main place where people socialised and discussed business and politics and social news. It acted as the media medium, especially before the invention of the radio and the television later on. However, today, the *qahwa* is mainly a place to experience the traditional sense of gathering and traditional food, which still attracts local residents and tourists alike.

Gradually we got closer to Bab al Bahrain, which was our last point of the walk, and one of the most important monuments within the old city of Manama. There is a long history behind this monument, it was the main gate of Manama, the capital city, at the edge of the sea, where Manama harbour existed. It was the place where people exchanged goods coming mainly from Persia and India; it welcomed travellers as well as pearl divers. Today, this point acts as the gateway between the old part and the new contemporary part of the city with its tall skyscrapers, built on reclaimed land around the area of the old harbour and beyond. The participants enjoyed discussing lots of aspects related to the old and new Manama especially around the renovated part of the *souq* just before Bab al Bahrain. This part has the sense of traditional architectural style with ornamentations and arches, and even the goods displayed were related to the old lifestyle. However, the existence of a shopping mall that housed some of the shops was questioned. Although the exterior design of the mall goes well with the traditional architectural style of the city and the renovated part, the atmosphere of the mall itself seemed alien to the whole scheme of the old city.

In summary, during the walk, the participants experienced the city in a way that may be different to their everyday experience, as they were taking in every detail, including the sounds, patterns and even walked through rarely used, narrow alleyways. The main idea behind the walk was to try to get the participants to enjoy the walk and feel the spirit of the city without being disturbed by the activities in the street. The participants found that the experience of an organised walk was a special one. Even those who actually lived in Manama or were very familiar with the city, were surprised by what their senses had experienced during the walk, which normally goes un-noticed during their every day experience of the city. It was interesting that even members of the public

who were not taking part in the walk and the locals showed interest and curiosity towards the walk and made complimentary comments (see Figure 6.7).



Figure 6.7: A local passer-by in conversation with the *Manamawalk* participants (Source: Author)

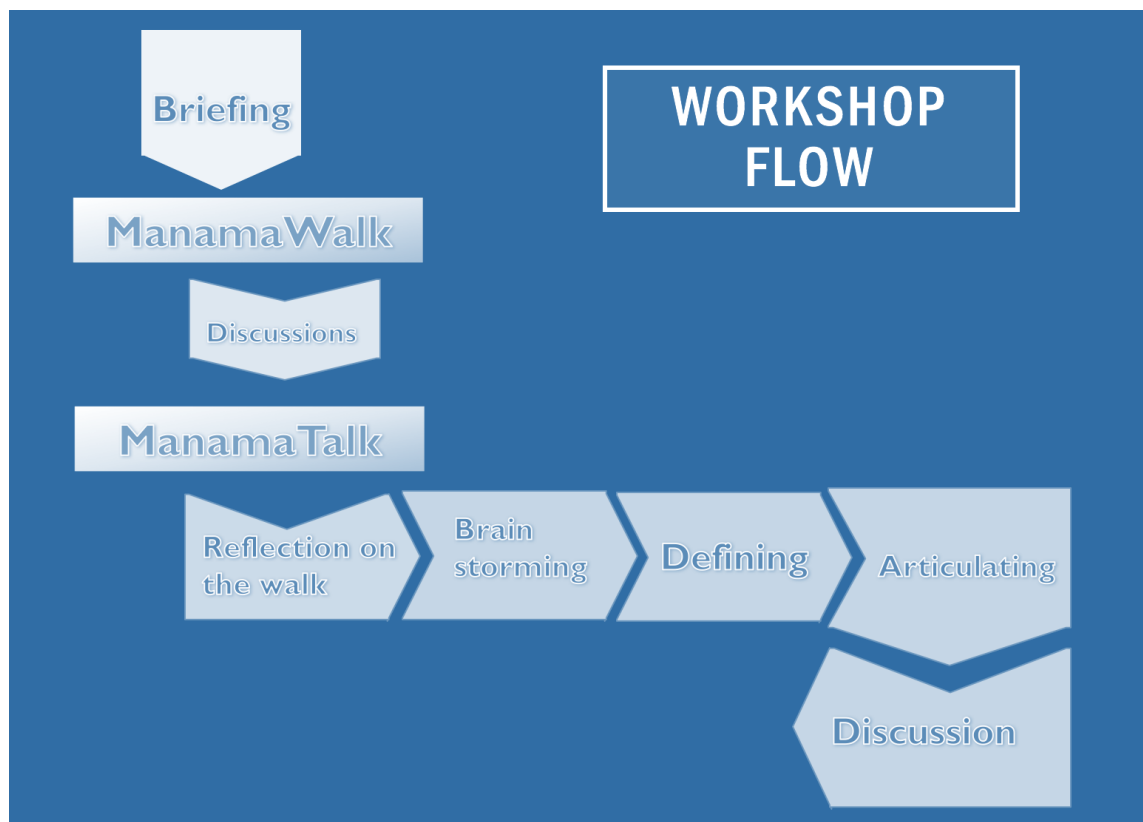


Figure 6.8: A diagram showing the two-day workshop flow (Source: Author)

6.5.2.2 Manamataalk

The talk took place on Wednesday 25 of February 2015. The participants were invited to take part in a round table discussion where they were encouraged to reflect on their experience of the walk and offer their views and opinions.

Manamataalk started with welcoming the participants, offering refreshments and drinks and casually seeking feedback in regards to Manamawalk. As a way of refreshing their memory, the organiser asked the participants about what they thought about the walk they had had? Did it meet their expectations? Did they enjoy it or not? The responses were positive, with most of the participants feeling that the walk was interesting and enjoyable, in part because they had had the chance to visit and learn about places they had never been to before.

During the day, the organiser facilitated three exercises, starting with a photograph exercise, where the participants were encouraged to bring a photograph (physical or mental image), which represented what Manama meant to them. Every participant contributed to the discussion and the session lasted for almost half an hour. The second exercise was the sticky notes exercise, where the organiser presented four terms on an A1 pad, and then the participants were asked to associate each term with three key words, and to justify their choices. The four terms used were: city, culture, heritage and architecture (see Figure 6.8). The last exercise was a short evaluation questionnaire administered at the end of the workshop. The workshop ended with the distribution of the certificates of attendance to the participants.

Participants who could not attend the walk during Day 1, but were able to attend Day 2 were welcomed.

The discussion attempted to explore the relationship between the city, its users, its architecture, culture and heritage as a way of understanding the users' experience of the urban space, in the context of Bahrain.

Given that Bahrain is part of the Islamic world, it is inevitable that the discussion was extended to the context of Islamic architecture and how it is informed by religious teachings as well as having an impact on people's way of life. How the role of architecture in the traditional city extended beyond the material function to immaterial aspects of everyday life, which were highly appreciated, as the socio-cultural values of the people and the architecture, were interrelated.

The discussion extended to consider the major economic and social transformation that cities in the Gulf region in general have been through during the last three decades, which impacted on their design and the way the urban space is experienced.

Sensory and memory based experiences of each participant were discussed. Everyone explained how they looked at Manama and what image of it they would store in their minds, and it was notable how the answers varied from one to another depending on their backgrounds, culture and social context.



Figure 6.9: Part of the discussion during *Manamatalk* (Source: Author)

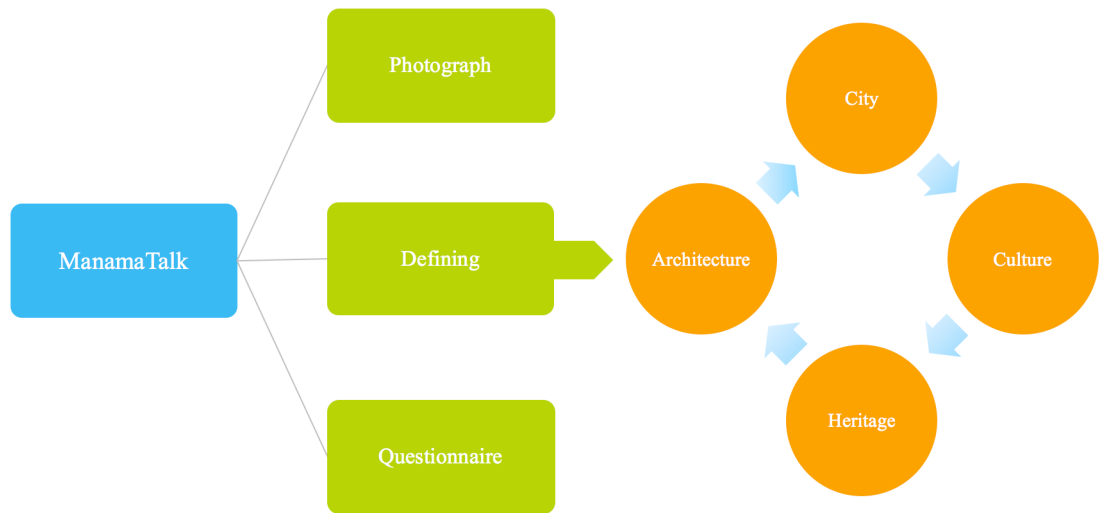


Figure 6.10: A diagram showing the flow of discussion in *Manamataalk* (Source: Author)

6.5.2.2.1 The first exercise: photographs

During the Manamataalk round table discussion, on Wednesday 25 of February 2015, all participants were asked beforehand to bring a photograph that represented what Manama meant to them. It was preferred that the photograph be one that had been taken during the Manamawalk on Saturday 21st of February 2015. On the day, some of the participants brought a printed photograph, while others shared theirs from their phones or discussed their mental image of Manama.



Figure 6.11: The organiser's chosen photograph, answering the question: What does Manama mean to you? (Source: Author)

The organiser started by showing her chosen photograph and justifying her selection, arguing that where the photograph is taken represents a significant point in Manama (see Figures 6.11). That particular point, Bab al Bahrain, presents evidence of the past, the present and the future. The zone, which has been through major changes and transformation throughout history, now defines the point between the old city of Manama, with its dense urban fabric, vernacular architecture, and human-scale buildings and life, and the new part of Manama, which is built on reclaimed land, where towers and high rise buildings stand. In addition to that, what also makes this photograph represent what Manama means to the organiser is the presence of the participants who took part in Manamawalk, arguing that this became an important part of the organiser’s memory especially when she thinks about Manama.

Participant 1 discussed the imagined picture of Manama she stored in her mind, which refers back to her childhood when she used to visit Manama textile market with her mother to buy her school uniform. Such a nostalgic experience explains the relationship between the participant’s childhood and the city of Manama, although she does not live in Manama and neither do any of her relatives. The participant declared that her visits to Manama are all about shopping, and when she says Manama, she primarily thinks of the *souq* (market), textiles and childhood memories (see Figure 6.11).



Figure 6.12: Part of the textiles market that Participant 1 talked about (Source: Author 2015)

Participant 2 shared a phone photo of Halwachi Sweets store (see Figure 6.13), which sells traditional handmade local sweets, although there are numerous other stores that sell the same traditional sweets, this store is somehow different. It is the only branch that exists in Manama and it is now more than fifty years old. The specialist food that this store sells reminds the participant of Manama. Therefore, the memorial experience here merged with a sensational one, attaching the taste and smell of the food to configure the meaning of the place to this participant.



Figure 6.13: The photograph that represents what Manama means to Participant 2 (Source: Participant 2)



Figure 6.14: Photo showing the renovated part of the old market, which Participant 3 described (Source: Author)

Participant 3 explained an imagined image of the renovated part of the *souq*, located close to Bab al Bahrain, where our last point of Manamawalk was (see Figure 6.14). She argued that this zone of the city acts as a mixture of heritage and modernism at the same time. “You can see all types of people there, Bahrainis, Indians, tourists”. As it combines the old and the new parts of Manama, the diversity of retail shops adding richness to the place, one can experience many different types of shops – high and middle range. In this particular location the experience is really rich and varied and it’s what one can call “all in one”.

Participant 4 talked about the historical houses as a representation of what Manama means to her. The participant thought that those houses take us back and encourage us to look at history and culture and think of a way of preserving it. Khalaf House (where Manamataalk was held) is an example of how to preserve culture. Despite the temptations of globalisation, the participant thinks that the new generation is interested in preserving history, heritage, culture and their identity, which she felt was a very important thing.



Figure 6.15: Photographs that represent what Manama means to Participants 5 and 6 (Source: Participants 5 and 6)

Participants 5 and 6 (brother and sister) wanted to join us on our walk, but as they arrived late, we had already left. However, they had done the walk on their own; in fact, they met the group on Manamawalk, but they did not interfere (the organiser did not recognise the participants while they were walking, as they had not met before). Both participants presented photos of Khalaf House (where the talk was held), and they started to explain how they were amazed by the value of architecture and detailing, as that was the first time they had seen such an architectural style, especially such an interior (see Figure 6.15). Both participants were from an Indian background,

both were born in Bahrain and had spent more than twenty years there, however, they had never been exposed to such a house. They felt that it was an amazing place, the basic colours of the surfaces, the wood details, the coloured glass and everything, including the renovation touches added to the house, such as the light fixtures.

Participant 6 thanked the organiser for giving her the chance to be introduced to such a place, as she usually only ever visited the commercial part of Manama, Bab al Bahrain and the *souq* (market), so she thought it was a good opportunity to see the other side of Manama. The participant also thought that Bahrain looks after its heritage more than the other GCC⁸ countries, where they would demolish buildings with great heritage in order to build a shopping mall or a high-rise building instead. She thought that Bahrain has a part that moves with the world's progress, for example, with its particular skyline and high-rise buildings, but at the same time it keeps its heritage and culture, allowing this architecture to tell us a lot about the type of people who lived here and their lifestyles.

Participant 7 maintained that the first time she had been introduced properly to Manama was when she worked for the Ministry of Culture, and when she thinks of Manama she remembers the old houses, their layout and every single detail. The renovated and the non-renovated houses were amazing, but the participant thought that the non-renovated houses are more beautiful than the renovated ones, as they still have the same old spirit. The participant thought that with Khalaf House, for instance, one could see the fancy side of renovation and fancy furniture, which does not go well with the atmosphere, and which one might be afraid of touching or using as they looked like museum pieces.

⁸ Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, and Oman. The GCC was established in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in May 1981. (Britannica.com)



Figure 6.16: Photo showing the narrow alleys in the old city of Manama (Source: Author)

Participant 8 did not join our Manamawalk, however, she shared with us her the experience that she always remembers about Manama, which is about the alleyways and the awkward flow of pedestrians and cars. The participant said, “Manama was not designed for cars”. (See Figure 6.16)

Participant 9 (who comes from a Sri Lankan background) thought that if he were to choose an image that represents what Manama means to him, he would not choose an image from the ones he took during Manamawalk. Manama is represented in the participant’s mind by the main highway, modern buildings and cars. The participant thought that Manama used to be represented by the alleyways and traditional buildings and houses, but not anymore, while asserting that he was trying to be objective. The participant said that he liked the traditional vernacular architecture, but that he would distance himself and look at the city and say, “I will go away from Bahrain and some day I might think about Manama, and what will come back into my mind is the main highway and the building with Bab al Bahrain around it probably, but these old buildings, alleyways and walkways are not the ones that represent it (the city)”.

The nine participants introduced interesting and different dimensions into experiencing the city, drawing on their own backgrounds and interpretations, and the discussion facilitated an understanding of such experiences. However, these experiences were not limited to those dimensions only. For instance, the participants did not introduce a religious or spiritual dimension, which in fact, is a vital one when talking about Manama in particular.

“The cities are also the spaces where religious belief is performed and where the architecture of belief (particularly in the form of places of worship) frequently dominates.” (Stevenson, 2012: 5)

The participants were encouraged to reflect on the above quote, and describe how it could facilitate the discussion about Manama’s spaces, flow, patterns, circulation and rhythm. Participants described the identity of Manama through a religious dimension and the practices of the holy months of Ramadan and Ashura (Fuccaro, 2000).

6.5.2.2.2 The second exercise: sticky notes

As a way of an indirectly reflecting on Manamawalk, and in order to facilitate a discussion around the meaning of city, culture, heritage and architecture, this exercise asked the participants to define each one of the posted terms with three keywords. The participants related their ideas, opinions and thoughts in an engaging debate.

How can you define “City” in three words, with brief justification?

City



Figure 6.17: Part of the discussion about the definition of the city in Manamataalk (Source: Author)

Organiser:

1. Life
2. Interaction
3. People

Participant 9:

1. Built-up
2. Crowded
3. Noisy

“Negative experience, lots of buildings, lots of cars, rural areas are more preferred. In my mind, the place we call city is always built up (a lot of buildings), secondly it is crowded as there are a lot of people together in this small area, and thirdly it is noisy, with the sound of cars and people and so on.”

Participant 8:

1. Fancy
2. Modern
3. Big

“Lots of people, and area-wise city is much bigger compared to villages. When I think about the city I always think about the modern type of architecture, nothing really giving the feeling of tradition or being old.”

Participant 7:

1. People
2. Activities
3. Roads

“Without people there will be no city, activities are what will define the city, city perceived as a social interaction and the success of the city mainly comes from the success of its social side, the city as a lived experience.”

Participant 6:

1. People
2. Development
3. Skyline spacing

“In the rural areas, the buildings are lower, two or three stories, while in the city skyline there are lots of towers and skyscrapers that appears in the air photos. Cities are becoming bigger and bigger these days and lots of people are coming in.”

Participant 5:

1. Crowded
2. Busy
3. Vibrant

“City is compacted/packed and full of people, the bigger the city the busier it is. Really good cities never stop; they do not sleep at all, they run 24/7. The more people there are the more crowded it will be and the more vibrant it will get. The better the city, the more crowded and vibrant it is. The city has to be multicultural and multi-religious.”

Participant 4:

1. Living
2. People
3. Building

“Living means the activities, lifestyle, the spirit of the city, the people who conduct those activities, and mostly this interaction (people and activities) would take place in buildings (The action, who does it, and where it occurs). ”

Participant 3:

1. Road
2. People
3. Functional activities

“Those define how important the city is.”

Participant 2:

1. Road
2. Building
3. Crowded

“Buildings define the city boundaries, while roads mainly go in the middle (connection/network); we have to have those two to create a city. Sounds play an important role in defining the city, especially the sound of people walking here and there.”

Participant 1:

1. Movement
2. Living
3. Nights

“Movement is not only in terms of the movement of people (walking, etc.), it also covers the meaning of seeing the city progressing. The city also means our living, where we do activities and operate. The distinction between day-life and night-life is an interesting point to think of, as the city at night is normally crowded and full of life, unlike the villages, which are quiet at night (What happened after the oil revolution, educating women, women’s involvement in the field of employment, did that change the day/night life of the city? When would the city be crowded now?).”

How can you define “culture” in three words (or more)? With brief justification.

Culture

Organiser:

1. Identity
2. Civilization
3. Religion
4. Lifestyle



Figures 6.18 & 6.19: Part of the discussions around defining *culture* and *heritage* in Manamataalk (Source: Author 2015)



Participant 1:

1. Lifestyle
2. Religion
3. Beliefs

“Religion creates the culture, and culture creates the lifestyle, and it creates the beliefs.”

Participant 2:

1. People
2. Tradition
3. Doors

“Culture, tradition and heritage are created by people, while the image that came to my mind when talking about culture and heritage is the image of doors, with all their details and ornamentations.” (see Figure 6.20).



Figure 6.20: This is how Participant 2 perceives culture (Source: Participant 2)



Participant 3:

1. Religion
2. Tradition
3. Heritage

“Religion and tradition are elements that we share and it defines our lives, while heritage is mostly associated with our history and things we have from the past. Culture is something shared between people.”

Participant 4:

1. History
2. Tradition
3. People

“History is where culture grew from, while tradition is more associated with the people’s behaviour, as the translation of culture into behaviour.”

Participant 5:

1. Values of traditions
2. Change
3. Roots

“Slow change in culture evolves along lifespan, it evolves into something else by the time we are young, it is not something that you can do alone but it happens in/as a society, then society moves forward with it and slowly sees the culture as new version of itself. It won’t be somebody else’s culture either, it would be the one you are born with.”

Participant 6:

1. Roots
2. Identity

3. India
4. Celebrations

“The first thing that comes to my mind whenever talking about culture is India. Within India we have so many cultures that coexist. No matter how far or where we go, identity is the one thing that binds us together with our country. It is a quality in you. When people from the same culture come together you feel a lot more comfortable no matter which country you are in, and this is how I feel when we celebrate our Indian festivals here in Bahrain. So culture is the one thing that brings us together in respect to many differences we may have.”

Participant 7:

1. Lifestyle
2. History
3. Background

“Culture is not only about things happening today, it is about things that happened in the past and then continue to happen in the present and then the future, affecting our lifestyle.”

Participant 8:

1. Lifestyle
2. Identity
3. History

“I see culture as routes that remain with us but as we grow up we find our own paths, but it will still be within us. Culture starts from history then it evolves, reflects our lifestyle and how we act in our daily life. Everyone’s identity comes from his/her culture and how he/she saw the culture and then moves on with it.”

Participant 9:

1. People
2. Change
3. Tradition

“It seems that culture is always connected with things to do with tradition, but culture is not something static, it is dynamic. Culture is something that deals with who we are, it is collective and individual.”



Figure 6.21: One of the Manamataalk participants explaining her thoughts and ideas (Source: Author)



Figure 6.22: Manamataalk participants' interaction with the discussion

How can you define “Heritage” in three words (or more)? With brief justification.

Heritage

Organiser:

1. Roots
2. Originality
3. Pride

Participant 9:

1. Greatness
2. Pride
3. Historic buildings

“Heritage is what defines whatever our greatness is, heritage projects our individual personalities and it is connected with pride; we are proud of our heritage always, and our pride would disappear if heritage is lost, that is why it is important how we maintain our pride as a nation and as a people. Although heritage is connected to so many things, historical buildings seem to be the things that very clearly and visually express it. We celebrate our historical buildings as part of great a heritage more than anything else.” (see Figure 6.22)

Participant 8:

1. Tradition
2. Culture
3. Country

“Confused between heritage and culture.”

Participant 7:

1. History

2. Society
3. Reflection

“Heritage is part of the history, and every society has its own heritage. Heritage reflects who we are, and its two-way reflection, rethinking and redefining.”

Participant 6:

1. History
2. Communication
3. Museum

“Heritage is a sort of communication between you and your past. The basic idea of having a museum is to show the history of a place. Because of the mixture of cultures and backgrounds people might need to refer to documentary places like museums to know best about a place. Things got lost between generations so museums help in documenting heritage. It could be sad to depend on museums to know about our own heritage while we should depend on our own, and our social interactions.”

Participant 5:

1. Inheritance
2. Past

“Heritage is always associated with what happened in the past, not the present not the future. What we got/received when we were born becomes part of who we are, and it also depends on who we born to (parents). I had been born to Indian parents but Bahrain’s heritage influences and affects me because here is where I was born and grew up, so my heritage will be a mixture of both, different than my parents and different than my children in the future.”

Participant 4:

1. Background
2. Identity
3. Treasure

“Heritage is where we come from, and it is crucial that we embrace it. Heritage plays a big role in shaping our identity, even if one chose to either embrace it or turn away from it, it is still part of one’s identity. Without past there will be no future. One’s heritage should be always treasured and valued. To end the existence of a nation is by destroying its heritage like what happened in Baghdad when Hulagu (Mongolian leader) destroyed the great library.”

Participant 3:

1. Lifestyle
2. Wood
3. Time

“The past has its own lifestyle. Wood is a strongly used element in the traditional houses. Heritage defines an era or period of time.”



Figure 6.23: Photos describing what is heritage, according to one of the Manamataalk participants (Source: Participant)

Participant 2:

1. Architecture
2. Society
3. Culture

“The heritage of any society is reflected in its architecture.”

Participant 1:

1. Tradition
2. Old
3. Past

“Heritage belongs to the roots, it creates the tradition, and it is something from the past and exists now and will continue to exist in the future as well.”



Figure 6.24: Keywords defining “architecture” (Source: Author)

How can you define “architecture” in relation to the previous three terms (city, culture and heritage) using three words (or more)? With brief justification.

Architecture

Organiser:

1. Shaping
2. Translating
3. Embodiment

Participant 9:

1. Process
2. Production
3. Container

“Architecture is one of the processes of the production of the city, architecture has to be there to make the city, and it makes how the city becomes. Culture is also produced through the architecture. Architecture contains heritage in the building (food, clothes ... etc. contained in the building) and by the building itself.”

Participant 8:

1. Restrictions

“The relationship between architecture and city, culture and heritage creates restrictions in terms of how spaces are planned. It determines how buildings are made and the amount of transparency.”

Participant 7:

1. Landmark
2. Focal point

“Architecture is the landmark of the city and creates the significant of heritage.”

Participant 6:

1. Communication
2. Buildings
3. Grow

“Architecture tells you about the culture and heritage, building has a lot to say, it’s a two-way communication, and architecture defines city. The city expands and architecture is what makes the city bigger, through buildings and people.”

Participant 5:

1. Identity
2. Development
3. Reflection

“Kinds of buildings in the city form identity, and also linked to the development of the city. Architecture is also a reflection of the sort of people there are in the city, the time of building the building, and what the world was like at that point.”

Participant 4:

1. Experience
2. Belonging

“Experiencing the city and getting to know it is all about architecture, starting from the smallest shop to the tallest skyscraper and this is where sense of belonging comes, home, cosy, how it feels.”

Participant 3:

1. Concept
2. Building
3. Image

“Concepts of building are always affected by heritage and culture. Buildings are the most important elements of architecture. Architecture creates the image of the city.”

Participant 2:

1. Identity
2. Experience
3. Geometry

“The heritage of any society is reflected through architecture, and there where one knows about the identity of each culture. Ones may know the city while experiencing every part of it. Geometry and architecture are always linked, at least in my mind.”

Participant 1:

1. Image
2. Reflection
3. Belonging

“Architecture creates the image of the city with its buildings, roads, landscapes and every architectural element, and it reflects the culture and the heritage, and it belongs to a context.”



Figure 6.25: Collection of photos showing Manamataalk (Source: Author)



Figure 6.25: Collection of photos showing Manamataalk (Source: Author)

6.5.2.2.3 The third exercise: questionnaire



Figure 6.26: Participants filling in the questionnaire sheet at the end of Manamataalk (Source: Author)

The organiser wanted the participants to put down their thoughts in a short questionnaire, which asked mainly about things discussed in the talk (see Figures 6.25 and 6.27).

As a way of saying thank you to all who attended, the organiser handed out Certificates of Attendance to the participants at the end of the talk (see Figure 6.26).

The analysis of the workshop discussion is articulated further in Chapter 8.



Figure 6.27: Distributing the Certification of Attendance (Source: Author)

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents descriptions of all data collected through the fieldwork trips, conducted in the context of Bahrain throughout the period of this study, while the discussion and analysis of this data will be in Chapters 7 and 8. The Chapter starts with explaining the pilot research, then the investigation of spatial experience within both the private and public spaces using semi-structured interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Getting in touch with users at the initial stages of the fieldwork was really informative, particularly during the pilot study and the early stages of the semi-structured interviews. These preliminary discussions around the spatial experience revealed the importance of the cultural impact on architecture, which appeared as one of the main recurring themes. Through these discussions it became evident that the research questions needed some refinements, replacing the argument of participation in design with the discussion around the cultural impact on architecture, as it appeared to be more important and relevant to the core of the study.

This chapter also includes the data and resources collected from the study into everyday experience of the urban space. This study was conducted by means of observation and a walk through the old city of Manama followed by a discussion workshop with a group of participants through a fieldwork based study. Through this, there is an attempt to help uncover what may contribute to people's understanding of space and their actual experience of it, beyond the commonly used descriptors of spatial materiality. Through the investigation of both private and public spaces, it was interesting to see how people tried to reflect on their daily spatial experience in a way that gives more attention to the immaterial side of architecture, which is normally either overlooked or neglected. One of the aims of this study is to consider how the immaterial aspects of architecture can impact on the users' experience of the built environment beyond the given physical descriptors and boundaries of a space.

The main finding of this study reveals the importance of cultural elements and its impact on the architectural spatial experience. It also shows the great loss of heritage and tradition, which obviously led to a loss of appreciation for architectural heritage, and social alienation of the citizens. The described situation is not just happening in Bahrain, but in cities throughout the Gulf region. These cities have been through major transformations over the last four decades and are experiencing a rapid urbanisation, taking the form of a checkerboard of architectural styles and global signature designs, dominated by tall skyscrapers and western style shopping malls.

It is important then to any society in general, and the Bahraini, as well as that of the Gulf region in particular, to understand how architecture, as a creative industry and process, can be deployed to enhance the people's way of life, and have positive impacts on individuals. In fact, it is the architects' essential responsibility to negotiate among different perspectives and realities and to create an environment that is meaningful for those who live in it. However, it is also important to

bring to the attention of the general population the different approaches to architecture, including the ones that acknowledge the value of culture and heritage.

Experiencing the city: Seeing Manama in a different light

By: Hawra Salman

Questionnaire

Name: Zaira
Age group: 22 (20-30)

What does Manama mean to you?
(if there is more than one item, please rank them according to an order of preference)

- * culture
- * the souq.
- *

What do you find important/special about Manama?
(if there is more than one item, please rank them according to an order of preference)

- * cultural significance
- * it being the capital.

What ideas/thoughts/feelings came to your mind during Manamawalk?
(if there is more than one item, please rank them according to an order of preference)

- * once lived
↳ appreciated.
↳ still remains so.

What did you learn from both Manamawalk and Manamatalk?
(if there is more than one item, please rank them according to an order of preference)

- ↳ thinking more deeply about culture, heritage & relating it to manama.

What will you miss about Manama when you are away from it?
(if there is more than one item, please rank them according to an order of preference)

- * The problem is that I was never attached to manama my whole life.

It started when I started my graduation project this year (2014-2015) that I became more involved to the manama and especially the souq. So the "Manama souq" will definitely be the thing that I will miss.

Thank you

Figure 6.28: Sample of the questionnaire

**Immateriality and Spatial Experience
Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews**

Chapter 7: Immateriality and Spatial Experience: Analysis of Semi-Structured Interviews

7.1 Overview

This research proposes to examine spatial experience through an exploration of the relationship between space as an output of a creative process based on an architect's intentions and an experience that the user will have in the space. In order to answer the relevant research questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with forty-four participants as has been discussed in the previous chapter. Through these interviews, there is an intention to identify the immaterial descriptors of users' spatial experience, and to seek a better understanding of architecture, while enhancing the response to cultural and social conditions. It is also intended that such research would generate greater awareness among those people of how to describe their spatial experience.

Through the interview discussion there is an attempt to reconsider space through the non-physical aspects that configure the narrative of the users' everyday life, and therefore emphasising the importance of the users' experience of a built environment.

In this context, this chapter is proposing to address some of the issues, challenges and opportunities that surround the users' experience within these specific social, cultural and economic settings. It is mainly looking at the findings of the semi-structured interviews, which were presented in Chapter 6, to explore the emerging ideas and information that underpin the experience of home space in Bahrain.

This chapter also aims to represent the stories and everyday narratives that the participants shared in the discussion, as a way of exploring the importance of the immaterial aspects in formulating the participant spatial experience. The researcher focused on three main themes, which this analysis will be articulating:

- immateriality/immaterial descriptors
- cultural impact on architecture
- understanding the user's spatial experience.

7.2 Immateriality/immaterial descriptors

7.2.1 Words for house/home/dwelling

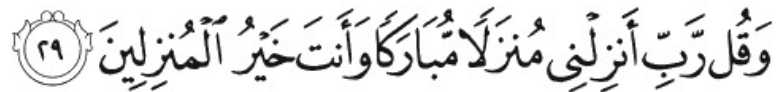
The spatial experiences discussed in the interviews are charged with multiple meanings and characterised with intangible aspects, either positive or negative, along with tangible ones. The interviews focus on *home* as the examined case.

The individual carries the immaterial part of their *home* experience around, while the building called *home* remains in one place. This explains the sense of *home* for the nomadic tribes, although they frequently change locations, they still experience these immaterial aspects and feel at home in surroundings that they do not actually own. From this basis, the interviews started in a way that reveals the interviewee stories, memories, thoughts, opinions and ideas.

One must admit that *home* is charged with meanings that go beyond the physicality of the building. *Home* also takes different definitions in Arabic depending on how the term is contextualised. For instance, it may refer to permanent home, and in this case it will be called *manzel*, or geographically it may refer to a certain location that identifies the individual's place of birth or homeland, and in this case it may be called *dar*. Furthermore, if the term refers to the place the individual inhabits and pursues his/her everyday life it may be called *bait*.

Maskan is one of the terms that refers to home/house, the original roots of the word come from *sakeena*, which means calmness and quietness. An interviewee stated that her father's house to her acted as *maskan*, as she always felt that it contained the real sense of living, rest, residence and life.

Some of the participants referred to verses from the holy Quran to express the meaning of different terms articulating the idea of home. Each term has its specificity, and differs depending on material and immaterial factors (see Figure 7.1).



And say: "O my Lord! enable me to disembark with thy blessing: for Thou art the Best to enable (us) to disembark."

لَكِنَّ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا رَبَّهُمْ لَهُمْ عُرفٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهَا عُرفٌ مَّبْنِيَةٌ تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
 الْأَنْهَارُ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ

But it is for those who fear their Lord. That lofty mansions, one above another, have been built: beneath them flow rivers (of delight): (such is) the Promise of Allah: never doth Allah fail in (His) promise.

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُبَوِّئَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ عُرفًا
 تَجْرِى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا نِعَمَ أَجْرَ الْعَمِلِينَ

But those who believe and work deeds of righteousness - to them shall We give a Home in Heaven,- lofty mansions beneath which flow rivers,- to dwell therein for aye;- an excellent reward for those who do (good)!-

Figure 7.1: Script from the holy Quran that the participants referred to to explain their sense of *home* (Source: <http://www.oneummah.net/quran/book/23.html>)

Another interviewee who lives in a spacious house states that *home* to her is not the actual building at all, she would be happy even if she lived in a house half the size and be satisfied with it. Home is not with the building; home is with the meaning of it. It is worth mentioning that when I asked this participant to compare her sense of belonging between the houses she used to live in, including her childhood house and the houses she moved to and from until she settled in the last one, the interviewee was in tears and she cried as she remembered her late mother. The whole idea of *home* to this participant is about the meaning, feelings and emotions, so it is about the immaterial more than the material.

7.2.2 Addressing terminologies

A number of interviewees state that addressing the terminology that articulates the meaning of home (*bait*, *maskan*, *dar* and *manzel*), helps establish sensory differences, in which the relationship between individuals and his/her dwelling could be identified (see Figure 7.2). They also explain that it is not easy to distinguish which is which, and the question seemed difficult to them.

فروق: البيت والدار والمسكن والمنزل

فُروق لَعَوِيَّة

الفرق بين:

- **البيت:** هو المكان الذي يعتاد الإنسان أن يبيت فيه أي يقضي الليل نام أم لم ينام. ولا يشترط فيه أن يكون مبنيا ولكن يشترط أن يكون لعائلة صغيرة واحدة لا يشاركونهم فيه أحد. قد يكون خيمة أو شقة أو دار أو كهف أو حتى غرفة في دار أو مأوى أو نزل.
- **المسكن:** هو حيث يسكن الإنسان، مثل البيت ولا يشترط فيه أن يكون من بيوت في المكان مرتبط بالآخرين. فكل بيت مسكن ولكن ليس كل مسكن بيت.
- **الدار:** يشترط في الدار أن تكون مبنية، الدار يشار بها إلى الأرض والبناء معا بخلاف البيت والمسكن الذي يشار فيه إلى القضاء الذي يشغله الساكن. الدار قد يكون فيها بيت أو أكثر من بيت، وقد لا يكون فيها بيت إطلاقا مثل دار القضاء أو دار الطباعة.
- **المنزل:** المنزل هو ما كان فيه أكثر من بيت سواء كانت البيوت مرتبطة ببعض ببناء واحد كالعمارة السكنية والدار أو كن البيوت متفرقة كمجمع صغير.

الأمثلة

- قد يطلق البيت على الغرفة الواحدة في الدار، لأن في هذه الغرفة يبيت أحد أفراد العائلة. وقد يطلق على الدار بأكملها إذا سكنتها عائلة واحدة.
- المسكن يشمل الدار التي يسكن فيها الطلاب مثلا أو المكان الذي يسكن فيه الجنود أو العمال ولا يقال لتلك الأماكن بيوت.
- الغرفة الواحدة إذا كانت مبنية باللبن أو الطابوق أو الحجر أو غيره تكون دارا. لا يشترط في الدار كثرة الغرف ولا يشترط حديقة أو صحن ولكن لفظة الدار تشمل الدار والأرض التي بنيت عليها الدار وأي أرض أخرى ملحقة بالدار إذا كانت موجودة.
- الدار تكون منزلا إذا كان فيها أكثر من غرفة واحدة للنوم، حيث أن كل غرفة نوم تعتبر بيتا لأن أحدا ما يبيت فيها ويبدأ يكون بالدار أكثر من بيت فيصبح منزلا.
- إذا كان بناء تسكنه عائلة واحدة فيه غرف نوم كثيرة فعند ذلك يصح إطلاق عليه بيت ودار ومسكن ومنزل.
- العمارة السكنية التي فيها أكثر من شقة يصح أن يطلق عليها دار ومسكن ومنزل، ولا يصح أن يقال بيت.
- الشقة الواحدة في هذه العمارة إن كان فيها أكثر من غرفة نوم وتسكنه عائلة واحدة يصح أن يطلق عليها مسكن وبيت ومنزل، أما الدار فهي المبنى كله.
- سكن الطلاب يصح أن يطلق عليه مسكن ومنزل ودار ولا يصح بيت.

Figure 7.2: Arabic definitions for the four terms explaining sense of home: *Bait*, *Maskan*, *Dar*, *Manzel* (Source: https://ar.wiktionary.org/wiki/فروق_البيت_والدار_والمسكن_والمنزل)

7.2.3 The traditional house



Figure 7.3: Example of an abandoned courtyard house in Manama (Source: Author)

A number of participants talk about traditional settings in Bahrain (see Figure 7.3), revealing stories and memories from the past as a way to describe what home means to them. One of the stories articulates the concept of the communal building process, which was a dominant form of housing in the region until the 1970s, when, unfortunately it tended to disappear as a result of the modern way of life, brought about by the oil boom and commercial progress. This concept reveals many immaterial considerations along with physical ones. This concept could be perceived as a social event, where the neighbourhood, mostly relatives, would collaborate in building a house, while the owner would offer three meals a day; breakfast, lunch and dinner. Celebrating the strong social bonds happened in many ways and this was only one of them. This collaboration created a special sense of intimacy and belonging to the land, neighbourhood and the house itself. As the individual income of the Bahrainis increased, along with the intensive import of foreign manpower, this social activity disappeared, and nowadays people perceive a man who builds his own house to be a low-class, low-income person.

One of the interviewees gave a detailed description of the layout of a traditional house, which was massive, around 800 sq m, with only three big rooms, one on the ground floor and two on the upper floor, and a kitchen, while the rest of the area was made up by the courtyard. The ground floor rooms used to house the children, boys and girls, and the upper floor rooms for the parents. The “life” and activities took place in the big courtyard, playing with sand, planting vegetables and fruit, tending livestock, gathering, events, and all sorts of activities. The house witnessed an organic extension when some of the daughters and sons got married and lived in the same house (as couples and young families later on when they had children), so more rooms were created. The story of this house started in the 1940s. In the early 1980s the house was demolished to be replaced with a family-owned block of apartments, housing around five families in five separate apartments, and a big *majlis* (guest hall), with facilities and services.

“When the traditional house was demolished, each one of us felt as if a part of his history had been destroyed.” (Participant 24).



Figure 7.4: The dense urban fabric within the historic settlement of Manama in 1977 (Source: <http://culture.gov.bh/en/babcompetition/resources/historicalmaps/#d.en.5994>)

In the traditional neighbourhood, the urban layout used to be very dense and the houses were attached to each other in a way that created a need for internal doors connecting the house, used mostly by women or young children (see Figures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6). According to the cultural and religious principles, the men were not allowed to use those doors at any time, as there could be exposed women in the house (exposed means not covering their hair with *hijab*). Those internal doors were usually used by boys as shortcuts without having to use the main passages and alleyways. This internal movement and circulation created a special immaterial connection with people, especially females, who never had to make an appointment to visit each other, neither did the males, despite the fact they were using the main front door. According to the participants, life used to be less complicated and safer than it is now.



Figure 7.5: Eastern side of the city of Manama in the late 1950s (Source: Bahrain National Museum)

As evidence, they stated that the main door of the house used to always be open during the day, as there were always visitors coming and going, and the women were always at home. This attitude has changed now for many reasons. According to some participants, this change is due to the percentage of women who go out to work now, while others mentioned the changes in the demographic make up of the country, with the arrival of migrants who had introduced many changes into the society and lifestyle. All those aspects had led to changes in the level of trust. According to one of the participants, the level of trust between people used to be much higher, especially with the internal doors between the attached houses and having the house unlocked

during the day. Nowadays, people are always suspicious, which obviously affects the level of perceived safety and security.

All those stories and memories are relevant to understanding the immaterial meaning of home, especially in the traditional setting, which most of the participants chose to describe when they were asked to explain what home means to them. One of the participants clarified that the traditional sense of home was created by activities that took place in it, like gatherings and entertaining. He also stated that elements of entertaining during old days were very limited, people mainly read books during their spare time as there were no TVs and smart phones as we have now. Most of the children's play activities took place outdoors in the narrow alleyways and passages between the houses. The majority of the activities, for both children and adults, encouraged gathering and social life, which was then reflected in the design of the urban fabric, in particular, with the creation of narrow, shaded alleys within the very dense residential quarters (see Figure 7.7). Even after the invention of the radio, which had a huge impact on social life, however, the social attitude did not change as much as it did with the introduction of the TV. With the introduction of radio, which was obviously portable, people could take it with them everywhere, and they continued to use *alqahwa* (the coffee shop in our days), as the place for entertainment, gathering, exchanging social and political news and even making commercial deals. However, the TV played quite a different role in people's entertainment, which led, in a way, to isolating some of them inside their houses. Peoples' daily schedules became dictated by the TV schedule of daily news and other programmes.

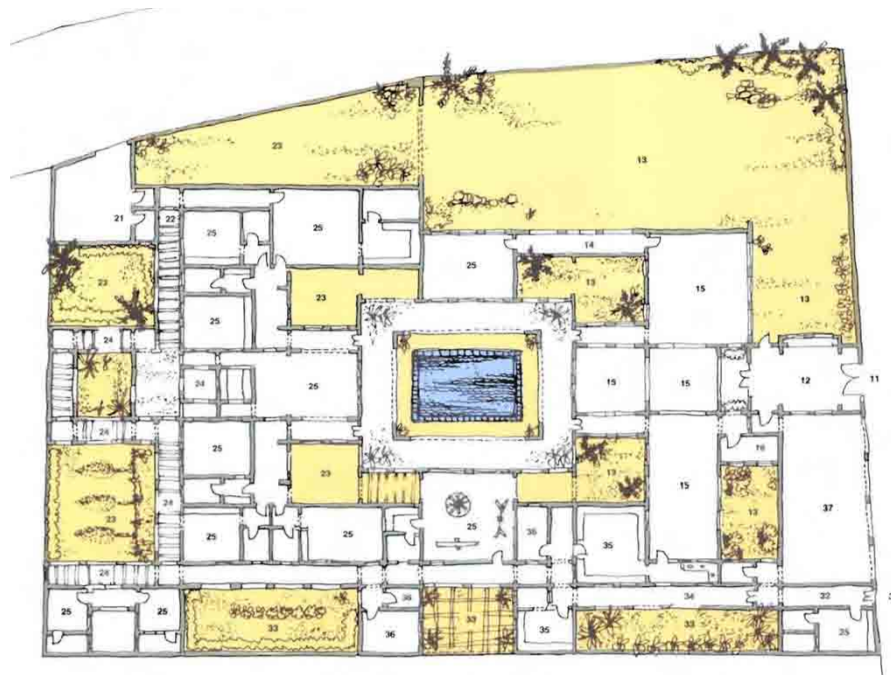


Figure 7.6: Example of a courtyard house layout (Source: Waly, 1992)

In the old days, many families lived in traditional houses, in some cases up to seven families per house. The concept of the traditional house, along with many other aspects and components of

the Islamic city, are similar across the Islamic world in general (Hakim, 1994). This was also asserted by one interviewee, who is from Saudi Arabia, and who was married to a Bahraini cousin. The head of the family was usually married to several wives, sometimes up to four. Life within those houses depended on collaboration and distribution of tasks among all the women, including daughters-in-law. Such duties would include cleaning the massive house, cooking for the big family, washing and so on. Every little family would have their own place within the big house, which could expand organically upon needs and sometimes desires. Each little family would occupy two rooms and one little kitchen, apart from the large communal kitchen, which was used to serve the extended family and the large number of guests that the house received on a regular basis. Therefore, the kitchen used to be attached to a big storage area for the tools and equipment and a second one for foodstuffs. The principle of hospitality and banquets was common during the early days, reflecting strong social connections, generosity and a way of celebrating wealth and wellbeing.



Figure 7.7: Narrow shaded alleys in the residential quarters within the old Islamic city (Source: Hakim, 1994)

The change in the traditional house layout also brought changes into the immaterial descriptors of the spatial experience and organisation, and obviously the feeling of the space. Having the open courtyard at the heart of the traditional house, open to the sky and surrounded by rooms, *laywan*, arcade, animal quarters etc., which created a totally different spirit that connected the indoors with the outdoors. Hasan Fathy, the Egyptian architect, talks about the holiness of the courtyard in his book *Architecture for the Poor* (1973).

To the Arab especially, the courtyard is more than just an architectural device for obtaining privacy and protection. It is, like the dome, part of a microcosm that parallels the order of the universe itself. In this symbolic pattern, the four sides of the courtyard represent the four columns that carry the dome of the sky. The sky itself is the roof of the courtyard, and is reflected in the customary fountain in the middle. This fountain, or basin, is in fact an exact projection of a dome on squinches. In plan it is precisely the same, basically a square with, at a lower level, the corners cut off to form an octagon; from each of the new sides a semicircle is scooped out, so that the whole basin is an inverted model of a dome, just as if a real dome were mirrored in the water.

This kind of feature disappeared with the modern changes that were introduced to the layout, along with the introduction of air conditioning, which required that spaces be closed. Accordingly, a western villa layout has been adopted as the modern and progressive style, which goes well with modern needs and technologies, and made the traditional layout unsuitable for modern living.

If a person grew up in a traditional house layout, it creates a sense of belonging to this type of layout for them, and it sets in the unconscious, which can be recognised by some interviewees stating that their dreams are always associated with the old houses. Some participants strongly regretted the loss of traditional houses as they saw it as a loss of part of their personal history and heritage. Surprisingly, an old lady in her late 80s who lives in a family owned housing block that was built to replace the old family house, was actually happy with this replacement. According to her daughters, this could be due to three main reasons. Firstly, as the eldest female, she was the head of the house, responsible for all the duties within the house, which was around 800 sq m in area, and she now finds the small apartment more manageable. Secondly, the in-laws preferred not to live in the same house, with the extended family, as was traditional throughout the country, as it brought a number of inconveniences. Therefore, the sons preferred to rent their own places, which was the dominant practice during 1980s. In addition, the old lady was happy with the new building, as it brought the family together again but with a new layout – all living in the same block but each family had their own separate apartment. This way of living was due to the wave of modernity that was welcomed all over the country, so she was happy with the modern details of the new house, all the marble floorings and other finishes, the sanitary wares and the furniture.

Another participant who spent her first four years in a traditional house asserted that the central courtyard was for playing, gathering, having meals, sleeping, especially during summer, or when hosting events like weddings. Her understanding of space and particularly home differs over time. Her childhood understanding was all about gathering and play, while home to her now as an adult is about privacy and independence, especially as she now lives with her in-laws. The participant regrets that the sense of gathering was lost along with the loss of the traditional layout house.

Another participant who lived the first eight years of her life in a traditional house confessed that the real meaning of home was in that old traditional house, with the extended family around and the gathering for events, where the sense of belonging reached its maximum.

One more participant who spent his childhood in a traditional layout house argued that the notion of spaciousness and openness is reflected in his desires when he started planning his own house. However, he was looking into horizontal openness and spatiality rather than the vertical exposure to sky, as the house needed to be sealed.

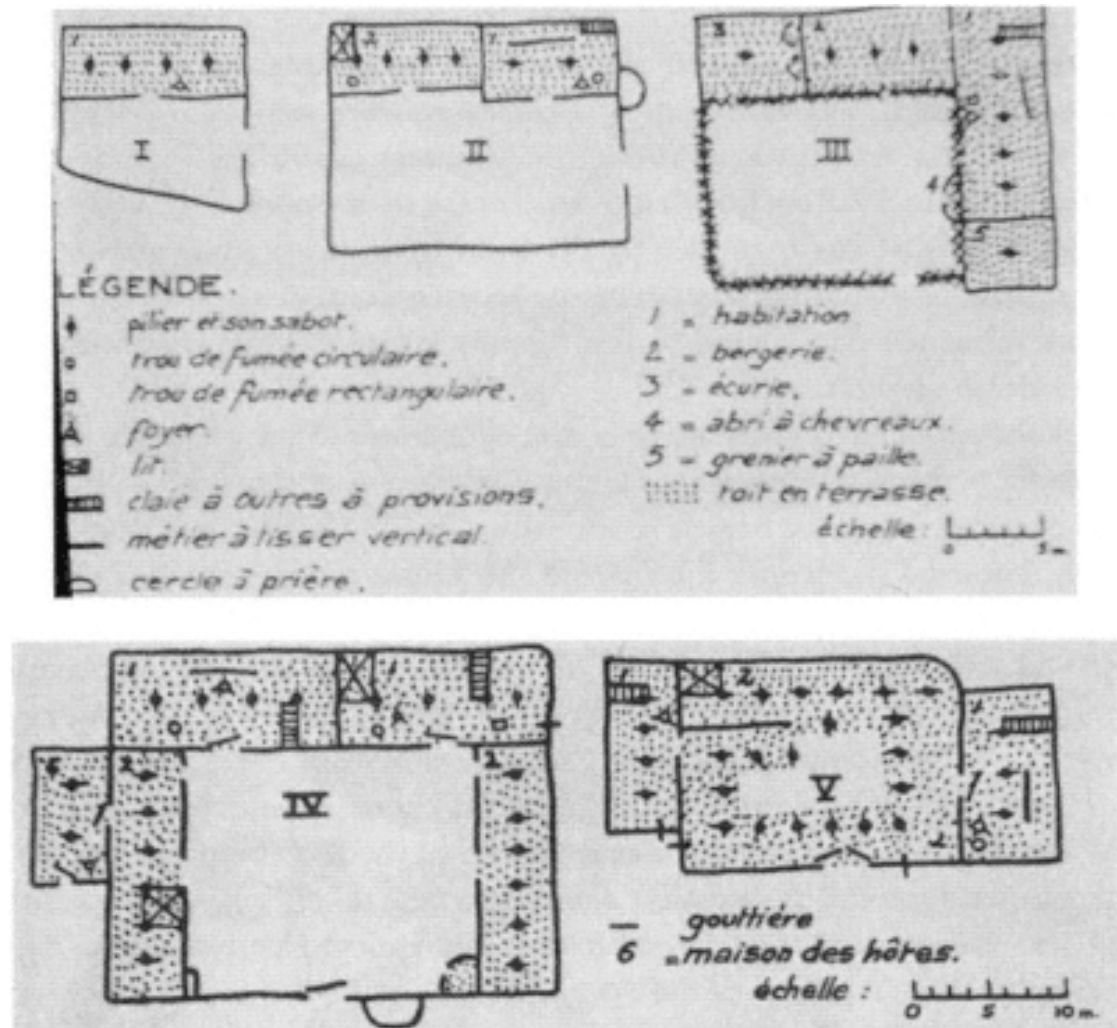


Figure 7.8: Plans of a terraced courtyard house showing the possible forms of growth around the courtyard (Source: Rivière, 1938)

The organic expansion of the traditional house covered many aspects (see Figure 7.8), including the area, number of rooms and functions, thus the layout of the house was always changing.

On a contemporary level, most of the interviewees argued that this layout (with the central exposed courtyard) is not applicable these days, although it suits the environmental conditions very well. They support their claim by saying that the current furniture style needs to be protected and not exposed to the dust, heat, rain ... etc. The interior finishes of the house have also changed

completely, and if they were exposed to the elements they could not be easily cleaned or repaired. Add to that, the use of air conditioning for more than eight months a year, which requires having sealed and enclosed indoor spaces to keep it cool. Although the participants who expressed this really liked the traditional layout and all life aspects that went along with it, they also thought that each era had its own specificities and that change should be accepted.

Participant 26 said, “We lost many of the traditional house values. People used to be happy in their houses without A.C. and the other modern additions, unfortunately those houses disappeared and they took with them all their values”.

An interviewee (twenty-five years old), who was born and spent the first eighteen years of his life in a traditional courtyard house was very attached to and valued the social life and qualities. Being raised in such a social environment established a level of appreciation to the originality of local social life, in which the interviewee is seeking to establish his dream house in the future. The interviewee shared many of his life stories regarding the traditional courtyard house, including the non-stop process of the organic extension and changes, which sometimes involved the structural elements. The interviewee argued that this situation reflected his grandfather’s personality (the head of family and house), as he never had long-term plans, and that puts him in a continuous process of change, where he finds his joy. The changes touched the location of the vertical axes (staircases), the location of bedrooms, and even introduced different commercial activities into the house, like establishing a flat with external access for letting, and turning one of the rooms into a small retail/cold store with an on street entrance. The retail area had a commercial and social dimension, as the head of family received neighbours and relatives on a regular basis, and they established a mini social hub. The retail space therefore, had to have an internal connection with the house to serve and supply tea, coffee and refreshments. So, to summarise, this example of a traditional house, which still exists today, serves as a shelter for an extended family, the head with his sons and their families, and as a source of income through the letting of the flat and the cold store retail. It used to have a garden and a cowshed as well as, and at some stage it also housed labourers who were sponsored by the owner of the house for his construction firm.

Being raised in such a house and environment affected the interviewee and his family. Even after moving from the extended family house to one of the state housing units, the interviewee and his nuclear family were always seeking to establish strong relationships with the neighbours, who were from different backgrounds, as will be explained in the state housing section. Moreover, when the interviewee described his dream house, he asserted the idea of neighbourhood as an element that guarantees a good community to live in, and this meant a lot to him. He also sought to have a large open space and garden and enough space for the extended family in the future. He

also talked about cultural elements like the segregation between genders, while other interviewees around his age (twenty-five years) did not really care.

The researcher had the chance to visit a courtyard house in a rural area of Bahrain, met the inhabitants and interviewed them. The house was owned by the head of the village, a well-known man who was married to four wives, three of them living in the same house. The area of the house was very large and contained three courtyards. Recently, some of his sons built their own houses, within the boundaries of the larger house, but adopting modern styles and spatial distribution. One of the housewives living in one of the new houses stated that life still followed the old model but with some changes. Old people within the neighbourhood still celebrated the strong connections with each other, however some of the traditional habits had gradually faded, like the neighbourhood women's meeting each morning to have their brunch together. The courtyard house I visited achieved the highest level of privacy, to the extent that the inhabitants used to sleep in the courtyard on summer nights. The gender segregation in the house layout is evident. The divan (*majlis*) with all facilities (toilets and washbasins) is close to the main entrance. There was a small bedroom close to it used by the head of the family in his later years. The interviewee stated that the old man was sick and he used to receive a large number of visitors, but it was inappropriate to receive guests in his actual bedroom at the heart of the house, as this would impinge on privacy, and for this reason he was moved to that bedroom.

It is evident that the concept of hospitality is still important in rural areas. In both cases of the two houses that were visited, the hosts insisted on offering meals for lunch. The idea of the extended family is dominant as well as the organic extension both vertically and horizontally, if and when possible. In addition, the social connections and bonds were very strong. Another aspect that came up was the establishment of small *ma'tam*⁹ within the house for religious ceremonies. In fact, people would dedicate a large room to be used as a *ma'tam*, whether it be before or after the construction of the house.

⁹ A **Hussainia**, also known as an **Ashurkhana** or **Imambargah**, and “**Imambara**” is a congregation hall for **Shia** commemoration ceremonies, especially those associated with the **Remembrance of Muharram**. The name comes from **Husayn Ibn Ali**, the grandson of **Muhammad** and the third **Imam** of the **Shia** Muslims. Imam Hussain was killed by the **Umayyad Sunni caliph Yazid I** at the **Battle of Karbala** in **Iraq**, on October 10, 680 AD. Shias commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain every year on the day of **Ashura** in Hussainias all over the world.

A Hussainiya is different from a **mosque** in that it is intended mainly for gatherings for Muharram in the mourning of Hussain Ibn Ali, and may not necessarily hold *juma'at*, or Friday prayer.

In **South Asia**, a Hussainia can also be referred to as an *imambara*, *imambargah*, or *ashurkhana*. In **Bahrain**, and the **United Arab Emirates**, it is called a *ma'tam* (مأتم). In **Afghanistan** and central Asia, the equivalent term for a **Shia** congregation hall is *takyakhana*. Examples of Hussainias include the **Bara Imambara** and **Imambara Ghufraan Ma'ab**, both in **Lucknow, India**, as well as the **Imambara Wazeer Un Nisa** in **Amroha, India** and the **Hosseiniye Ershad** in **Tehran, Iran**. Source: <http://www.worldheritage.org/articles/Hussainia>

7.2.4 The female dimension

A female element could add an interesting dimension to the analysis, especially since most of the interviewees were female. This dimension will be used to compare the female's experience of her father's house compared to that of her husband's. It is common in Bahrain, especially in days gone by, that the house is usually owned by the man, the head male of the family, therefore, for the female, the house where she lives is either owned by her father when she is young, or the husband after she gets married. In the interviews, when trying to configure the immaterial meaning of *home*, the distinction between the before and after marriage, has always appeared. The house that was associated with childhood represented a sense of attachment, belonging, memories and sometimes relief. One of the participants said that even though she now lives in a different house in a different country, her father's house remained the same to her, and she never felt like an outsider or a foreigner in it. She argued that the sense of attachment she always felt was not just to the family members, but also to the house itself.

Another interviewee stated that she belonged to her father's house, and that she always felt that her heart was still there, although she is happy and feels comfortable in her husband's flat.

One more interviewee explained that her father's house for her was a refuge and source of happiness, memories and gathering, however, she does not mean the house itself, as she is not attached to the house but the people. Wherever people go those immaterial values go with them. When she was asked what if her father's house was knocked down, she laughed and she said she would encourage that, and seek a new modern place. Another interviewee had been asked the same question and she strongly disagreed, as the house itself contained lots of memories and they all, her family and herself, loved the house very much. This shows the difference in spatial experience between cases, being attached to the *home* as building, and being attached to the *home* as people.

Another aspect to the female dimension is the process of planning the house and the level of involvement of the female of the house. Some interviewees stated that the involvement of females in planning the house changed over time. In the past, the head of the family, the male, would be responsible for everything, and the women's opinion would ever be sought. While now, the situation differs; the female has a strong input into the decisions regarding the design and planning of the house, either directly or indirectly.

7.2.5 The journey of creating *home*



Figure 7.9: Furniture pieces imported from outside Bahrain (Source: Participant)

One of the participants had received some advice from a British architect during the 1980s, the advice says: “the house you build should reflect your identity” and here is where the participant’s journey with building his own house started, even before he got married. The participant believed that the identity he wanted to reflect was an Islamic identity, so he researched this identity, not only his own beliefs and thoughts, but also Islamic architecture. From books, and actual visits to places with rich Islamic architectural style, like Morocco, the participant formulated a vision of what he really wanted in his dream house, planned it in one year, and executed it in four years. The participant experimented throughout the process with some of his relatives. He was building by himself, with the help of some labourers and the supervision of an engineer. The participant had a direct input into designing and building his house, all the thoughts and ideas he tested, the ones that succeeded and the one that failed generated a special connection between him and the house. The journey of searching for the materials and the quality of manufacturing the doors and the plaster ornaments was unique by itself and created unique results. The participant did not depend on the local market in Bahrain, he thought that the choices there were limited, so he ordered, executed, made, or bought from abroad like Mumbai, Rome and Iran (see Figures 7.9 and 7.10). The participant spent a considerable amount of money in order to create what he wanted and felt comfortable with, as he was a bank employee earning a good salary. This introduces the economic dimension, which plays a vital role when building the desired house and therefore the desired experience.

“I know every single block in this house, and every single detail, this house is my life,” said the participant.

As this house was ready in 1989, before he even got married, the renovation process that followed in 2002 was led by his wife.

Another interviewee shares his story of planning and building his own house. The interviewee explained that the spirit of the old traditional house where he grew up was reflected in his new house. The house contained a large front garden as a way of replacing the central courtyard. The internal layout of the house was spacious and wide and most of the spaces and facilities were open and connected, which are also features of the traditional house. The interviewee stated that he planned his house and then the architect/engineer only added the structural requirements to the plan. That was followed by the contractor who constructed the house. The interviewee explained that the ability to generate the idea came after an extensive study of books and journals, and being exposed to different cultures, as he studied and lived in different countries such as Iraq, Egypt and the USA. The participant also created the neighbourhood when he agreed with his other two brothers to establish a community of three attached houses, which are connected/interconnected with internal doors like the traditional idea. The participant argued that the whole process of living in and outside Bahrain and the self-initiated study of planning and design enabled him and his two brothers to create the desired spatial experience, which they were fully satisfied with.



Figure 7.10: Wood carving, made in India (Source: Participant)

7.2.6 Privacy as an immaterial value

Dealing with privacy in the garden is a big issue for many houses – some people would plant tall trees to prevent loss of privacy due to visual access and some would resort to high fences and walls.

A detailed discussion about privacy is given in section 7.3, however, it is worth mentioning that privacy has an immaterial dimension that is associated with creating independence and sense of settlement. To most participants, creating a private environment means creating a space for them to own and do whatever they would like to do without any external interference.

7.2.7 Social bonds

Social bonds are established in many ways, one of them is the weekly gathering of the extended family, especially during the weekends, which happens in most families in Bahrain. This has an impact on the spatial layout of the house and how it is experienced by the family members. Such gatherings have an immaterial dimension that explains the strong relationships between family members. These relationships reveal many feelings and emotions, which are reflected in the way people understand their spaces and experience them.

7.2.8 Temporary living

The temporary living issue was raised by number of interviewees who thought that it strongly affected their spatial experience of feeling settled and having a sense of belonging. This is common for newly married couples, if they are living in rented accommodation or staying with their parents on a temporary basis, which could last up to ten years, as one of the participants explained. Another participant stated that the temporary living period lasted for twenty-two years, until they were granted a house by the state social housing programme.

7.2.9 Location

The location of the house plays an important role in achieving certain immaterial values that most of the interviewees are after. In days gone by, with the dense urban fabric, most of the neighbours were related to each other, as an extended family would own a quarter large enough to make up a neighbourhood. Nowadays, along with the changes introduced in the society and lifestyle, the urban fabric has changed as will. Some people do not even know their neighbours. However, people still have strong social bonds with their families, even if they are not living in the extended family house, and most of them prefer to live nearby. A sense of gathering plays an important role in most people's lives, as most of them believe that being surrounded by family creates emotional security.

Socialising, having a sense of community, safety, emotional security and identity are immaterial values that most of the interviewees thought could be achieved by choosing houses close to their parents and relatives.

The religious dimension plays an important role in deciding on the house location, as a number of the participants stated. It was always preferred to have a short journey and easy access to the *ma'tam* and the mosque, and it was always pleasant to hear the sound of *athan* (call to prayer) from home.

Part of choosing a location is related to choosing the neighbourhood, particularly if one desires to be surrounded by relatives, as is the case with houses in traditional settlements. However, according to one interviewee, this is not always a positive experience. She explained that her husband was convinced to buy some land and build their house within the same community as relatives, but the fact that their neighbour was not always respectful created an unpleasant atmosphere, affecting their ability to settle into the neighbourhood.

7.2.10 Public housing

The common problem in the public housing sector is the lack of space, so people attempt to alter the internal layout of the house to suit their needs and desires from the first day they move in. The main purpose of the public housing projects was based on the government intention to help and house low-income families, while in return the families would pay a long-term loan. Those housing units or blocks (see Figures 7.11 and 7.12) were planned and built according to standard layouts and specifications prepared for the housing authorities, creating hundreds of similar units. As a result, people who have different tastes and requirements were not satisfied with those units, but they did not have any other choice. They ended up accepting what was provided and they modified it to create their own spatial experience, which reflected their own identity, opinions and way of thinking. One of the participants who lived in a house provided under the public housing scheme stated her feeling that the authorities were not likely to take into account everyone's needs and aspirations. However, compared to what she had before getting this house, she felt that although it was not ideal, having it was a blessing.

"It's the house of my husband and my children," said a participant, in expressing her sense of belonging to her house, even it did not satisfy all her needs.

Another interviewee stated that there were a number of material and immaterial factors articulating the failure of the state housing projects, such the lack of space, lack of privacy, lack of security and lack of community spirit. In fact, people in Bahrain are not happy with the state housing units, but these act as a starting point solution for some families.



Figure 7.11: Housing blocks, part of the Ministry of Housing residential projects (Source: Author)



Figure 7.12: Housing blocks, part of the Ministry of Housing residential projects (Source: <http://www.alwasatnews.com/news/1062496.html>)

7.2.11 The multiple kitchens phenomenon

Along with the introduction of housing units with contemporary sealed layouts came a problem of lack of adequate ventilation for kitchens. By its nature, the Bahraini cuisine makes use of spices

and fish, which generates strong smells. In traditional houses, cooking takes place in the open, naturally ventilated courtyard and the smells are dealt with adequately. However, given that the kitchen in contemporary dwellings is inside, there is a need for an outdoor kitchen to supplement it. Thus, most of the houses in Bahrain now have an indoor kitchen, used for light cooking and sometimes as part of the dining room, and an outdoor, well ventilated one as part of the backyard. In one of the houses visited as part of the study, the interviewee requested three kitchens, although the family is only of a middle class.

7.2.12 Lack of space

The lack of space is not always a material factor that could be measured. It can be considered as an immaterial issue, for which the importance and perception differ from one person to another. Throughout the interviews, it seemed that people who spent part of their lives (mostly childhood) in courtyard houses were always aspiring to have spacious homes, and not satisfied with the compact apartments. One of the participants said, "I always complain about the lack of space and always feel as if I live in a cage".

7.2.13 The extended family nowadays

Some people would prefer to be surrounded by the extended family, especially when they become grandparents. An interviewee stated that he could not imagine himself living in his big house only with his wife, and he is happy to have his married son and daughter with their respective little families in the same house, having their own sections of the house. The other daughters who live with their little families in their own houses, away from the family house, still have their own rooms to stay in whenever they want to come over to visit. It's worth mentioning that the father of this interviewee used to house the whole family, with all the other brothers when their families were little, in one house, and when the participant decided to move, his father asked him in a very sad tone, "Are you really leaving us?"

Some of the interviewees, especially the new generation of mothers, do not want to live in the extended family house, while some others would opt for it given their economic conditions. A twenty-eight-year-old interviewee had a different view; she stated that although living in the extended family house (in-laws' house) may have disadvantages, it has many advantages too, as it is convenient, particularly in the early years of married life. The interviewee stated that being in the big house meant always being surrounded by family, people and community, which creates a sense of security and support, and always having activities taking place. However, living with the extended family nowadays is considered as a temporary-living condition, as each little family

will gradually grow and have more children, so obviously the house will eventually not be suitable any more. In addition, each little family will be seeking to establish their sense of privacy and independence, thus the family will be always looking for another housing alternative. This matter has immaterial values as well as cultural impacts.

7.2.14 Identity

How could your place reflect your identity? This question turned out to be one of the most difficult ones in the interview. People attempted to answer it by describing the style of furniture they would prefer or the paint colour they desire. Few interviewees articulated their answer by explaining their religious identity and how that was reflected in their homes, which was interesting.

Torabi and Brahman in their article *Effective Factors in Shaping the Identity of Architecture* (2013) argue, “Identity is inherent, natural, gradual and inevitable and creates our yesterday, today and in the future will lead us as the most important challenges of our lives. Identified a space, the combination of signs and symptoms that distinguish a space and the land” (Torabi and Brahman, 2013: 113).

There are a number of factors in creating architectural identity, and the main one is the relationship between architecture and culture. Such a relationship could be reflected through the spatial organisation, the design principles, shapes, forms, building materials and many others. Thus, the users’ spatial experience will be integrated with cultural values and will convey different meanings in different uses. In this respect, the users’ and the spaces’ identity will be integrated. However, what seems to be happening in Bahrain nowadays, is that it is supporting architecture that is in line with contemporary and global trends, at the expense of the local culture and context. Therefore, there is a need for an architectural practice that is able to maintain its identity according to social and physical changes in its community.

7.2.15 The meaning of *home*

When the question “What does your home mean to you?” was asked, the answers given were varied and included some twenty-nine different descriptions relating to some material but mainly immaterial descriptors (see Table 7.1). What is even more interesting is the variety of answers reflecting the personal differences between the way people think of *home*. Only one answer was repeated four times among the interviewees, and that is the sense of belonging.

Table 7.1: The immaterial descriptors that participants used to describe their home spatial experience

Belonging	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Rest	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	
Security	Light Blue	Light Blue		
Contentment	Yellow	Yellow		
Memories	Light Blue	Light Blue		
Attachment	Yellow	Yellow		
Nostalgia	Light Blue	Light Blue		
Refuge	Yellow	Yellow		
Relief	Light Blue			
Ownership	Yellow			
Permanent	Light Blue			
My home	Yellow			
Settled	Light Blue			
Freedom	Yellow			
Independence	Light Blue			
Missing	Yellow			
Yearning	Light Blue			
My life	Yellow			
Pride	Light Blue			
Glory	Yellow			
My kingdom	Light Blue			
Residence	Yellow			
Living	Light Blue			
Reflecting	Yellow			
Identity	Light Blue			
Achievement	Yellow			
Feels good	Light Blue			
Perfection	Yellow			
Relatives	Light Blue			
Spirituality	Yellow			

7.2.16 Sense of belonging

To some of the interviewees, their sense of belonging relates to the length of time they lived in the house. Living more than twenty-five years in the same house increased the sense of belonging. To some others, their sense of belonging is related to the house itself and if it meets their tastes and desires. Sometimes the sense of belonging is not related to the period of time spent in the

house at all. One of the participants lived in a house bought by her husband, despite having spent two years living in it, she did not feel any sense of belonging. When she started to explain the situation, she compared her house with other people's, who buy land and build their own houses. She admitted that she (and her husband) could not stand the long process of buying the land, finding a suitable architect and contractor, or going through the design process. Therefore, they decided to buy a newly built house that fulfilled their needs. However, she felt that her sense of belonging and attachment to that house was not the same as that of other people who build their own houses. She felt that she could easily sell her house and buy another one. At the other end of the spectrum, another interviewee who spent more than seven years in the process of building her house would never think of moving out of it to another one, even if it were of better quality.

It seems that for children, monitoring the progress of building a house acts as creating the process of a growing sense of attachment and belonging in parallel. One of the interviewees stated that she witnessed every stage of building of her father's house, starting from digging, the foundations, building, furnishing and so on (the building process lasted around four years and she was seven years old at the time). The experience of going through the building process created a special connection between her and the house.

A wealthy interviewee who grew up in a well-to-do family explained the sense of belonging in a different way. Her father owned a large number of houses in and outside Bahrain, he often changed his residence and even at the weekend he used to take the family to one of his cottages or holiday houses. The interviewee stated that she believes she developed a sense of belonging to all of the houses. Even now after she got married, had children and built her own house according to her needs, desires and aspirations, where she cared about every single detail, and she feels that she belongs to it, when she was asked if she would sell it, she laughed and easily agreed. This participant explained that she loved the continuous change of home. It seemed that because she had been through this experience, she possibly did not develop a sense of belonging to any particular one of the houses.

Having so many material and immaterial resources invested in building a home over a long period of time seemed to have impacted on the way people feel about their homes. One of the interviewees spent a long time moving, with her husband, from one place to another, in rented accommodation, while observing the building process of their house, which lasted for more than seven years, during which time they faced many difficulties and challenges. She explained that her attachment to her own home was beyond description and she would not change it for anything else. She felt that she always wanted to protect it.

7.2.17 Dream home

When the question “What is the dream/ideal home/house?” was asked, the participants’ answers varied between material and immaterial descriptors. It is also interesting to see answers reflecting personal differences between the way people think of their dream *home*.

- It could be a combination of the traditional and contemporary layouts, with a covered/glazed courtyard to prevent dust and protect the internal environment.
- The garden is an essential component.
- A garden that does not compromise privacy.
- A strong connection between the inside and outside of the house.
- It allows organic expansion to accommodate future family changes (sons and sometimes even daughters with their young families after getting married).
- Spaciousness is a desired factor in the ideal home.
- A number of people mentioned a swimming pool as a component of their dream home. One interviewee argued that due to a lack of entertainment places and the religious teachings that prevent females from using/swimming at beaches, people would prefer to have their own private swimming pools, so this desire is a result of a cultural and social impact.

When asked about her dream/ideal home, one interviewee explained that her current home is not the ideal, but if she were to move to an ideal one, it would be under the following conditions: her husband’s blessing, all the family members would have to move with her, the new place would need to be wide and the location had to be close to where the extended family and relatives lived. There are many immaterial values within those conditions, which reveal that the ideal home, as far as this interviewee is concerned, is not the material side of the house, even if she specified some material values like the size. The ideal home would be created with the family and community, with the blessing and respect of the head of the family and with the creation of a space where “the soul could breathe”. The idea of the extended family is strongly referenced by this interviewee.

7.2.18 What happened to Manama?

Many of the participants, especially those who originated from Manama, the capital of Bahrain, referred a lot to the old city in their interviews. A number of them described how the city used to be beautiful, and regretted its current condition with derelict or abandoned houses and the dominance of migrants’ residences, which changed the identity of the city.

A number of interviewees, especially in the age group sixty to eighty years, claimed that the reason behind their attachment to Manama lies in the religious gatherings of *ma'atams*. These interviewees were born and raised in Manama. One of them got married and moved to another city close by, where she lived with her husband for a long time. When her sons and daughters got married she moved back to live in her old house in Manama. The house has internal circulation connections with all the facilities that this lady would need, which makes it easier for her, especially as she can hardly move now. These connections included one with the attached house of the neighbours, who were also relatives, and a second one, through a narrow passageway with the *ma'tam*, in which she spends most of her afternoons and sometimes mornings depending on the seasons. The interviewee regretted how most of the original residents of Manama had left their houses. These are now either rented to Asian labourers or abandoned to drug users.

Some houses in Manama are left empty only to be used during the religious seasons of Ashura and Ramadhan, which are approximately three months a year. These are religious traditional celebrations and Manama is the best place to facilitate them. During Ashura in particular, the alleyways and passages are full of food stalls (*madhaief*), cooking and distributing all different kinds of fresh food for free. Some stalls give free booklets, leaflets and educational CDs. During these special seasons, lots of people use their abandoned traditional houses in Manama to use for activities like cooking, during the day and night. Some people are still maintaining these houses just so that they can be used during these seasons. One of the interviewees argued that maintaining the old houses was not easy. She stated that her family thought of demolishing the house and rebuilding it with a new layout that could house the extended family that gather during the religious festive seasons, and to be able to turn the house into a *ma'tam* on some occasions. The fact that the house is surrounded by attached houses and only very narrow alleyways for access, makes it impossible for construction, plant and material delivery vehicles to access the site. Given these logistical difficulties, the family decided to carry out minimal refurbishment to the building fabric. This interviewee talked a lot about her childhood memories in that house, which was surrounded by the two houses of other uncles. The three houses used to be the grandfather's big house, which was then divided into three to house his sons with their families. The other uncles sold their houses, which are now inhabited by Indian families. The house and community represent a big part of the interviewee's memories, who is in her fifties, especially since she participated in the process of building the house with her sisters, brothers and father. One of her great dreams is to buy the other two houses and reunite all three to claim back the land that was owned by her grandfather.

Another interviewee in her seventies, who lived in Manama since she was born, strongly refused to move out. She preferred to stay in her very small house, with an area around 150 sq m only. She stated that she used to live in the big family courtyard house, with her in-laws during her early days of marriage. Around seven families lived in that house including the head's wives and

the sons' young families. A social organisation was established in the house with the distribution of duties among females, the neighbourhood brunch gathering and other activities. To avoid conflicts within the house, every family established their own house, small kitchen and small toilet with one or two bedrooms open to the main communal courtyard. The interviewee stated that she spent around fifteen years in the family courtyard house, where she had all her seven children, then her little family moved to a new house, where she currently lives. The old house is now left empty apart from when it is used during the festive season as explained earlier. For this interviewee, Manama is connected with her religious beliefs, as the accessibility to *ma'tams* was the main reason behind her attachment to the place. Although her current house is small, she always refused to leave it for even short visits to her parents or sons. Her house was always open to neighbours, relatives, visitors and even strangers. During the religious season, even people she did not know would normally knock on her door asking to use the toilet or "hubble bubble" (traditional way of smoking, normally for ladies) and she would offer some sweets and food. Expressing the traditional habits of hospitality and generosity does still exist, to a certain extent, in Manama, especially around the three festive months.

The immateriality of the spatial experience within the city of Manama is not only attributed to the residential part of it, rather, it extends to reach the life within the commercial market or what is traditionally called *souq*. One interviewee stated that Manama *souq* had big immaterial values behind it. It is not only about commercial activities, but it extends to formulate a special social interaction where the whole atmosphere represents a special sense of traditional values that tend to disappear along with the emergence of shopping malls. The interviewee stated that one could not find the *souq's* atmosphere anywhere else, and she also declared that she has a friend who always visits Manama *souq* whenever she feels down and needs some refreshing.

7.2.19 Discussion

The first question that this research sought to explore is to identify the immaterial and non-physical aspects of architecture that can have an impact on the user's spatial experience. This type of research is very significant for two reasons. Very little work on immateriality in architecture in the context of Arab/Islamic countries could be found in the literature. Furthermore, the term "spatial experience" is not a well known concept that people can easily understand, which makes some of the interview questions quite difficult to answer. However, in terms of willingness to engage in the research, the participants did not just explain what their homes mean to them, but they shared many of their everyday stories, which revealed how they tended to experience their own spaces and places. This is obviously hugely influenced by the specificities of their religious and social values. The interviews showed that people in Bahrain are aware of the immaterial values that shape their spatial experience and give rise to meanings and concepts associated with

their homes, and they managed to specify a number of immaterial descriptors, listed in Table 7.1. The meaning of home seemed to relate to the type of house, whether it was the traditional type or the contemporary one.

Most of the participants acknowledged that the traditional house with its vernacular architecture carried more meaning and related to who they are, materially and immaterially. In traditional settlements with courtyard houses, people celebrated the strong social bonds and sense of togetherness within their quarters and neighbourhoods. This obviously increased the sense of belonging and identity, which was reflected in their architecture and lifestyle. There is an acknowledgement that architecture that was created locally for the local people and local context seems to be more in tune with both material and immaterial needs of the people.

Participants regretted the loss of many immaterial values that can be associated with the traditional settlements that were the norm up until some fifty years ago. They recognised that the contemporary way of life brought about many changes that did not relate to the local context, however, most of them stated that the wheel of change cannot be turned back and that the new lifestyle is here to stay. The researcher explained that there are ways to embrace some aspects of traditions without necessarily going back to the old lifestyle and that the new generation needs to be aware of the value of their tradition and to try to propose solutions that fit with contemporary life and progress.

7.3 The cultural impact on architecture

This section articulates the impact of the local culture on architecture, through the interviewees' responses. Through the cultural changes over time, some of the social habits of the past are disappearing, such as gender segregation, taking-off shoes when entering the house and many more. All these cultural aspects contributed to creating the traditional vernacular architecture and its features, which has been through major transformation over the last four decades. As a result, the new lifestyle brought with it a new architecture, so it is worth questioning; does this architecture suit the local context with its specific social, cultural and religious settings?

7.3.1 Privacy

There is a difference between privacy as a socio-cultural aspect and privacy as a religious requirement, although they overlap. The former is associated with the desire for people to enjoy life away from outsiders, while the latter is in keeping with the teachings of the religion, with a view to keeping the female members of the family away from the eyes of male strangers. In Arabic

the two terms have different translations; privacy as cultural aspect is *khososiya* while religious privacy is *sitr*.

One of the interviewees who lives in an extended family house with her in-laws living on one floor, while she and her family live on another, feels unhappy with her situation. The interviewee was of the opinion that she does not have enough privacy because everything she does can be noticed by her in-laws. Even small, mundane matters, like going out or coming in, can be the subject of scrutiny. In this case, privacy is of the social type “*khososiya*”. The need for religious privacy is noticed in the yard or garden of a contemporary house, for example, when it is overlooked by the neighbours. This means females cannot use it freely. The traditional layout of courtyard houses was fully protected and were never exposed to strangers’ eyes, to the extent that females used the internal courtyard to do all their household activities, and even sleeping during the summer nights, without worrying about being exposed.

Another example of privacy as a social or cultural aspect appears through sharing a house with the in-laws. When the main entrance is shared, receiving guests becomes problematic. It is not easy for the individual families within the big house to receive guests at all times, especially male ones. Some people considered it as a social and cultural value to be respected; as *home* has its sacred and respected value.

Achieving privacy in relation to the use of the house’s swimming pool is a dilemma in some cases, especially for religious people who do not accept the idea of females being exposed while swimming, as they see this as a forbidden act. Some of those people would prefer to have an interior swimming pool totally covered and enclosed, while others would have a high fence, walls or tall trees to block the line of vision from outsiders. One of the interviewees stated that the architect’s advice was to locate the swimming pool by the main entrance and to have it connected to the front garden both visually and spatially, as this would give the house an added aesthetic value. However, the interviewee (the client/owner) strongly disagreed and wanted to hide the swimming pool in the backyard to give it more privacy especially for the women when using it.

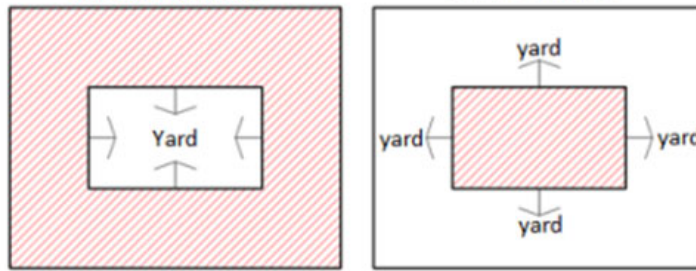


Figure 7.13: Openings of houses to yard, traditional setting (left) that protect visual privacy and current setting (right) where the yard is exposed (Source: BEManian and SaREM, 2015)

Another interviewee argued that the spatial layout of the modern houses lacks privacy, especially in the front yard and this has, sometimes, led to a change in people’s spatial behaviour (see Figure 7.13). Traditionally, weddings took place in houses, which would be decorated to receive guests and celebrate the occasion. Nowadays most houses lack the space to host guests, and even in the case of spacious houses, people cannot use their yard to hold weddings, as they would be overlooked. The alternative is to hire a wedding hall for the occasion.

“Built environment in old Muslim cities was an outcome of activities that were guided by principles of Islamic law, *fiqh*, which turned into endogenous mechanisms.” (Hamouche, 2003: 12)

Fallah *et al.* (2015) explain the role of privacy in shaping the built environment in Iran, as an example of Islamic architecture (see Figure 7.14). the authors discussed the concept of privacy as one of the most vital values, especially that it is supported by religious beliefs. They consider it as “the most important feature of cultural values within architecture”.

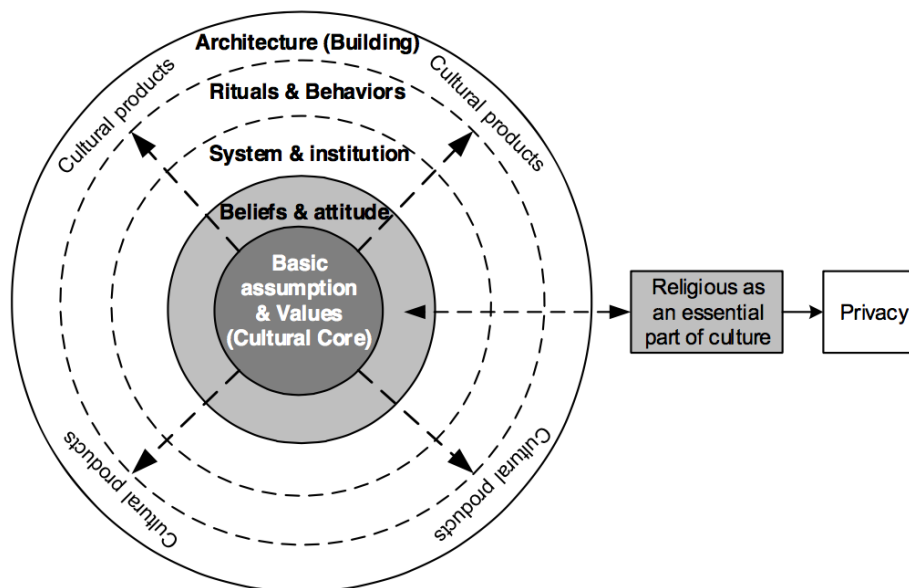


Figure 7.14: The position of privacy within cultural layers (Source: Fallah *et al.*,2015)

7.3.2 Modernity and the new lifestyle

Many interviewees talk about the changes to lifestyle after the discovery of oil, and the changes in people's income. Add to that, the high level of educational achievement for women, which enabled them to be fully active in society outside the house. Therefore, women are not just dedicating their lives to house work and raising children, they now study and work long hours outside their homes. This has resulted in reducing the time they once had for daily social and cultural gathering. This in turn led to a weakening of social bonds. Globalisation has a big impact on the current lifestyle. This impact can be felt in the architecture and life of the neighbourhood, where the neighbours do not necessarily know each other, and many of the spatial features like the internal doors linking adjacent houses have disappeared.

7.3.3 Neighbourhoods

One of the most important values in Muslim society is neighbourhood relationships, as the Prophet Mohammad (p.b.u.h) stated the importance of such connections in many of his speeches. Neighbourhoods used to have an important role in the social life of Bahrainis, and in building the society as a whole. Nowadays it tends to be less important as a result of a number of factors, mainly relating to the impact of globalisation. Some people still value their relationships with their neighbours, however it is on a different level than in the past. Visits that used to take place on a daily basis are now reduced to occasional visits or sending food gifts over the holiday periods, like during Ramadan. One interviewee who is twenty-six years old explained that when she was a child people were always visiting each other, especially when someone came back from travelling. Welcoming people back acted as a socio-cultural-religious activity where people who were about to leave or had just come back from their travels, would receive guests, males or females, who would congratulate or wish them a safe journey back. This social activity used to be a common event, which is now gradually disappearing.

Another interviewee stated that there is a traditional Arabic proverb that means if people are to move house, they should choose the neighbour before choosing the house.

الجار قبل الدار

“The neighbour before the house.”

Both the traditional courtyard house and the urban spatial grid layout supported the development of these social bonds. The internal doors provided a hidden network that connected the houses and connected people at the same time especially females. The central courtyard was used for the daily brunch gathering, where every neighbour would bring what was left over from the previous

day's meal and they would gather, eat, chat and discuss. One interviewee noted that the strong social bonds celebrated between people in the old days was what made their life easier, while these days we tend to lack such an immaterial value in our life.

7.3.4 Gender segregation

The origin of the gender segregation principle comes from the religious teachings of Islam. Gender segregation still plays an important role in deciding on the internal layout of the house for some people, depending on the owners' way of thinking and their age. In some cases, this requirement is achievable, especially if the people own the land and they supervise the planning of their house. In other cases, such as with the state housing units, where people are given a completely built house ready for them to furnish and move in, the owner might need to carry out some building alterations to achieve a layout that can enable gender segregation when needed. With the changes in lifestyle, people tend to overlook this principle when planning their houses. Some interviewees explained that they do not need this segregation nowadays because they do not receive many guests. This can be seen as an indication that the social bonds are not as strong as they used to be. Participants argue that most of the guests would be close family members anyway, in which case segregation is not needed.

One interviewee argued, "When designing my house, I should think of my own needs, and I believe that it is a waste of space to dedicate a space for divan (*majlis*) for guests, whom I might receive only once or twice a year". According to the gender segregation rules and the sense of generosity and hospitality in the Arabic and Muslim lifestyle, having *majlis* used to be a must. Now, along with the changes in the culture and lifestyle, *majlis* is not a must to everyone anymore, so it has been replaced with spacious living rooms, where people could receive guests from both genders at the same time, so this could be considered as a regression of the social and cultural impact on architecture.

One of the cultural traditions that has marked people's social behaviour for a long time is hospitality and the desire to gather and socialise. The impact of such a value in architecture has its roots in the traditional house layout, with a large, open central courtyard that could fit more than fifty people. The houses nowadays are very cramped with limited space, barely enough for the family members living there, never mind guests. People with a high income who still buy into this tradition can easily create their house layout to suits such events, but other people, like those from the public housing blocks, lack the resources to alter the layout of their homes. This was the case for one of the interviewees who had to introduce many changes like the position of the main door and the location of the kitchen, reducing the area of the garden and so on, in order to enlarge her living room to be able to receive more guests.

One of the interviewees suggested that she might introduce movable partitions in case she needed to divide the space to create segregations.

The tradition of hospitality is not only reflected in the scale of a house but also in the larger scale of the city. Based on this value, the idea of *madhayef* (plural of *madhef*) is generated. *Madhayef* are small stands, which are located and distributed in the alleyways of the old city of Manama, offering meals for free during special occasions (discussed before in previous section).

On another level, the impact of western culture has interfered and changed the local cultural pattern, especially around understanding the notion of modernity and progress. People nowadays would prefer to spend more time in enclosed, sealed and air-conditioned buildings like shopping malls, rather than having the simple experience of the local traditional market. Many of the interviewees argued that people in Bahrain these days perceive shopping malls and that type of architecture, and highly marketed brands to represent progress, which should be prioritised. The media play an important role in creating this image of the consumer society (as if all the people in the West and elsewhere would prefer shopping malls). One of the ideas that is gaining in popularity nowadays is that imported products tend to be better than the local ones.

7.3.5 Direct interaction with the outdoors

Why do people tend not to walk in the streets these days? This was one of the side questions articulated within the conversation with the interviewees. Many participants responded by referring to the climatic condition as the main reason. However, the climate of the region did not change much, and Bahrain has always had a long, hot summer, and people a hundred years ago were not stopped by this climate. Evidence shows that they were using the passages and walking in the streets at all times. Other participants argued that the idea is integrated with social, cultural and even economic changes. A number of female participants expressed that they would be happy to walk in the streets of foreign countries, when they travel abroad, but not in Bahrain.

One interviewee argued that the reason people are not walking in the alleyways being due to cultural and religious values is not true at all. She suggested that women adhered more to wearing the *hijab* in the early days when they were using those alleyways constantly. Now the wearing of the veil is losing popularity but people still claim that they do not use the passages because of gender segregation.

One of the interviewees explained that not walking outdoors in the alleys and passages has led to an increase in disease, as people are getting sick by being lazy. She also declared that some people

were being criticised for walking (for exercise) between alleyways, which then made them avoid doing it.

A number of interviewees agreed that the loss of direct interaction between people with the city and the urban environment, through walking, was due to the improvement in economic conditions. This has in turn led to the widespread use of cars and people became lazier, preferring to use their air-conditioned car to go to a nearby shop, even if it is only a few meters away. The direct interaction with the city has been lost, in many instances, and has been replaced by an experience from inside a car. This phenomenon is contributing to the lack of social interaction between people on the one hand, and between people and their environment on the other. This is leading to the creation of a new type of experience that lacks many of the meanings referred to earlier. This might also explain the diminishing appreciation of tradition and heritage, as these are no longer being experienced nor understood.

7.3.6 Toilet seats

One of the religious teachings is that when a person is in the toilets they need to avoid being along the *qibla* axis (the direction of prayer towards Mecca). In practice, this has an implication on the layout of bathrooms and water closets, as it affects the orientation of the sanitary fittings (toilet seat, bidet). One of the interviewees who bought a house which had been built for and inhabited by foreign nationals, found all the toilet seats were facing the wrong direction, so they had to change them all. This type of alteration illustrates the need of users to live in a house that reflects their identity, beliefs and practices.

7.3.7 Location

When looking for a plot of land or a house to buy, people would set their criteria based on a number of factors like the location, the local neighbourhood's activity and celebrations, and social and religious practices. Some people would prefer to live close to their community and relatives, while others would prefer to be close to the big cities and amenities. Some people would like to live near where activities are held during social and the religious events, and some would like to avoid that. Some people would see hearing the sound of *athan* (call to prayer) as an essential element so they would choose to live near a mosque. Some people do not want to live in an area that does not have a *ma'tam* nearby. Some would be proud of the number of *ma'tams* surrounding their home, like the people living in the old city of Manama.

7.3.8 Commercial versus family-owned apartment blocks

Comparisons between the commercial apartment block and family-owned apartment block came up in a number of interviews. The family-owned block acted as the extended family house but in a modern layout. In this case, some of the immaterial values of the traditional house, like the sense of gathering and community, had been preserved. It also succeeded in giving its inhabitants a sense of commercial and emotional security, as they were living in their own property. On the other hand, the commercial block was not created for social bonds, and the inhabitants barely greet each other. Most of the interviewees who live in the commercial apartment blocks stated that there is no sense of community, no neighbourhood, no bonds, and most felt emotionally isolated and lonely, and they missed the communal life.

Another interviewee stated that living in a family-owned apartment block had its advantages and disadvantages. The advantages were about being surrounded by your own family and the added sense of emotional security that comes with it. Having the grandparents living in the same place is an added advantage in creating an environment full of family and relatives where children could develop strong relationships and a sense of belonging. This is much better than living in a general housing block next to neighbours who you don't know and with whom you have no interaction. The disadvantage would be around seeking social privacy where people would have their own space, especially when the family grows. The interviewee said, "Like any other woman I was looking forward to having my own independent house away from the extended family, which would act as my own kingdom".

7.3.9 Organic extension

As explained earlier in the immateriality section, the traditional courtyard house was in a constant state of expansion with extensions being built to accommodate the needs of a growing extended family. Within the modern life setting, the same notion still exists, but it takes on a different form. In some families, the financial and commercial situation plays a vital role in deciding where to live. Add to that, the inherited cultural and the social settings also contribute. A sense of gathering, community and clan has always been encouraged and people mostly seem to be attached to their families, especially in the early years of married life. Therefore, the family house had to be expanded/extended, and according to most of the interviewees, their family house expanded vertically. This means that the house that used to have one or two storeys for the original family, had to have an additional storey or more added, depending on the number of new families to be housed. Those new storeys were usually for a newly married son and his wife, and in some cases it might house a daughter with her husband. It is still common nowadays for parents to help their son by offering accommodation when he gets married, and in some cases their daughter as well.

One of the families interviewed had three generations living in their house. The ground floor was for the grandmother and her unmarried daughters, the first floor was for the son, who looks after his mother, with his family (wife, four daughters and a son), and a newly built second floor was occupied by the newly married twenty-one-year-old grandson and his wife. In the case of this family, what drove them all to live in the same house was definitely not their financial situation, as their income was good compared to other families. If they wanted to they could have bought/built houses for each family to live in separately, however, they preferred to all live in one house, reflecting a special social and cultural value that still impacts upon some people today.

7.3.10 Culturally alien designs

Some interviewees stated that the dominant imported design styles nowadays are alien to the local culture and environment. There are many reasons behind this but two of them are worth elaborating on. Firstly, the architects and designers are mostly educated abroad, thus the ideas and designs they bring with them are shaped by their studies more than their background. It is a common belief nowadays, among users and practitioners, that the western designs are more progressive and improve people's lives. According to Petruccioli and Pirani "The international style has devastated more the Islamic environments because of their eagerness for progress, identified tout court with the Western product." (2002: xi).

Secondly, the size of the building plots these days is much smaller compared to what they used to be. Under such circumstances, people are now more interested in having more rooms in the house than taking into consideration layouts that may foster good social bonds. However, in the process, they may use up a lot of space in an already diminished house size. The interviewees also argued that most of the architects nowadays do not make reference to the local cultural, religious or social needs of the people, and many culturally related aspects are being ignored, such as the orientation of the toilet seat.

7.3.11 Gender issues in the designer–client relationship

An interesting point was raised by one of the interviewees, which illustrates well the matter of client's gender when dealing with architects and designers. According to the religious teachings and the cultural values, females should limit their direct interactions with males, except when it is necessary. During the planning phase of her house (hers and her husband's), the interviewee could not have an input into the process to make a big enough impact, as she was not dealing directly with the architect who was a man. She stated that she wanted to convey what she wanted through her husband, but this process was not successful, as the message seems to have been lost

in translation and what she was hoping for from the designer did not materialise. On the other hand, when it came to interior design, the participant felt much relieved as she was dealing with the designer directly, who was a female, and everything was done according to her instructions.

7.3.12 Discussion

Architecture in traditional Islamic cities was an expression of and an outcome informed by people's daily activities and practices, which are guided by the principles and teachings of Islam. Over time, the culture evolved and it became complicated to combine traditional activities within contemporary settings. This has led to the implementation of new approaches in architecture, and life in general, to cope with the new modern settings. Consequently, society has witnessed a diminishing influence of local culture on one hand, and the emergence of a new western-orientated culture.

The modern Muslim city seems to be lacking a sense of maturity, especially in expressing its identity and belonging. This results in these cities lacking originality, especially in terms of immaterial values over material ones.

This section presented the cultural impact on architecture from the interviewees' perspectives, whom mostly referred to examples from the traditional settlement to express the cultural impact on architecture.

7.4 Understanding the users' spatial experience

The interview discussions reveal that there is a gap in understanding the users' spatial experience at both levels: the users' and the designer's/architect's. Design briefs tend to be influenced by a number of factors, such as the client's wishes, the budget and the architect's way of responding to the brief. Few architects, if any, are sensitive to the views of the users, and take risks, in order to obtain a conservative view of cultural change; and the same thing could be applied to design education, as one of the interviewees asserts.

According to Bruce Allsopp (1974), architecture is for people, not for architects, therefore, it is important to consider the dimension of a user-oriented, culturally responsible practice. Involving people in the process of creating their space and special experience, which they will inhabit and pursue in their daily life is very important. Practice that appreciates user-involvement helps the individuals to identify and develop their own understanding of their environment.

7.4.1 Understanding the spatial experience

Articulating the spatial experience is a reflective process that the society in Bahrain and the Gulf region in general are not used to. Therefore, this point was not easy to discuss in the interviews. People expressed their desires in regards to their dream homes or sometimes explained what they imagined before building their home. As there is no specific Arabic translation for the term “spatial experience”, the interviewer referred to a set of questions in order to convey the idea to the interviewees. Such questions articulated the mechanism for using house facilities, the circulation and the various daily or occasional activities. To give the discussion more depth, the participants were encouraged to talk about their feelings and emotions in regards to their private spaces, and to reflect on the social and cultural references. Some participants talked about the spatial experience that they imagined to have before starting the actual process of building their house, how that had gradually changed and how they ended up with something different to what they had originally planned. This particular participant had the chance to buy some land and to design and then build their own house, with the help of architects and contractors. At the design stage, the house contained two kitchens, indoor and outdoor, as is popular in Bahrain nowadays. Due to their financial situation, they were only able to construct an indoor kitchen and delayed building the outdoor one. After moving into the house and living and experiencing the real space, they thought that they did not actually need the outdoor kitchen. Even if most people in Bahrain think that having two kitchens is ideal and essential, it does not mean that it is a standard requirement. In fact, every spatial experience is personal and unique, just like fingerprints, so what suits one family does not necessary suit another. This cannot be realised unless they actually experience the space, not only imagine it, and it could change over time.

The same thing happened with the *majlis*. The interviewee stated that the private space for receiving guests, especially males, was not created when they moved into the house, due to finances, so they decided to leave it for later. However, after living in the house for four years, they did not feel that there was a need for such a space, so they did not create it.

Experiencing the space first-hand helps people to understand their needs and desires, and creates attachments with every corner. However, if one tries to define the experience of space, it is about the practice of living in it. It is not about the ideal home or what people need or want specifically, it is about what they actually experience, good or bad, nice or ugly, sad or joyous, and everything that sticks in people’s memories.

“Space as experience has to derive from an Ur-feeling, an ability to imagine a dimension that projects above basic reality, an exposure to a reality greater than we are able to conceptualize. Sense of space is a mental construct, a projection of the outside world as we experience it according to the equipment at our disposal: an idea.” (Hertzberger, 2000: 17)

One interviewee stated that there is a need for architects and designers to understand and imagine the clients' spatial experience and to produce their design features accordingly.

The human spatial experience is integrated with and shaped by spatial cognition and behaviour and how people interact with their physical built environment. Within the context of Bahrain, it seems that there is a lack of understanding of the spatial experience, and there is no published research that articulates this. People infer things about the use of their environments and spaces, however, their knowledge of the spatial experience and the way in which they visualise and symbolise their built environments is limited. Therefore, there is a gap in understanding and describing the spatial experience and its components of elements, patterns and sequences.

7.4.2 Learning to cope

Some of the interviewees were not happy with their living conditions, in terms of their space and spatial experience but had no other choice but to cope with it.

Other interviewees stated that they needed some time to get used to a new atmosphere, even if they were happy with it. One participant explained that she used to live in a small flat with her family, and the atmosphere of the flat was completely different to the new big house. The flat was very small and intimate and she stated that she always felt that everything was close, whereas in the big house that she moved into, she felt that it had a sense of a vagueness, especially in the early days of their move. It took them a while to get used to the sounds and echoes in the bigger spaces. The interviewee gave an example: they used to spend a lot of time in the kitchen as their gathering/living area, because it was more intimate and smaller than the living hall, until they got used to the other parts of the house.

7.4.3 Being used to something

The relationship between people and space could be informed by what a person is used to or has been raised with. This could affect the way in which he/she may experience or live in another type of space. This element has appeared in interviews with people who had been raised in traditional courtyard houses, and how they conceive their new homes and villas, which are built according to the western layout. Furthermore, this theme also appeared in interviews with young people who live in modern houses. One of the participants stated that she grew up in her father's house, a wide and spacious house with a big front garden and big swimming pool. Now, after getting married to a cousin, she could not move with him to his small flat, so she still lives with him at her father's house. She states that she can't even handle being invited to a small place, as

she always feels that she cannot breathe in those cramped spaces. It would seem that the spacious place this interviewee was raised in affected her experience of small, congested places, and obviously reflected on her daily spatial experience.

7.4.4 The ability to read architectural drawings

An interviewee argues that the typical user is not always able to read, understand and imagine the space through architectural drawings, which require approval before the building work on the house starts. This can lead to clients ending up with houses having the wrong layout, and can explain why many of them might end up being disappointed with the outcome and want to introduce many alterations and changes.

7.4.5 Commercial considerations in architecture

Some interviewees argued that domestic architecture in Bahrain today is all about profit, “Give me £800 and I will give you the plans for your dream house”. In the architecture practice domain, profit gained took precedence, at the expense of another important element – the users’ spatial experience. An interviewee stated that this should not be the attitude of architects and designers, as they are in charge of creating spaces for people to live in and be happy with. This “profit orientated” approach could make the user happy at the beginning, but once he/she moves into the house, they might gradually discover that this is not what they wanted, it is not practical for them or that they are not happy or comfortable living in it.

7.4.6 Spatial experience and memories

An interviewee who spent her childhood in an apartment in a family owned block, and then moved to her father’s new house when she was teenager, and spent ten years there, then came back to the original apartment after marrying. The interviewee stated that when she moved back into the apartment where she spent her childhood, she did not want to change anything in the layout, she wanted to experience the space as it used to be when she was a child. She wanted to keep the same identity of space while preserving her memories.

7.4.7 Discussion

Both material and immaterial aspects of architecture can come together in generating a full and comprehensive spatial experience for people. One cannot deny that architecture contributes to its users' lives, and it is associated with meanings and hidden narratives. Most of the participants were not able to define their spatial experience, however, it was set within their own understanding of their daily life activities, and this is what matters. Some of them were happy with where they live and some were trying to cope with what they had. Some of them had got used to certain criteria within their space, or they were used to a certain spatial experience, which created their sense of attachment to their spaces and built up their memories.

While the ability to understand the spatial experience and its meaning is not easy, it is one the architect's duties to try to understand what the client's needs are in order to create an architecture that is specific to a certain context, culture, society and individuals.

On another level, what is called profit-architecture is quite dominant nowadays, especially in Middle Eastern cities, where both local and foreign architects stand to gain large profits – this does not necessarily result in creating happy architecture or happy cities.

Throughout the discussions with the participants, it was acknowledged that there is a need for architects who fully understand local traditions, culture and environment, and who are willing to allow for people's involvement in their designs, in order to create new architecture that is respectful of the locality and specificity of the context, and which blends with the global contemporary needs at the same time.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter articulates the process of analysing the data and information gathered from the semi-structured interviews with a group of Bahraini people regarding their experience of their *home*. Many themes, concepts and general ideas were generated through the extensive discussions, which covered many aspects, such as the traditional vernacular architecture, the local culture, the impact of globalisation and many others.

Through the analysis there has been an attempt to make the information intelligible and to clearly explain the context and background behind it. The perceptions and understandings of meanings and values discussed above have been through critical analysis to illustrate the importance of the immaterial aspect, as an element that helps in assuring the success of architecture.

Reflections from the analysis confirm that the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience are as important as the material ones. It shows that immateriality sits at the core of people's perception and understanding of their spaces, and it defines the relationship between them. Although the term "spatial experience" is not that familiar, people managed to specify a set of immaterial descriptors that describes what their *home* means to them (Table 7.1).

The research findings also show that there is a barrier between the culture and architecture within the context of Bahrain. Firstly, there is a lack of personal interest and will to implement traditional design solutions, as most of the participants believe that it is not suitable for their current life. Some participants are seeking to integrate design solutions, which combine an essence of heritage, but which also blends well with contemporary life. However, such a proposal has to be suggested by a professional, who could build and supervise such a project.

It is also important to mention that the people's understanding of culture and its implications for architecture has certain limitations. Most of the participants are after "trending architecture", which is what they are exposed to through media nowadays. Few of them mentioned the role of vernacular architecture in sustaining the traditional local community and celebrating social practices. However, the younger generation, who probably had no idea about the essence of the traditional local architecture, or may have been exposed to some information through books and journals, does not appreciate the loss of immaterial values that disappeared along with the courtyard houses and the old connected urban fabric, for instance. Therefore, it is noticeable that the impact of local culture on architecture nowadays is very limited, especially when one compares it with the condition of the traditional settings.

The culture-architecture debate could be a way to enhance the users' understanding of their spatial experience. First of all, such a debate establishes a solid ground where people's identity sits. It is what distinguishes people and their context, and it is what could drive them toward creating distinctive solutions for all aspects of life, including their built environments. Identity is also well connected with people's roots, tradition and heritage, which, according to the interviewees' discussions, lacks appreciation nowadays in Bahrain. Therefore, there is a need to enhance people's awareness of their heritage, greatness and pride, especially within the context of Bahrain and the Islamic world in general.

Ragette's approach to explaining the relationship between architecture and culture supports the findings of the interviews. He articulates that in the traditional Arab Islamic region, the architecture blended with the context, and its connection with the local culture was assured. Most importantly, buildings were built in cooperation with the user, and the builder knew exactly what was required. The architectural approach was flexible, especially within the construction processes, and decisions could be made and changed on the spot. Builders and craftsmen could

use their individual judgement and apply their creative ideas. This resulted in a design that did not specifically express the decision of one individual, but rather, it reflected a general order of life, including religious and social concepts.

This contrasts with the situation today, where the architect predetermines every detail, and the contract documents tie the contractor/builder to certain specifications. The users' involvement varies depending on the type of building. For instance, a private home would be considered to be the type of building requiring the most personal input. However, clients' preferences nowadays are often influenced by western models, especially the exterior appearance. Other types of buildings require the input of specialists and authorities, with little if no user input. They are designed for unknown or "average" users and an investor's main concern is for what will most successfully sell.

The effects of globalisation and westernisation upon Muslims are significant, and certainly this affects their architecture and built environment. The spread of secularisation, which creates an ambience in which God is forgotten, has a big impact on how spaces are created, as Nasr asserts in most of his writings (after Ragette, 2003). If Muslim architects and users no longer care about the religious teachings that once informed their architecture, they will be open to adopting alien concepts, as there will no longer be criteria and specific standards governing their choice.

Throughout the engagement with the people during the interviews, the investigation gained a better understanding of the problems associated with the design process and gained an in-depth insight into how spaces are understood and used. This has provided a more detailed framework on which to place the objectives of this research.

The interviews and information gained acted as a great experience in many ways. It enabled the study to obtain a reasonable amount of valuable data and resources, and provided the chance to capture the sentiment of Bahraini people regarding the main concerns of the research, which contributed to the development of the analysis and the articulation of arguments.

It is hoped that this study will lead to a better understanding of the contemporary architectural discourse with a focus on the position of user-orientated practice. It is also anticipated that it will be responsible for creating architecture that is meaningful to its users, and at the same time responds to contemporary social, cultural and environmental conditions. In this respect, the design process will be informed by both material and immaterial considerations of the users and the

context. Such an exploration will benefit architecture both as a practice and as an academic discipline.¹⁰

¹⁰ More data came out of the interviews which could contribute to further research, shown in Appendix E, and sketches of houses shown are in Appendix D.

Space, City and People

Chapter 8: Space, City and People

8.1 Overview

This chapter describes a framework for explaining and understanding the relationship between people, as users of the space, and the city, as space, acknowledging that the latter is more than a mere container for activities but a context for the everyday users' experience. Given the focus of this research, the discussion will consider *immateriality* as part of the spatial experience that people have within their surroundings.

The discussion starts with giving a theoretical overview of experiencing the city, referring to famous thinkers, like Lefebvre and his theory regarding the production of space. This overview acts as the background in which the analysis of the focus group discussion is articulated against.

Consequently, the argument of architecture and the users' spatial experience as a way of consuming space is undertaken within the context of Bahrain using the city of Manama as a case study, based on both; the historical overview of the city that was provided in Chapter 2, and the information gathered from focus group discussion.

The chapter also includes explaining how the cities in the Gulf region in particular have been through a rapid change during the last four decades, since the rise in oil revenues, which impacted on their design and the way the urban space is experienced.

At its conclusion, this chapter questions the relationship between the newly created urban centres and suburbs and their context, after presenting a comprehensive theoretical and historical framework for understanding the Arab Islamic city.

8.2 Experiencing the city: A theoretical framework

One way of approaching the issue of trying to understand the city is to use Lefebvre's approach. Lefebvre (1901–1991) was a French neo-Marxist philosopher and sociologist of urban and rural life who is best known for his critique of the everyday life and the phenomenological concepts he introduced into understanding the city and the production of social space. Lefebvre's critiques of the city were based on his investigation of the cultural construction, where he discussed notions such as modernity, alienation and globalisation. His interests in urban environments "as contexts for everyday life and the expression of social relations of production that extends from the household to the neighbourhood to the urban life. The definition that Lefebvre provided for the urban extends beyond individual elements such as population, geographical size, buildings and centres of production to include all of these together. Thus, "the urban is social centrality. [...] 'City-ness' is the simultaneous gathering and dispersing of goods, information and people. Some

cities achieve this more fully than others – hence our own perceptions of some as ‘great cities’ per se” (Shields, 2010: 280).

Lefebvre maintains that every person has a right to the city as a site of social interaction and exchange, as he asserts that in his book *The Production of Space* (1991). In the book he deals with social space itself across cultural meanings, presenting three forays into the topic: *Perceived Space*, which is of everyday social life and common perception, *Conceived Space*, where the professional and theoretical practice deals with space, and the *Lived Space*, where the person dwells and his/her imagination is kept alive.

“The perceived—conceived—lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces) loses all force if it is treated as an abstract 'model'. If it cannot grasp the concrete (as distinct from the 'immediate'), then its import is severely limited, amounting to no more than that of one ideological mediation among others”. (Lefebvre, 1991:40)

The city, as Lefebvre explains, is not an abstract, neither does it exist in an isolation; thus the concepts he proposes for understanding the city, the lived, conceived and perceived, are not separated. In order to understand the three concepts, one should look at them as interconnected. The spatial practice produces space in a society, in which society could be translated through these spaces, and this is how one may perceive a space. The daily routine has a close association with the perceived space, as it links spaces and places together.

Moreover, the representation of space, referred to as conceiving a space, is actually conceptualising it, as it explains how professionals deal with the conception of space, in which most of their approaches are towards a system of verbal signs as Lefebvre maintains.

“Conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent - all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived.” (Lefebvre, 1991:38-39)

Lefebvre also presents the representational, lived, spaces as directly inhabited through their associated images and symbols. This action determines the passive experience. It covers the material space and makes a symbolic sense or use of it and its objects, as if it represents nonverbal symbols and signs.

The relationship between the three moments of the perceived, the conceived and the lived “are never either simple or stable, nor are they ‘positive’ in the sense in which this term might be opposed to ‘negative’, to the indecipherable, the unsaid, the prohibited, or the unconscious. Are

these moments and their interconnections in fact conscious? Yes – but at the same time they are disregarded or misconstrued. Can they be described as ‘unconscious’? Yes again, because they are generally unknown, and because analysis is able - though not always without error – to rescue them from obscurity. The fact is, however, that these relationships have always had to be given utterance, which is not the same thing as being known – even ‘unconsciously’”. (Lefebvre, 1991:46)

Discussing the city and urban life through the eye of Lefebvre’s three concepts reveals how the city could be examined within the categories of *materiality/immateriality*, which lead to multiple underlying meanings in understanding the city. Experiencing the city responses to aspects related to the way people use, interact and imagine their surroundings. So the city as experience is set within the unconsciousness of everyday activities. This experience is informed by the city as an environment consisting of people, landscape, buildings, infrastructure and so on. The city and urban life engages lived, spiritual and organic elements, in which most of the great historical cities normally emerged and evolved throughout time and out of organic extension processes according to the needs and desires of people over time, and not necessary planned. In fact, this has led some critics to doubt the very existence of urban architecture, as discussed in *Datutop 13: Urban reflections* (1988). The reference indicates that one of the interesting things about urban architecture is that it could be doubted whether it exists or not. One can understand that every city is an architectural entity, however, most of the cities have not been built as a single action and projects. Real cities, like Sana’a and Aleppo, evolved over time, creating and reflecting their inhabitants’ interests and desires, ideas and thoughts, hopes and disappointments.

“Thus it would be impossible for an architect – or for a domestic planning board – to express physically this stream of life. Cities must, to some extent, just emerge; they cannot be planned from the beginning to the end.” (Datutop 13, 1988: 3)

While cities could be perceived according to two modes, the material mode and the immaterial one, unfortunately there is less attention directed towards the latter one as “the relationship between cities, built space and emotions is complex and little understood within urban studies” (Stevenson, 2013: 96).

In her book *The City* (2013), Stevenson acknowledges that the full understanding of cities and urban life cannot be reached in the absence of the embedded emotions in the concept of place. The author admits that emotions, as part of the immateriality of architecture, is of a great influence in understanding and perceiving the spatial experience one may have when consuming the city. In addition, emotions as an immaterial aspect do not exist in isolation from the meanings and connects of religious, social and cultural values. People’s engagement with the city and urban

space is part of their sociological understanding and interaction, which could be slipped into either essence of psychology or constructivism.

In his writings, Lynch, the American urban planner and author, made a connection between psychology and environment. In his book *The Image of the City* (1960), Lynch expresses the view that a city with a good performance is determined by its ability to express social, cultural and meaningful values to its observers.

In order to evaluate the components of the city observer's perception, Lynch carried out an analysis of three American cities. He interviewed small samples of participants for his study: thirty people in Boston and fifteen each in Jersey City and Los Angeles. Lynch's main aim was to understand how the image of an environment could be generated as a result of an interaction between the observer and the environment in which s/he lives. In explaining the image of the city, the author approached the concept of legibility, which enhances the identity, structure and the meaning of the surrounding environment. However, the concept of legibility could be subjective and might differ from one person to another. As this study is mainly associated with the user's spatial experience, the main focus here will be around the city observer, which Lynch describes as a citizen who "has had long associations with some part of his city, and his image is soaked in memories and meanings" (Lynch, 1960: 1)

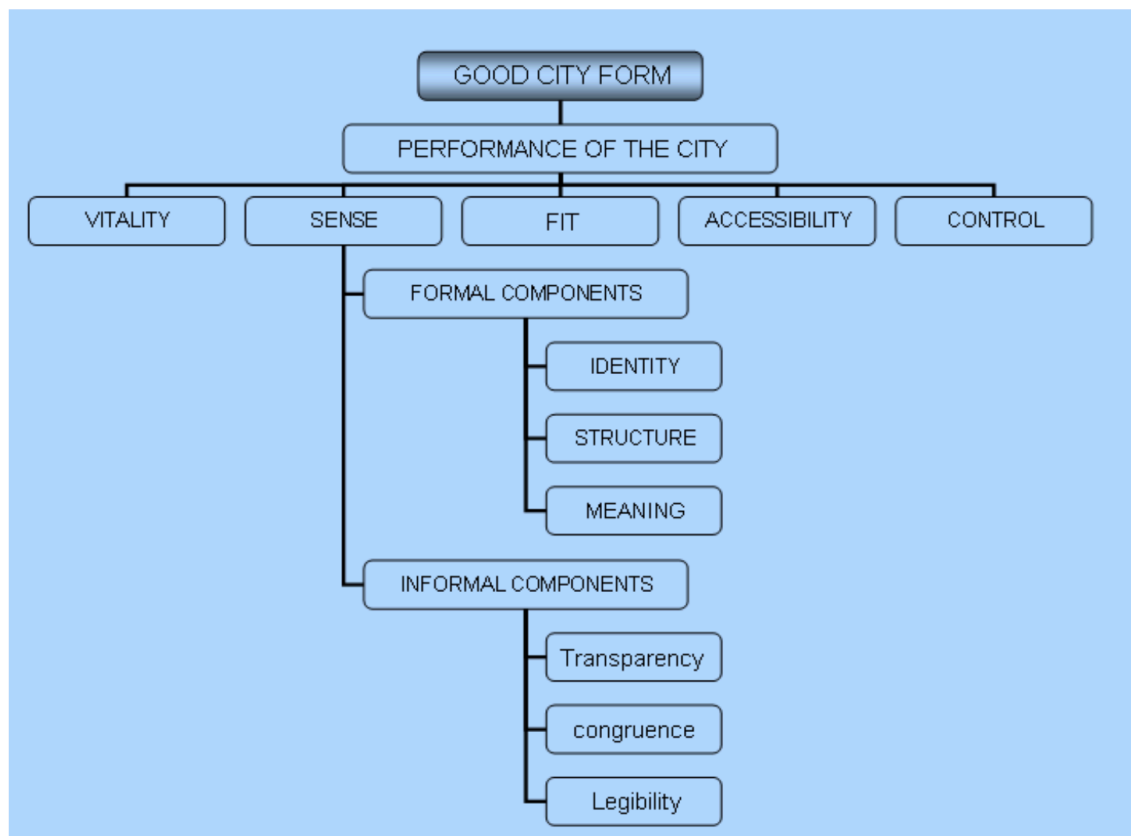


Figure 8.1: Lynch's approach into the good city form (Source: Lynch, 1960)

Apart from presenting a comprehensive methodology for urban planning and design, Lynch, in his discussion, mainly focuses on objective and physical aspects of urban environment and design, while giving less attention to the immaterial aspects including the social and cultural. Although the image we form of the city has immaterial considerations, and Lynch mentioned some in his configuration of a good city form (see Figure 8.1), however, there is still a gap to be highlighted in the urban planning context. There is a need to acknowledge that the immaterial aspects are as important as the material/physical ones, in which immateriality embodies what the place stands for and represents. Subsequently, the quality of experiencing the city is not only about factors related to the city itself as a physical space, such as its shape, form, colour, and arrangement, rather, it is also related to meanings and associations, economics, politics, sociology, religion, history and many others that contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of familiarity and affinity.

It is obvious that the space may gain its lived dimension from people. A particular space would be provided with a sense of existence as it motivates and creates a sequence of meanings for the individuals who use it, and vice versa. Therefore, this interaction between the city and the individuals that shape both of them, creates a method of thinking about the city and experiencing it at different levels.

Thinking about the real experience of the city, which is in fact, the ordinary process of everyday life, may be referred to as a way of reading the city, both direct and indirect, as Gartside explains in his book written for an exhibition titled *Accumulation: Experiencing the City*, held in Manchester in 2010. The author explains how the city could be read through images and objects, as both require a sense of place.

In this book, the idea of accumulation has been used to immerse the reader into a range of perspectives on seeing and being in the city. It accompanied commissioned photographs as well as archive film stills from the last 100 years.

Gartside supports Lynch's idea that in the city, one cannot experience things in isolation as they will always be in relation to others and to the surroundings, which then creates a sequence of events and subsequently memories of past experiences. However, although the experience seems to emerge from ordinary everyday practice, in some cultures, there is a lack of such an understanding of the everyday city experience, as it is difficult to be gauged from a distance, especially if there is a lack of direct interaction with space.

“The experience can be split between the casual view of the worker or shopper and the more constructed deliberation of the tourist” (Gartside, 2010: 22).

What if the typical city workers are migrant labourers, and the majority of the actual citizens prefer to shop in sealed air- conditioned spaces like shopping malls? This may indicate that such

a nation has little direct interaction with the real city. In this case, one may wonder, where is the mental image of the city held by its citizen, if they perceive the rest of the city beyond the shopping mall only from behind the windows of their cars?

Experiencing and presenting the city might be considered as a narrative of progress in which all people contribute to creating a better future for their cities. Such a narrative has to be culturally embedded, in order to create a strong image of the city to any given observer, which Lynch had named *Imageability*.

“A high imageable (apparent, legible, or visible) city in this peculiar sense would seem well formed, distinct, remarkable; it would invite the eye and the ear to greater attention and participation.” (Lynch, 1966:10)

Gartside also agrees that the imageability of the city is part of creating the city itself, especially if there is integration between the image and experience.

“An image is unable to be limited solely by contents of what we can see. Both image and experience are catalysts in never-ending process of revisions and adjustments which make up our response to place and space [...] Image is influenced or coloured by experience and experience is nuanced by a stock of mental images flowing unevenly through the mind, against which we compare and contrast.” (Gartside, 2010:14).

8.3 Contemporary Arab cities: the case of Manama



Figure 8.2: Manama today (Source: <https://almanamah.wordpress.com>)

Recently, in order to transform Bahrain into a financial centre, the country seems to have been heavily influenced by globalisation, which has directed efforts toward the developments of communications, financial services, banking infrastructure, commerce and tourism. Just like its

neighbour, Dubai, towers of various forms and heights are standing to enhance the image of Bahrain as a way of marketing it to the world. Skyscrapers symbolise the favourite style in Bahrain nowadays, and are intended to be of multi-purpose use, serving both housing and commercial activities (see Figures 8.2 and 8.3).

Like the other modern Islamic cities, Manama and cities in the Gulf region in general are progressively abstracted for the new housing and living schemes. Most of the urban aggregates lack any cultural references, and are inspired by the international design reviews. It is obvious that “the rise of the figure of the ‘designer’, leading to the self-referential statements of today’s architectural star system as products of a consumer society” (Petruccioli and Pirani, 2002: xi).

Petruccioli and Pirani (2002) define ‘internationalism’ as “the illusion brought by the Modern Movement that different cultures could express themselves by using the same language” (Petruccioli and Pirani, 2002: xi).



Figure 8.3: New part of Manama, built on reclaimed land (Source: Author)

As a result of globalisation, most of the residential and commercial quarters around the world tend to look similar, and deprive the population of their identity. This has devastated the Islamic environments, especially as they are keen to imitate the western model.

Accordingly, the Islamic nation is also going through its own cultural crises or *the lack of culture*. This matter is simultaneously mirrored, transposed and reflected in architecture, as the values and actions of its civilization and people changes. Religion and culture were once considered as one

in the Islamic world, hence acknowledging that there is a cultural crisis leads one to wonder if there is actually a religious crisis.

“Progressively and continuously the cultural strength of Islam was firstly influenced then eroded by western capitalism, ultimately provoking a religious reaction that imposed a literal interpretation of the Koran in all aspects of political, economic and social life.” (Petruccioli and Pirani, 2002: xi).

Furthermore, the coming section provides a discussion around Manama within the contemporary setting, based on the historical review provided in Chapter 2 about the city’s modern history. The overview established the starting point to understand the transformation of lifestyle, which has big impact on shaping and reshaping the immateriality of the user’s spatial experience. Based on that, the next sections articulate and analyse the information gathered during the fieldwork, which will help in highlighting issues related to immateriality and the cultural impact on architecture, and how it has changed over time to be what it is today.

8.3.1 Manama through some observations (by the researcher February 2014)

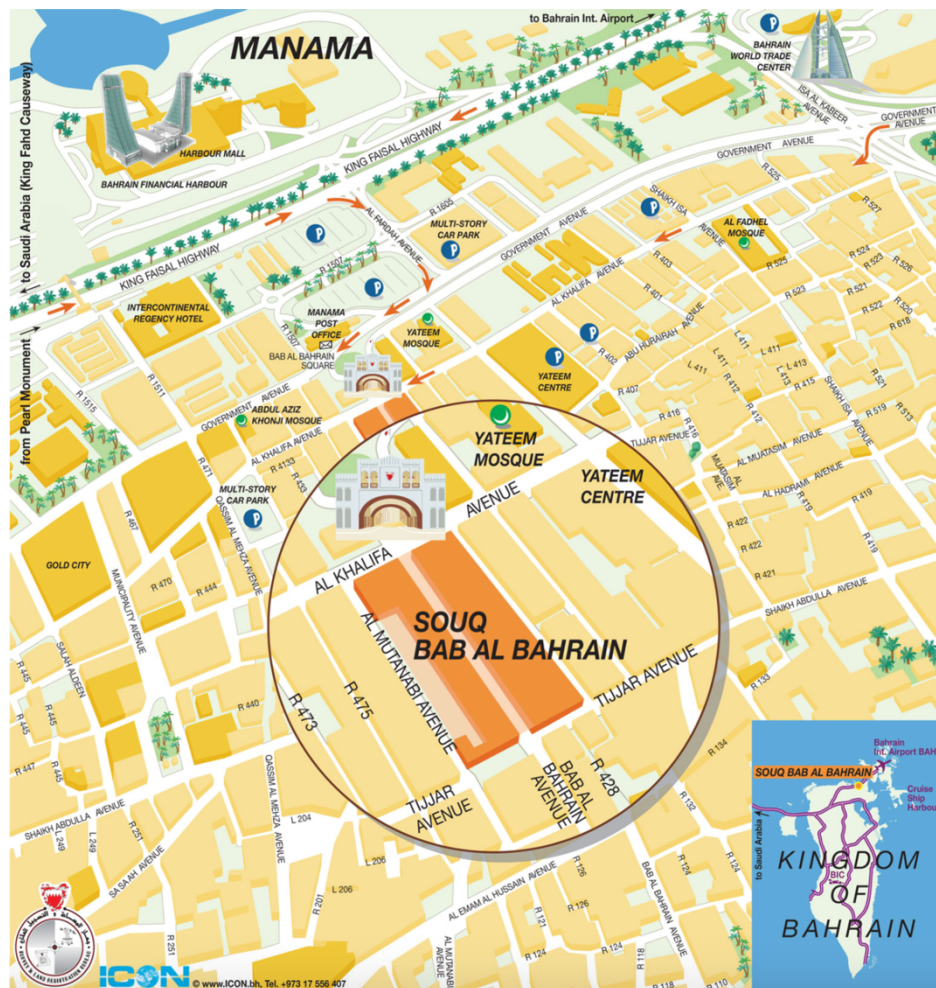


Figure 8.4: Location of the renovated part of Manama old market, where the observation took place (Source: www.ICON.bh)

As previously discussed, observation was used as a research method alongside interview work and focus group discussion. This section describes a series of observations carried out in the high street in Manama. Throughout the observation carried out during the fieldwork of February 2014, and the focus group workshop of experiencing Manama in February 2015, many aspects related to the way that the urban space is organised and used were observed.

The location of the observation is at the “junction” between the old and the new Manama, at “Bab al Bahrain”, the building which was originally designed as government offices but is now used as a monument (see Figures 8.4 and 8.5). The main features of the city like the square and garden in front of the monument adjacent to the harbour are no longer the same, as more land was reclaimed and is now occupied by a number of towers including the Bahrain Financial Harbour.

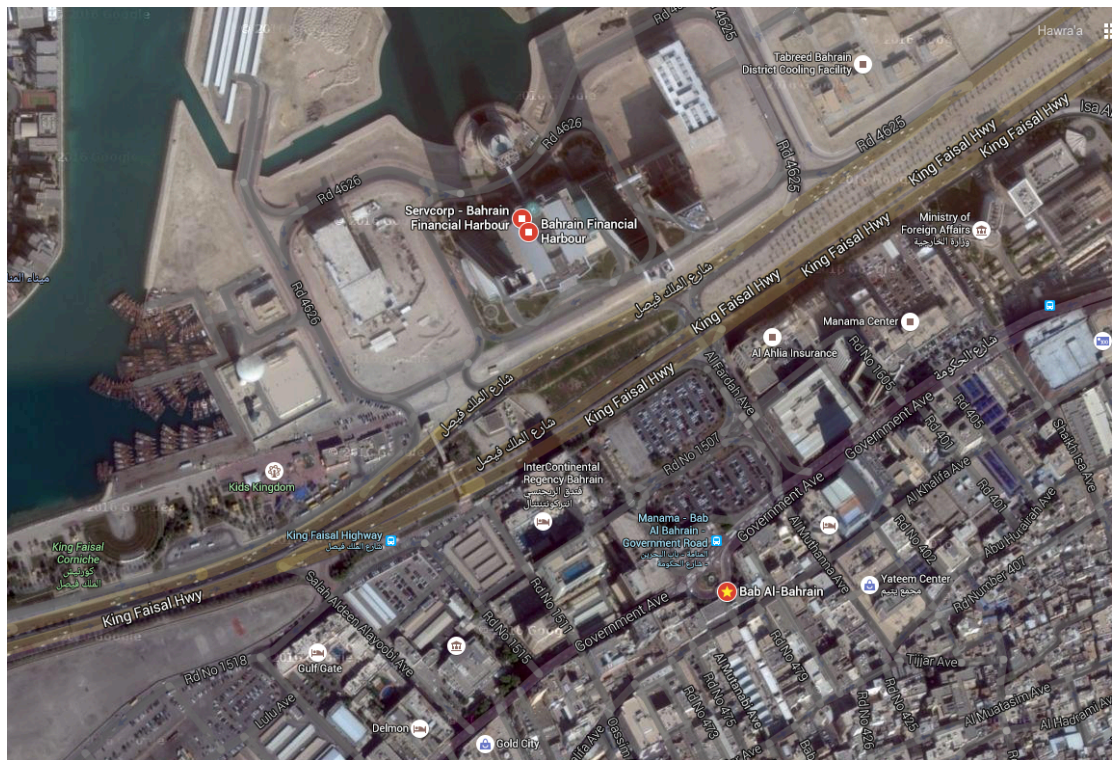
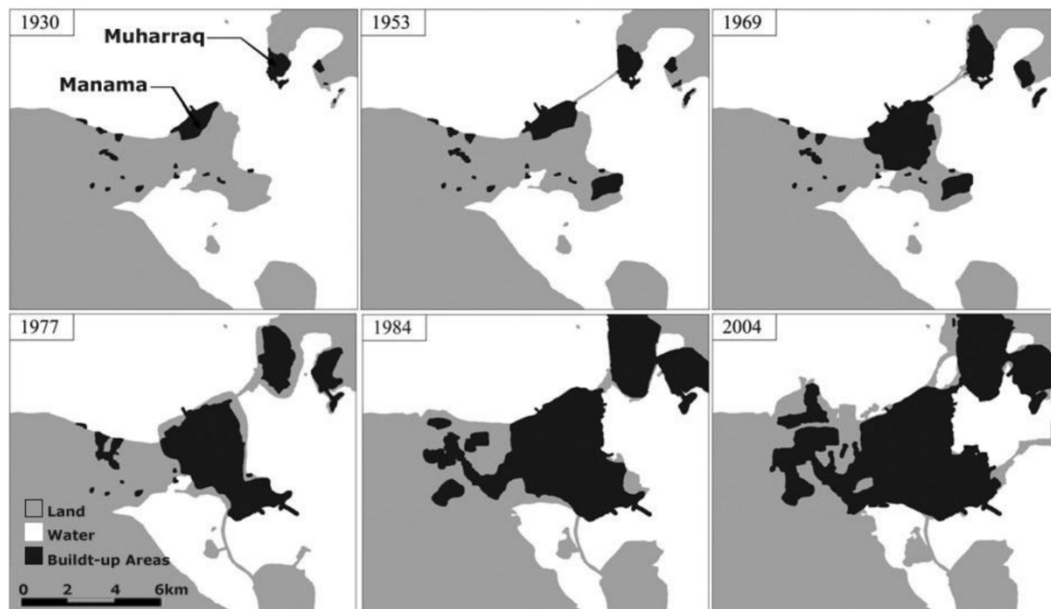


Figure 8.5: Map of the edge point between old and new Manama. Source: <https://www.google.co.uk/maps/place/Bahrain+Financial+Harbour/@26.2358772,50.5731756,795m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m5!3m4!1s0x3e49a58b0e7fcf9d:0x9f51bd01fae45bad!8m2!3d26.2376961!4d50.5734224>



Figure 8.6: Manama today (Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-14540571>)

The city of Manama today consists mainly of two parts; the old urban quarters where the market and the low rise buildings are located, and the new part built, on the reclaimed land (see Figure 8.7), called “diplomatic area” consisting of towers, hotels, embassies, ministry buildings, and so



on.

Figure 8.7: Expansion of Manama through urban growth and land reclamation (Source: Al Ansari, 2009)

In Manama’s traditional market, the *souq*, as it is called locally, there are few Bahraini people walking in the narrow alleyways, but rather more foreign nationals (Asian labourers and tourists). In a way this snapshot is a good indicator of the current demographic make up of Bahrain. The

Bahraini people seem to be attracted by the offerings of the little shopping mall located at the newly renovated part of the *souq*. The mall was designed according to traditional local architectural style applied to a sealed and air-conditioned building. Despite the reasonable February weather, with its average temperature fluctuating between 15-25°C, Bahrainis preferred to head to the mall, while foreigners and tourists enjoyed the open-air market. Standing on the high street soaking in the market hustle and bustle of the market, it is obvious to the naked eye that the number of non-Bahrainis (Asian visitors, inhabitants, workers, business owners or customers) exceeds that of the Bahrainis. Is that contributing to making changes to the fabric of Bahraini society? Is the new Bahraini society make up affecting the way people use the urban space? These are questions that one cannot help but keep wondering about.

The newly built mall adjoins the monument area in the vicinity of the old *souq*, with many traditional design features, including some shops selling traditional goods, and restaurants. There are sometimes events, sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, which take place within the shaded alley leading to the mall, such events would aim to inspire people to appreciate and experience the tradition and culture.

The old market is divided into sections and quarters. One of the main sections is the gold market, where there are many retail spaces surrounding the main gold mall. In the other quarters where the textiles and spices are, sellers call customers: “Welcome, have a look”

Some street traders would simply lay a mat on the ground and spread what little goods they have it, on it in the hope of attracting customers before they are spotted by the market inspectors (as the practice is illegal).

As explained earlier, Bab al Bahrain serves as transformation point between the two parts of the city, the old and the contemporary. The new part of Manama, toward the north, is extremely different. Modern buildings and high towers are built on the reclaimed land. The people who are experience those buildings and and the urban area around them are normally busy with the business lifestyle. The highways are not pedestrian-friendly, so people do not directly experience the city, except from their cars.

At the edge of the district there is a car park, right after “Bab al Bahrain”(see Figure 8.17), so the newly developed zone starts with a sea of cars, and juxtaposed over it is a grid of very busy vehicular access roads..

Near to the car park there were two adjacent mosques, only 200 m apart, which may suggest that one could be for Sunnis and the other for Shias.

The huge number of cars is clearly noticeable in this area, with an absence of public transport (buses), which is rarely used in Bahrain, as cars are readily available and fuel prices are low.

On another level, if one compares the number of Bahrainis using the open spaces in the old city of Manama, especially around the old *souq*, to the number of Bahrainis who use the Bahrain city centre (BCC), the biggest shopping mall in Bahrain, there is a big difference between the two cases (see Figures 8.8 and 8.9). People in Bahrain nowadays are used to the enclosed air-conditioned places, and they always claim that they cannot handle the harsh climate any more. Life in the shopping mall seems to be replacing the open outdoor city experience, as people, gather, shop and socialise in retail shops, coffee shops, restaurants and cinemas, all located under one roof. People are more attracted to the contemporary lifestyle, which is promoted well through the media nowadays. From a sociology and cultural studies point of view, such spaces are creating the base to establish a consumer culture, which affects and changes the spatial contexts of everyday public life.

This study does not intend to resolve the dilemma of the current culture of the changing urban experience, and the immateriality related to it, so evident in the comparison between Manama souk and BCC; but rather it intends to shed light on the subject.



Figure 8.8: Busy life at Bahrain City Centre shopping mall, where Bahrainis prefer to spend their free time (Source: <https://badernoaimi.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/gergaoun-event-at-bahrain-city-centre.jpg>)



Figure 8.9: Foreigners are the typical users of the City of Manama (Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/culturepicturegalleries/9108702/Everyday-life-in-Bahrain.html?image=6>)

8.3.2 Experiencing Manama through walking and discussion: the focus group

This section describes some research undertaken to look into the users' spatial experience within their urban space. The investigation has led to conducting a workshop with a number of participants, consisted of two parts, a *walk* followed by a *talk*, as explained earlier in Chapter 6.

The *walk* acted as a precursor to the *talk*, where participants had the chance to view the city and reflect on its architecture, lifestyle, sounds, smells, patterns and everything associated with it, materially and immaterially. They were trying to read the city and unfold its hidden meanings and values that people tend to forget about nowadays. This approach encouraged the participants to reflect on their own city, culture and heritage, in a way that helped generate some ideas and thoughts, which had been discussed and articulated in during the *talk*. The fact that the discussion took place two days after the walk, had enabled the participants to have a chance to reflect on what they experienced in the city. During the workshop discussion, they were encouraged to write down or sketch ideas they associated with the city.

During Manamataalk, the discussion atmosphere was very friendly and every participant was encouraged and given the chance to express his/her ideas and opinions. The discussion around the term '*city*' was quite divergent, where people found it interesting to try to identify what *city* meant to them. One way to approach the meaning of the city is to look at it from the materiality/immateriality point of view. On the one hand, city is the built environment, consisting

of buildings, roads, highways, infrastructure etc., which create a big place in terms of area, with a specific skyline. On the other hand, the immaterial side of the city is about the people, their involvements, interactions and input in all aspects of life. Through the focus group workshop, seven participants out of nine indicated that *people* is one way/word/term of defining a city. The participants also introduced many terms that would describe people's engagement in the city life, like interaction, activities and movement. While other terms could suggest both material and immaterial characteristics associated with the city, such as crowded, noisy, fancy and vibrant. For instance, the city could be vibrant materially in terms of movements, buildings, vehicles people etc. and it could also be vibrant immaterially in the case of activity, life, experiences and facilities. In some cases, the immateriality for these terms could be expressed through conjunction with memories of the city (see table 8.1 at the end of this Chapter).

This discussion around defining the “*city*” indicates that the proper city environment cannot be created without the balanced combination between both the material and the immaterial sides, the social and cultural interaction alongside with the engagement with the other physical aspects. A city cannot exist in isolation, neither do people, and this proves the importance of appreciating all of the factors involved in creating the city experience.

Recently, cities in the Gulf region have been experiencing a massive and rapid urbanisation, which has transformed them into something completely different to the traditional settlements that existed before. The new cities that were generated, with new buildings, roads, highways etc. lack the basic sense of city life. In these new cities, pedestrians are not encouraged to walk around, but to use their vehicles instead, which means that people only see each other and the city through car windows. The lack of physical and social interaction with the outside world (outside the boundaries of the car), makes the city experience totally different now to how it used to be in the traditional settlement.

Supporting the focus group discussion, and according to Montgomery (2013), a number of thinkers argue that the new urban planning of cities lacks the human dimension within it, in which the basic interactions, exchanges and communication between people and the city component is missing. Importing the western model of urban planning to the Middle East could be compared to planting seeds in the wrong soil. The model in the West has been governed by certain political, economic and most importantly, social and cultural systems, which might work there, but not necessarily in the Gulf region. The specificity of this context comes from the well-established urban planning that existed more than 1,000 years ago, and it worked well with the people. Islamic architecture and urban planning used to be dominant in the area, however, along with globalisation and modernity everything has changed, and the old ways and lifestyle have been replaced with new ones. The question here is: Is there a way of generating a new solution that

would respect the specificity of the context and at the same time go well with the needs of the contemporary way of life?

In Manamatalk, the discussion of the city had led to a wider discussion around defining *culture* and *heritage*. Although the two terms overlap, each has its own distinctiveness. *Culture* is a vibrant system that changes quite often, which means that the culture of the past is not exactly the same as the present one, and for sure it will be different to the culture of the future. Culture is mainly created by the people and for the people, so it is shared between the people, and it has a strong connection with religion, beliefs, history and tradition, and here exists the overlapping with *heritage*.

However, *heritage* is mainly concerned with inherited values from the past, so it is a setting of fixed values that cannot be changed. It also defines the individual's and the nation's greatness and pride, so people are always proud of their heritage.

“Our pride would disappear if heritage is lost.” (Participant 9)

“It is important how we maintain our pride as a nation and as people.” (Participant 9)

“Heritage reflects who we are.” (Participant7)

“Heritage is always associated with what happened in the past, not present, not the future.” (Participant 5)

“Heritage is where we come from and it is crucial that we embrace it.” (Participant 4)

The discussion around culture and heritage reveals the importance of both, along with their strong interrelations with people's lives. The participants indicated that culture is strongly connected with religion and beliefs, which suggests that the Islamic culture is still dominant, as most of the people in Bahrain practise Islam. It is inevitable that the discussion around Manama extended to touch some factors related to the characteristics of the Islamic city. It included articulating how its *raison d'être* is informed by the religious teachings as well as having an impact on people's way of life. In traditional settlements, the role of architecture extended beyond the material function to immaterial aspects of everyday life that were highly appreciated as the socio-cultural values of the people and the architecture were interrelated. Hakim (1994), in his paper *The 'Urf' and its Role in Diversifying the Architecture of Traditional Islamic Cities*, explains the *urf* from the perspective of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and articulates its implications on architecture. He argues “the ‘Urf’”, or customs, in various Muslim societies had a very important role in establishing a framework of accepted norms of behaviour operational in its own terms at the level of the community” (Hakim, 1994: 108). The author also states that the implications of *urf* and

Islamic teaching on architecture within the traditional Islamic city “was direct and its manifestation evident in any city, particularly if viewed comparatively to other Islamic cities across space and time” (Hakim, 1994: 112).

Consequently, Islam as a set of religious teachings has not changed for 1,400 years, however, the Islamic culture is vibrant and has adapted to many situations and settings. The participants also indicated that culture represents the people’s identity and lifestyle, and it is linked in a way with heritage, tradition and civilization. On another level, heritage itself is more interconnected with history and the past, and it represents the society’s roots, origin, greatness and pride. It embodies the people’s inheritance from the past that should be valued, treasured and preserved.

To wrap up the workshop discussion, the participants reflected on the meaning and definition of *architecture* in light of the *city-culture-heritage* discussion. Participants revealed that architecture is the container of all of what had been discussed, including identity, experience, reflection and belonging. It is the concept, process and production that exemplifies the embodiment of communications, growth and development, which could be considered as one of the processes of creating the city, as Participant 9 indicates. It contains the people’s culture and heritage when it creates the space and place for them to practice their daily lives with all its dimensions. Architecture then contains the city as well as the city containing the architecture.

Against the theoretical background that this chapter starts with, it seems that Manama, as an example of the Gulf cities, lacks sense of ‘city-ness’ nowadays. The dispersing and interaction goods, information and people is at its minimal level. The city is longer a major site of social interaction and exchanges, which has its direct input on the way of thinking about the city and experiencing.

One should think about the city as an environment consisting of people, landscape, buildings, infrastructure etc., which has an urban life engages the conceived, perceived and lived concepts with space, as Lefebvre describes. These interconnected concepts propose a better understanding of the *city*

The city, as Lefebvre explains, is not an abstract, neither does it exist in an isolation; thus the concepts he proposes for understanding the city, the lived, conceived and perceived, are not separated. In order to understand the three concepts, one should look at them as interconnected. The spatial practice produces space in a society, in which society could be translated through these spaces, and this is how one may perceive a space. The daily routine has a close association with the perceived space, as it links spaces and places together.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter explores the concept or idea of the “*city*” on a number of levels. It starts with a theoretical framework based on the contemporary debate around the subject matter. The argument looks at the main thinkers’ and philosophers’ opinions and ideas in this domain in a way that establishes a theoretical background to understand the meaning of a *city*.

The second section takes a closer look at the city of Manama as an example of an Arab Islamic city. With reference to the historical review provided in chapter 2, this section provides a comprehensive picture of how immateriality contributed in configuring the city in the past, and how its role is being reduced to a certain extent nowadays. The debate also touches on aspects related to the specificity of the local culture in shaping the city and how it evolves over time.

The study of the city of Manama made use of two approaches, starting with looking at Manama from a passive point of view, giving an overview about the users’ spatial experience within the city public spaces without any interaction with its users. On another level, the second approach was more interactive as it involved a number of participants who took part in a workshop. As this approach articulated the relationship between city, culture, heritage and architecture from the user’s point of view, it gives a comprehensive overview of a user-oriented process, where the recourses and information were generated and gathered from people and about people.

The discussion with the focus group participants revealed various descriptors of immateriality that relate to spatial experience and the city in relation to culture and heritage. A list of the descriptors indicated in the discussion around defining city and its experience are attached to the end of this chapter (see Table 8.1).

In conclusion, the work in this chapter articulates a number of descriptors for the users’ spatial experience that go beyond the material aspects of the city as experienced by its inhabitants. This helps in developing a better understanding of architecture and its connection with people and their culture. It also contributes to informing the understanding of the users’ spatial experience within the context of Bahrain, as will be discussed further in Chapter 9, as well as generating greater awareness among people with regard to appreciating their cities, culture and heritage.

Table 8.1: The immaterial descriptors that participants of the focus group discussion used to describe their city spatial experience

People	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Tradition	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Identity	■	■	■	■	■	■	
History	■	■	■	■	■		
Lifestyle	■	■	■	■			
Crowded	■	■	■				
Belonging	■	■					
Experience	■	■					
Change	■	■					
Roots	■	■					
Reflection	■	■					
Religion	■	■					
Living	■	■					
Image	■	■					
Inheritance	■						
Society	■						
Communication	■						
Concept	■						
Growth	■						
Reflection	■						
Heritage	■						
Development	■						
Treasure	■						
Past	■						
Movement	■						
Background	■						
Pride	■						
Greatness	■						
Noisy	■						
Past	■						
Society	■						
Fancy	■						
Modern	■						
Activities	■						
Busy	■						
Vibrant	■						
Process	■						
Production	■						
Heritage	■						

Development
Nights
Skyline spacing
Beliefs
Background
Country
Time
Old
Restrictions
Container
Focal point
Architecture
Celebrations
Landmark



Discussion and Conclusion

Chapter 9: Discussion and Conclusion

9.1 Overview

This research was undertaken to help in establishing a better understanding of some of the issues around immateriality in architecture, which could inform architecture as a practice and a discipline within the context of Bahrain. In terms of practice, the findings of this research argue for the need of the practice to recognise and promote a user-centred approach, reflecting the social and cultural conditions of the context. With this in mind, it is argued that the design process should be informed by both the material and immaterial considerations of the users and their context.

Beginning with the research questions in the introductory chapter, which addresses the aim, objectives and rationale of this study, a clear outline of the research context has been identified through establishing contextual boundaries. These research questions are as follows:

1. What are the immaterial and non-physical aspects of architecture that affect the users' spatial experience?
2. To what extent does culture impact on architecture as a lived experience in the specific context of Bahrain?
3. Based on the findings of the above questions, how can the culture-architecture debate enhance the understanding of the users' spatial experience in this context?

Having established the context, this helped in identifying the various methodological approaches used to undertake this kind of research. This study can be generally described as qualitative research as discussed in earlier chapters, mainly because the research aims to explore people's lives and everyday behaviour, and it seeks to identify and clarify underlying meanings regarding the users' spatial experience within both private and public spaces. Therefore, the qualitative approaches used in this investigation for both primary and secondary research included the use of case studies, semi-structured interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Looking at all these various methods and findings has led to identifying the thesis framework, establishing a clear vision of how people tend to understand and interact with their spaces, and it explores features related to people's everyday lives.

Moreover, this methodological approach informed a sufficient understanding of architecture, culture, context, and its relationship with people. It explores real-life interventions in which different spatial experiences are generated, in order to understand immateriality in architecture within different settings. The selection of methods and contexts gave examples of how architecture and design principles respond to the cultural and social conditions of each context by relying on the knowledge of space, its people and their social habits. It also questions the

contemporary solutions and their relevance the context in which they exist. This includes examples from the American rural South and the semi-rural village from Egypt.

Although the thesis is not about traditional versus contemporary settlements, it is interested in investigating good examples where the city, architecture and space were conceived in tune with the social, cultural, environmental and economic values of the local context. Therefore, traditional settlements could be looked at as examples to learn from, especially with regards to how to project and reflect those values in our contemporary architecture. One of the key aspects looked at is how the design in the traditional settlement used to be a process that took into account the people for whom buildings were built and the context in which those buildings and their people existed. The theme of traditional settlements, however, appeared regularly in the interviews and the focus group discussions. Participants drew attention to this matter when talking about both the place of dwelling, as a private space, and public spaces in the city, where the investigation looked at the spatial experience of city dwellers with a view to considering how that experience relates to the culture in which those spaces exist.

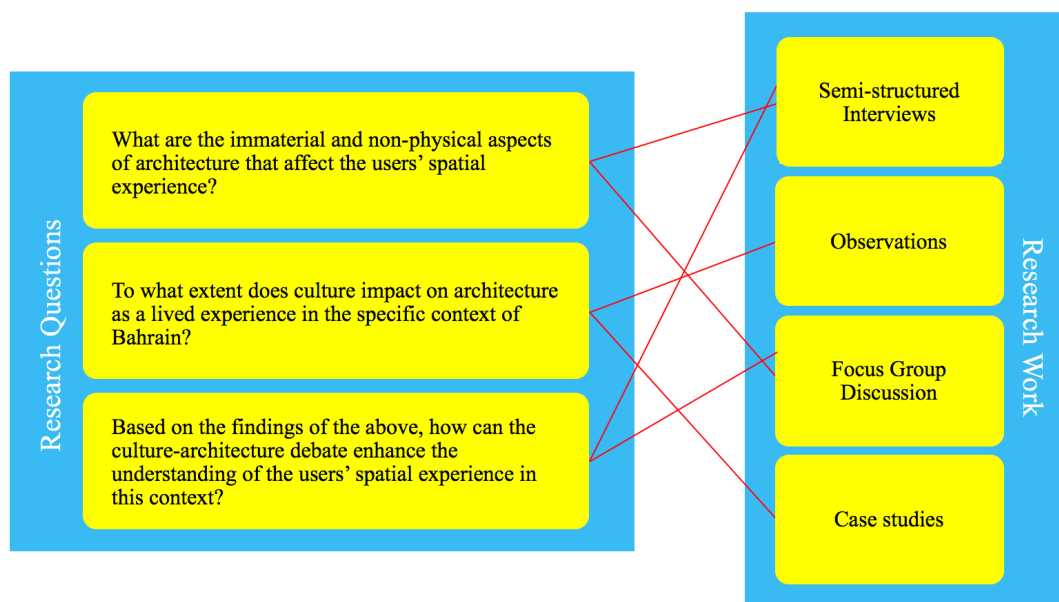


Figure 9.1: A diagram showing how the research questions have been addressed by the research work (Source: author)

9.2 Immateriality as part of the spatial experience

As mentioned earlier, this thesis is particularly interested in the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience, which is often either overlooked or naively assumed to be part of the design brief. According to the primary research, and by using Manama as a typical example of a city from the Gulf region, semi-structured interviews and an organised city walk with participants were undertaken to investigate users' spatial experience, with a view to exploring the aspects and meanings of space both in the place of dwelling, as a private space, and public spaces in the city.

A discussion around the private dwelling and its impact on people's everyday lives in the urban space, was also undertaken.

The users' spatial experience was not easy to discuss in the interviews, as the concept itself is hardly known in the Arabic language. In order to convey the main idea behind the spatial experience to the interviewees, especially as there is no specific Arabic translation for the term "spatial experience", the researcher referred to a set of questions articulating the meaning of home. Such questions meant to encourage the participants to talk about how they use their homes and its facilities, the circulation and the various daily or occasional activities. The discussion also explored the participants' feelings and emotions with regards to experiencing and interacting with their private spaces, and reflected the social and cultural references.

The data from the interviews clearly shows that both the technology used in the dwelling (TV, internet, digital entertainment, etc.), as well as the changes to the family unit have left their marks on the way people experience the space. For instance, the introduction of single occupancy dwellings (apartments/flats), as opposed to large family houses, has impacted on the size and configuration of the home space and in turn on people's ways of using the space and their experience of it as well as their sense of social and cultural belonging. People recognise that there are a lot of immaterial values lost with the new way of life. Such values include their sense of identity and the extent to which it reflects the users' culture and religion.

After the extensive interview discussions, most of the participants acknowledged that the spatial experience consisted of both material and immaterial aspects of architecture, as discussed in Chapter 7. Some of them had a better understanding of architecture and how it contributed to its users' daily lives. For those people, it was interesting that architecture is not only about the shape, size, structure, material, etc. of a building, rather, it is also associated with meanings and hidden narratives for its users. This means that their spatial experience, which is set within their own understanding of their daily activities, is actually derived from the immaterial descriptors of their lives, which they managed to identify within the interview discussions (see Figure 9.1).

Such an acknowledgment of the importance of immateriality in architecture is supported by some theorists' arguments, as discussed earlier within the theoretical review in Chapter 3. A number of thinkers and authors, including Hertzberger (2000), Tuan (1977), Zumthor (2010), Tervo (2007) and more, recognise the importance of considering the immaterial meanings of space not only just the space as a physical output. They agree that architecture implies special values and meanings that are attached and derive from people and their spatial experience. According to Zumthor, "We all experience architecture before we have even heard the word. The roots of architectural understanding lie in our architectural experience: our room, our house, our street,

our village, our town, our landscape – we understand them all early on, unconsciously, and we experience later on” (Zumthor, 2010: 65).

“Instead of describing built environment with measurable dimensions, we could start to intentionally enhance our vocabulary of emotions. In this context it is not enough that something “looks great” and “sounds fantastic”. Instead we want to approach the essence of a place with devotion by insisting on tangible sensation.” (Tervo, 2007: 226)

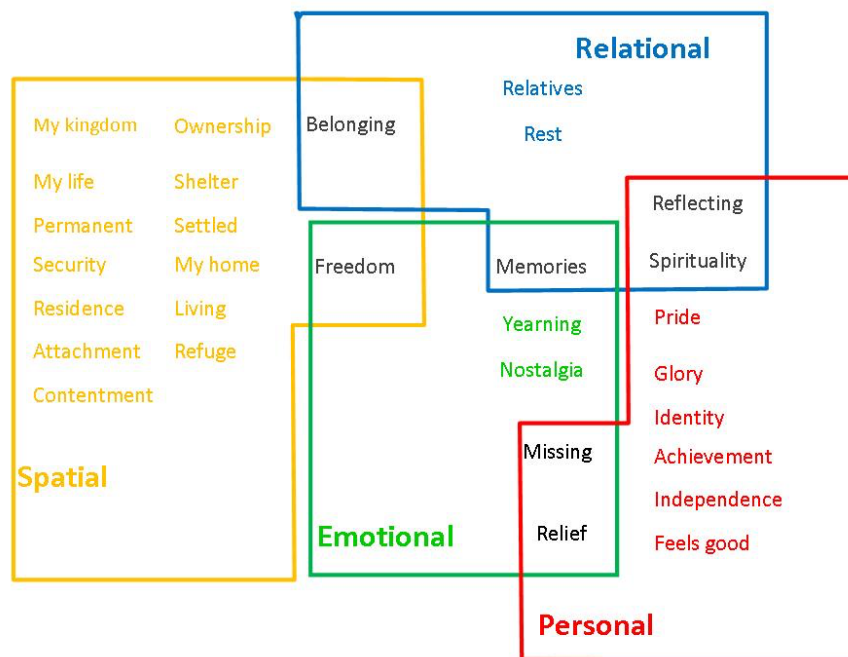


Figure 9.2: Series of immaterial descriptors that came out from the interview conversations describing the users’ spatial experience of home, classified under four main categories (Source: Author)

With regard to the issue of immateriality in the public space (urban space), this issue was explored as part of the workshop (*Manamawalk* and *Manamataalk*). The participants found it interesting to try to approach the meaning of the city through looking at it from the materiality/immateriality perspective. The information and data gathered has clearly shown that participants acknowledge the important role that people/users play in creating the immaterial side of a city or urban space. They expressed that the immaterial side of the city is all about the people, their involvements, interactions and input in all aspects of life. The participants also introduced many immaterial

descriptors that would describe people's engagement in the city life like interaction, activities and movement (see Figure 9.2).

The discussion around culture and heritage revealed the importance of both, along with their strong interrelations with people's lives, and as part of the immateriality of their spatial experience. The participants indicated that culture is strongly connected with the people's religion and beliefs, heritage, identity and lifestyle. On another level, heritage itself is more interconnected with history and the past, and it represents the society's roots, origin, greatness and pride. According to the participants, it embodies the people's inheritance from the past that should be valued, treasured and preserved.

The participants also commented on the effect of globalisation in creating rapid urbanisation and a checkerboard of architectural styles and global signature designs, dominated by tall skyscrapers and western style shopping malls. They indicated that this has led to a loss of some immaterial values including the appreciation for architectural heritage, and has led to social alienation of the citizens.

During the discussion, the participants revealed that architecture is the container of all aspects of life, including both the material and the immaterial.

“Architecture is one of the processes of the production of the city, architecture has to be there to make the city, and it makes how the city becomes. Culture is also produced through the architecture. Architecture contains heritage in the building (food, clothes ... etc. contained in the building) and by the building itself” (Participant 9, Manamataalk 2015)

Architecture then contains the identity, experience, reflection and belonging, as well as the concept, process and production. Architecture exemplifies the embodiment of communications, growth and development, which could be considered as one of the processes of creating the city. It contains the people's culture and heritage when it creates the space and place for them to practise their daily life with all its dimensions. “Architecture then contains the city as well as the city containing the architecture” (Participant 9, Manamataalk 2015).

Through the secondary research, this study explores the immateriality of the users' spatial experience based on two levels. Firstly, it delves into the literature in order to establish a theoretical background regarding the meaning of immateriality and the spatial experience, as discussed in Chapter 3. The literature explains that the notion of immateriality could be referred to on many levels. This study is interested in the level that defines immateriality by focusing on ideas and concepts that are related to the ways of experiencing space. This way does not depend just on the space itself, nonetheless, the image will not be completed unless it would automatically

be interpreted with other vital elements such as the user's background, memories and feelings. These concepts of immateriality are shaped and influenced by the users' cultural, social and ideological values. This uncovers underlying meanings that describe the relationship and interaction between people and their spaces, which are influenced by other aspects like function, needs, desires and aspiration. It is also concerned with the way the user interacts with their surroundings, and how people feel architecture through their senses (Allsopp, 1974).

This investigation has led to identifying a gap in the relationship between architectural theory and practice regarding the acknowledgment and consideration of immateriality as part of the design brief and process.

The secondary research was informed by an investigation that tackled three case studies from the literature. This established an understanding of the use of immateriality in architecture within different settings. Looking at the immateriality in architecture within western, eastern and traditional settings has led to gaining a deeper understanding of the research matter, and presented examples of how acknowledging immateriality in design could contribute to creating better lives. These case studies could be considered as models to learn from, while bearing in mind the specificity of each context.

This research, by using a variety of methods for both primary and secondary research, has highlighted the importance of immateriality as part of the users' spatial experience, in a way that responds to the cultural and social conditions of a context. The study has also helped in identifying a number of immaterial descriptors that could be used to set design intentions and eventually propose solutions (see Figures 9.1 and 9.2).

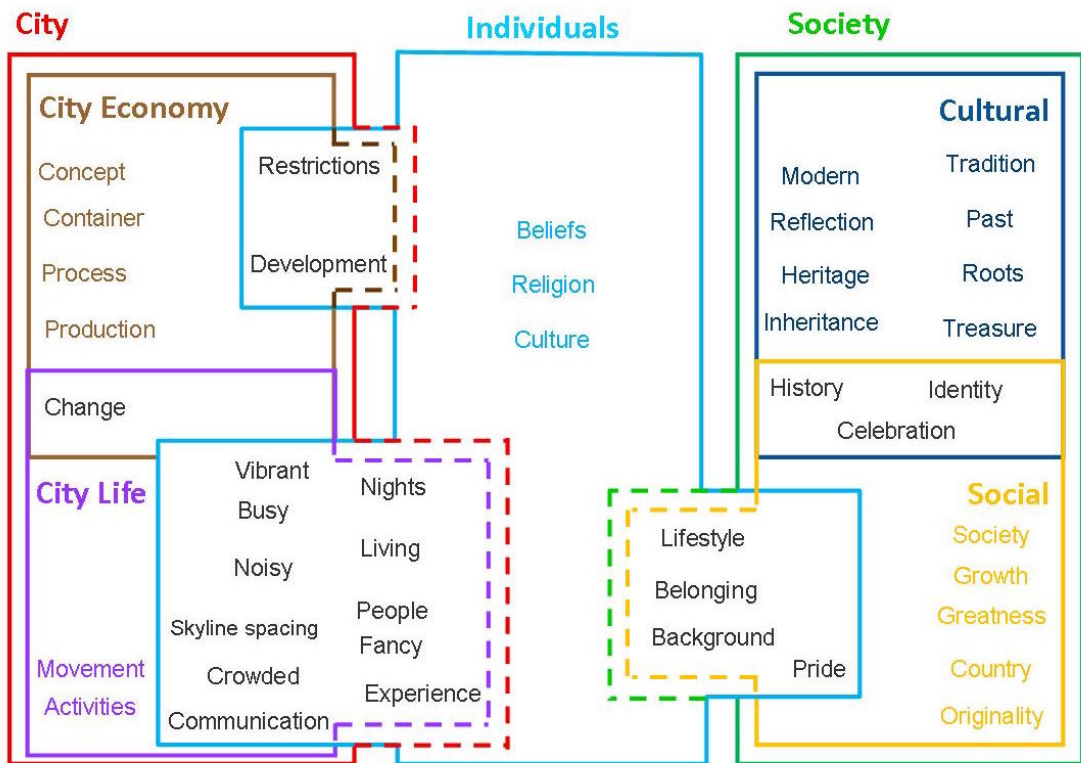


Figure 9.3: Series of immaterial descriptors that came out from the focus group discussion, describing the users' spatial experience of the city, classified under three main categories and four subcategories (Source: Author)

9.3 The impact of culture on architecture

Through the primary research both the interviews and the focus group discussion, participants discussed the impact of culture on architecture by contrasting the traditional settlement and the contemporary city and explaining how people lived in both settings. According to the participants, in the traditional settlement, the social, cultural and economic conditions were different. People's income was based on farming, fishing, pearl diving or trading. They were living with extended families in traditional courtyard houses, which were located within the narrow alleyways of the old cities. The dense urban fabric was created by the attached houses, which were connected by internal doors that helped facilitate many social and cultural settings. The neighbourhoods were mainly populated by extended family groups, which created small communities within the bigger society. This indicates that social bonds were very strong, which may explain why the way people

used the space was informed by cultural values and religious teachings. Examples of this include the spatial organisation within the traditional courtyard house. This reflected important values such as privacy, which can be recognised in the separation of public areas (at the family scale) where guests could be received, from private spaces and the courtyard that was mainly used by the females.

On the other hand, the participants also discussed contemporary life and the experience of space. They acknowledged that lifestyle has seen a big change and transformation. Today, people's income has increased due to oil revenues and the wealth of the country. On a social level, the extended family is no longer the norm, and even if it exists, then it is within totally different cultural and spatial settings. People no longer use the same space and share the same house facilities, and each family prefers its own privacy and independence. Furthermore, nowadays women are no longer staying at home to look after the children but instead going out to work. All these factors have affected the type of home people live in and the way they organise their spaces based on contemporary lifestyles, which are no longer the same as they used to be decades ago.

This change has also touched the scale of the city, where the narrow alleyways have been replaced with wide roads and highways in response to the changing infrastructure, required by the current condition. The use of vehicles and construction of tall buildings have affected, not only the physical environment of the city but also its spirit. Such a change has implications on the way people perceive and experience spaces. It is noticeable now how people avoid direct interaction with urban spaces, instead going to shopping malls with their sealed, enclosed and air-conditioned spaces. This was evident in the old market of Manama, the *souq*, which is mainly used by foreign nationals and tourists nowadays.

9.4 Enhancing the understanding of the users' spatial experience

This research has identified a gap between theory and practice with regard to immateriality being considered as part of architectural practice. Although the subject has started gaining in popularity among the theoretical disciplines, in the practice it rarely appears within the design brief or process. The research findings also showed that users acknowledge immateriality as an important part of their spatial experience, but designers still do not use it to set their design intentions.

Therefore, there is a need to raise awareness among users, practitioners and decision makers regarding the importance of appreciating immateriality as part of the users' spatial experience. One way of doing this could be through looking at the relationship between culture and

architecture. Through this research, the culture-architecture debate could be considered on many levels. Firstly, this debate assists in identifying the gap between theory and practice, especially as architecture is contemplated and appreciated visually even before the users had experienced it fully. Traditionally, one of the main roles of architecture, especially within the Islamic world was to relate to local culture. However, within contemporary settings, the impact of imported architecture has transformed cities in the Gulf region into prototype cities, just like Shanghai or Las Vegas. Such a transformation has affected people's spatial experience, especially as it sometimes conflicts with their social, cultural and behavioural norms. This has led to either dispensing with some values and trying to cope with the new situation, or editing the designs to make them more suitable to live with.

Therefore, the culture-architecture relationship could be seen as a way to enhance users' understanding of their spatial experience. Such a relationship establishes a solid ground for people's identity, their roots, tradition and heritage. In fact, this is what distinguishes the people and their context. This approach could drive people towards creating distinctive solutions for their built environments. Unfortunately, however, as highlighted by data from the interview discussions, the culture-architecture relationship lacks appreciation nowadays in Bahrain. Therefore, there is a need to enhance people's awareness of their heritage and pride.

Within the context of the Middle East, where Bahrain is geographically located, there are various forces that influence architecture, such as economy and the impact of globalization.

The Middle East could be defined as a subcontinent without clear boundaries, covering areas in western Asia and parts of North Africa. Nations in these regions share some similar values in terms of religion, culture and social behaviours, and they share a similar history and tradition of architecture.

Contemporary life in the Middle East has gone through major transformation, which has its biggest influence on culture and people's lifestyles. The cities became a representation of the new meaning and symbols of globalisation, in which the traditional vernacular architecture has gradually disappeared. The new trends brought by globalisation isolated the city entity and disconnected it from the daily social interaction with its users. Heritage, tradition and culture became terms that one tends to read about, but not necessary experience, live or feel, and the great loss exists in the gradual fading of Islamic representation of the city and its architecture.

Observing the cities in the Gulf region, in particular, from a socio-political perspective reveals that the urban forms that have been more recently developed may be considered as a response to the contemporary conditions, however, they do not blend well with the regional context and its specificity, and this is what the focus group discussion indicated as well. This means moving away from the vernacular "Islamic" city approach and replacing it with a copy of the image of

western society. Some argue that this could be considered as maintaining the colonizing bonds between the colonizers and the colonized.

One could question, what is globalisation? According to a number of authors, including Mahgoub (2011) and Za'za (2002), the term mainly refers to the spread of ideas, customs, institutions, and attitudes throughout the globe, however, these elements are originated in one part of the world.

There are some regions around the world that are less open to globalisation, or westernisation as some intellectuals argue, where nationalism dominates the evolution of culture and society. However, in the context of the Middle East, the culture, behaviours, beliefs and traditional society is heavily challenged by the spread of westernisation, which poses a major threat to tradition. One of the main problems is in considering religion as tradition, which then means that the religion itself conflicts with globalisation, westernisation or modernisation.

The ideal situation would be that society maintains its existing and traditional cultures, and finds a way to blend with the new and foreign ideas in order to establish a stronger mixture. According to the focus group discussion, as explained in Chapters 6 and 8, society should be selective in terms of what to choose, accept and reject, especially when dealing with values of tradition and religion. This would mean that globalisation is welcomed as long as it does not destroy the local society and tradition, rather, it should contribute in keeping it alive and encouraging it in a new form.

Nonetheless, cities around the world nowadays are becoming shapeless entities with a haunting sameness, trying to emerge as new centres of global economy and financial hubs. This assumes the need of powerful elements that would convert cities into “marked products”, to attract headquarters and international companies and events, which is actually what is happening in the Gulf cities (see Figures 9.3, 9.4 and 9.5). The new trend is to establish entertainment amenities and urban projects that will encourage global activities, investments and tourism. Therefore, architecture has been used as an instrument to generate “eye-catching” impressions, which do not always lead to “happiness of the cities”. This change on the cities’ spatial structure in the Middle East context, based on the new culture and lifestyle, has led to a new type of architecture and urbanism, which has changed the people’s sense of space. According to the participants of the interviews and focus group discussion, the existence of people’s Arabic-Islamic identity in this region is challenged by the current circumstances, especially since the Arabs are not effectively contributing to the progress of science, literature and arts activities, rather, they act as recipients, consumers and proponents of western ideologies.



Figure 9.4: New architecture of the Middle East in the most sacred place, holy Mecca (Source: https://issuu.com/ymahgoub/docs/architecture_in_the_middle_east_201)



Figure 9.5: Artificial islands as one type of future architecture in the Middle East. (Source: https://issuu.com/ymahgoub/docs/architecture_in_the_middle_east_201)

9.5 Contribution to knowledge

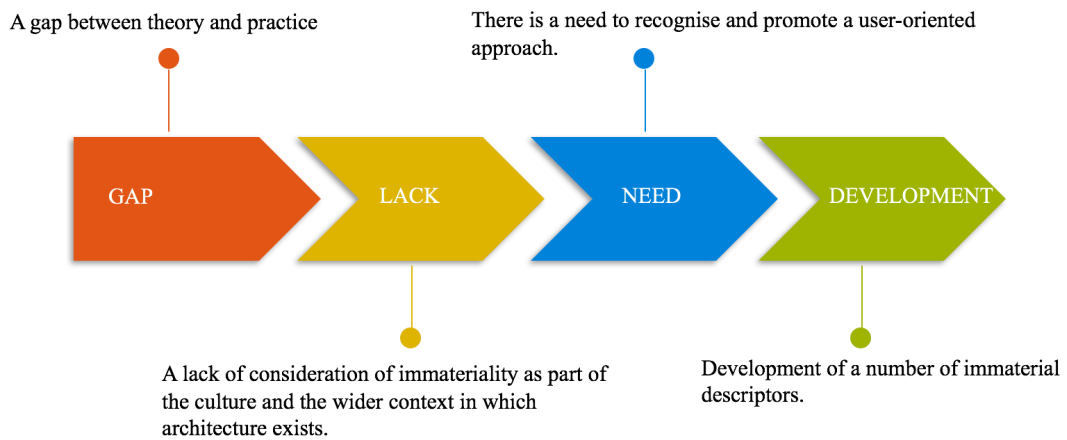


Figure 9.6: A chart showing the research outcomes (Source: Author)

The conventional way of looking at architecture is to consider the space primarily through its physical and commercial values, often at the expense of users' spatial experience. Many influential architectural theorists and practitioners promote a vision of architecture as an intellectualised, abstract form of exploration, claiming that it should be as free from any traditional constraints as possible. Others, like Koolhaas (in Sirowy, 2010), declare that architecture should follow the processes of globalisation and market forces rather than pay attention to the specificity of a given place and the needs of a local community, which in part explains how an architect can design and build in a context that he/she has never visited (Sirowy, 2010).

In recent years, architecture is being dealt with as a product of a creative process, artwork or even a sculpture with a scale that could house human beings, as if the experience of the user is incidental and takes a secondary role compared to the expressive forms of the architecture itself. This could be witnessed through the diversity of exterior forms and interior spaces that can be perceived in new, dramatic, never-before-experienced buildings, such as the works of Gehry or Hadid. These buildings are made possible only through digital design and production techniques, which are essential in the creation of a new kind of architecture that is fluid, elegant, complex and technologically innovative.

It is important in a world that deals with architecture as something that is formally contemplated and appreciated visually, to try to direct the attention towards the immaterial aspects of architecture, which has already started to gain in popularity. This research focuses on the users' experience of the built environment beyond the given physical descriptors and boundaries of a space.

On a more specific level, this study is situated in the particular context of Bahrain and the GCC countries, which adds a dimension of specificity to the argument. There is a lack of studies that are oriented towards the users and the immateriality of their spatial experience, specifically in the context of Bahrain. The literature review indicates that there exists no such study that articulates and identifies the immaterial descriptors of architecture in the Gulf region in general. This is the first study that addresses the issue of the users' spatial experience in this context, with its particular socio-cultural conditions and linguistic specificities, and as mentioned before there is no specific linguistic recognition for the term "spatial experience" in Arabic. This thesis is also the first to consider immateriality as an idea to be used in the culture-architecture debate, with a view to enhancing the understanding of the users' spatial experience within this context. Hence, this thesis would make a good starting point for further research in this field.

The transformation of the Bahraini economy over the last four decades, due mainly to the increase in oil income and the accumulation of wealth, has led the state to adopt a distributive and comprehensive welfare policy, which then became a major and unique factor in shaping the country. At the same time, the architecture of modern Bahrain follows models of western styles and global signature designs, which, it can be argued, has led to a loss of appreciation for culture and heritage, and the alienation of people.

Recently Bahrain seems to be directing its efforts towards the development of communications, financial services, banking, infrastructure, commerce and tourism, in order to transform itself into a financial centre. A large building programme is being undertaken with towers of various forms and heights appearing on the skyline to present the country to prospective investors. Skyscrapers shape the image of the country nowadays, and are intended to be of mixed use, serving both housing and commercial activities. However, one could question: How relevant are those skyscrapers to this particular context? Are they formulating and embodying a suitable spatial experience for people in this part of the world? Do architects responsible for designing those buildings consider immaterial aspects that relate to the specificity of this society and culture? Does the newly created urban fabric present an erosive danger to what's left of the country's cultural heritage?

This thesis is using a novel approach by looking at the architectural discourse from ethnographical and cultural studies perspectives. Using interdisciplinary approaches and methods to identify the non-physical and immaterial aspects informing users' experiences of buildings can be seen as contribution to knowledge. This allowed different ways of examining the built environment, based on the use of methodologies from other subject areas. Within this context, the research looked at architecture through the users' perspective in Bahrain, which is hoped that this will lead to raising greater awareness of the importance of considering the immaterial aspects of their spatial experience as part of the design process, and helps in establishing a user-oriented practice.

This could be considered as a beneficial methodological approach for someone who would like to pursue more research within this area.

The process of data and information gathering from different sources, like case studies, interviews, observation and focus group, helped in creating a knowledge based on narratives. While the theory and technical approaches are mainly recognised in architectural research, this is an attempt to direct the attention to the users' experience as a model that operates in testing and analysing subjects within the architectural discipline. The individual and the social interpretation, rather than pure theoretical discourses and simulation modelling techniques, is what distinguishes this research, methodologically, from other architectural studies. The qualitative approach is an essential method that leads to understanding the other disciplinary research methods, which helped in formulating a framework to facilitate this discussion. It is expected that through this approach, an expanding of the borders of such disciplines will be achieved.

Furthermore, the immaterial descriptors that came out of the fieldwork, the semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussion, has not appeared before in the literature reviewed. Therefore, this could be counted as a contribution to knowledge especially within this research context, where immateriality in architecture is barely acknowledged.

Mallgrave (2011), Goldblatt and Paden (2011) and Ballantyne (2002), all agree that it is a great limitation if architecture is only appreciated visually, measured by "photogenic" qualities, limited to "the bold and the beautiful", to projects with aspiring budgets, to buildings designed by professional architects, or "tasteful" buildings built for well-to-do patrons or prestigious corporations. They confess that it is time to reconsider architecture as a variegated experience, and to admit that buildings are involved with our sense of who we are.

Therefore, there is a need to rethink the way in which we understand "architecture", so as to reappraise its "humane" dimension in an economically driven design process. One way for doing this, is through reconfiguring and redefining the relationships between the design proposal and the users' expected spatial experience. Better understanding of that relationship would help in rethinking the conventional design process with a view to creating space that reflects the social and cultural values of the society. Such an exploration will re-examine architecture both as a practice and as an academic discipline.

9.6 Research limitations and challenges

Although this research was carefully prepared, there are some challenges and limitation that affected the flow of the process. First, a list of the difficulties that has been faced through the research journey are as follows:

- The inexistence of research published in Arabic that discusses the issues relating to spatial experience together with the lack of literature that articulates the notion of immateriality in architectural practice within the Arab/Islamic world has made it difficult to approach the subject, particularly when it came to the field work.
- The difficulty of audio and video recording people during the interviews, especially with female participants. Although the audio recording was fairly well accepted, some participants felt anxious at the beginning of the conversation.
- There were some logistical challenges faced while conducting the workshop, such as acquiring participants, obtaining the authorities consent to walk within Manama, and organising a place to hold the talk.
- As the research was conducted using a qualitative research approach, the findings produced might not be generalised to a large number of people, as the sample explored is not large.
- Limited access to members of the academia or decision makers, who could have provided a better view regarding addressing immateriality in architecture within the contemporary setting in Bahrain.
- Lack of previous research of this kind and within this field, particularly in the context of the Middle East. If such studies were available, it would make the design of this study easier and less time consuming.

While the researcher has sought to be systematic in conducting the research, the approach adopted may be seen as having some limitations as shown below:

- Using observation as a research method was not very effective as the context and the people were not open to such an approach. It is also a time consuming form of investigation and sometimes it is difficult to check its validity.
- The extensive time that the qualitative approach needed for gathering and analysing data and information, limited the number of research areas covered. Related areas, which were not covered, include gauging the architects' use of immaterial descriptors to set the design brief. It is the intention that this will be dealt with as part of the postdoctoral research.

9.7 Further research work

This thesis addresses the question of the immaterial aspects of the users' spatial experience, and considers the cultural impact on architecture, and how it could influence a real-world architectural

practice. In this context, the possible links between the people, their spaces, culture and heritage has been widely discussed.

A further contextualisation of the findings of this thesis may include addressing the major problems, challenges and opportunities related to users' spatial experience on another level. This may involve extending the fieldwork research to touch on different types of spaces, in a way that can contribute to the testing and improving of the findings of this thesis.

Problems connected with understanding the users' spatial experience within the context of Bahrain mainly required generating greater awareness among people, using different methods like the focus group discussion. In this regard, more walks and talks are intended to be conducted in order to extend the research findings.

In architectural discourse, the ethnographical approach is often time and resource consuming; therefore, one needs to allocate a sufficient timeframe in order to continue conducting such research and analysis. This contains further investigation with regards to the many side themes that are generated out of the semi-structured interview (see Appendix E).

A possible way of expanding the current project would be through focusing on the contemporary urban condition within the context of Bahrain. Cities are places where people experience diverse cultural, social and traditional settings. This approach would be one of the obvious directions for further research, especially since the current experience of space seems to have taken another direction that lacks a sense of direct interaction with the city.

This lack of direct interaction between people and the city could be considered to alienate individuals from their cities, which shows that the design of global and multicultural urban environments creates meaningless environments for its users. It will be really interesting to conduct further research on how to create a meaningful atmosphere in contemporary, multicultural cities.

On another level, examples of future settlements within the Gulf region, such as the example of Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, UAE, which I have already started, may help in examining the users' spatial experience. This may act as a case study to be investigated through an exploration of the relationship between space as an output of a creative process, based on an architect's intentions, and as an experience that the user will have. This case has been chosen for further research because there are existing arguments that suggest that the city is not fulfilling the planned function regarding sustaining economy, ecology and society, for which it gained its popularity. Therefore, it is an interesting opportunity to examine the immaterial dimension in such a future settlement.

Finally, there is an intention to reflect on the concepts of immateriality and the users' experience within architectural design teaching, as my practice. It is hoped that through this approach future generations of architects will be more mindful of aspects related to the specificity of the context in which they design, its people, tradition and social and cultural settings. Such an approach will be useful especially in challenging the role of researchers, architects, educators and practitioners, in regards with impacting on social change and sustaining culture.

9.8 Final reflections and recommendations

This thesis proposes that we look at architecture as both practice and discipline with a view to considering some issues, which are drawn out from the study's descriptions and analysis. First of all, there is a need to understand the contextual framework in which architectural practice exists. This could be achieved through having a comprehensive background about the context, its culture, heritage, history and religious settings. Therefore, the role of culture in shaping architecture and the users' spatial experience has to be acknowledged. This would contribute well in proposing architectural designs that blend well within the context. Moreover, viewing architecture as a socially responsible practice may also lead to better design proposals where the users' input is credited. Involving people and considering both their material and immaterial needs will help in identifying and acknowledging the role of social and cultural appreciation in architecture that may lead to improving people's lives.

It is also important to bring to the attention of the general public different approaches to architecture, including the ones that acknowledge the value of heritage. This approach needs to generate greater awareness among people with regards to appreciating their cities, culture and heritage. This will help in educating future generations, especially in an age where the influence of globalisation and westernisation on local culture is so evident, and this would affect their architecture and built environment. Therefore, there is a need to create new architecture that is meaningful for its users, and at the same time responds to contemporary social, cultural and environmental conditions. While the ability to understand the spatial experience and its meaning is not easy, the architect's duty is to try to understand what the clients' needs are in order to create an architecture that is specific to a certain context, culture, society and individuals. One can argue that it is the architects' responsibility to negotiate among different perspectives and realities and to help create an environment that is meaningful and purposeful for those who live in it.

People in the Gulf region are in need of architects who fully understand the local traditions, culture and environment, and who are willing to have people's concerns reflected in their designs, in order to create new architecture that respects the locality and the specificity of the context, and blends with the global contemporary needs at the same time. The design process needs to be

informed by both material and immaterial consideration of the users and their context, which could be achieved through understanding some of the issues around immateriality in architecture.

On the research level, an ethnographic approach to architectural research that is associated with the socio-cultural dimensions of the context is very effective when dealing with issues related to people's everyday lives. The qualitative approach could lead to gaining more information related to the way that people understand, experience and interact with their spaces. Furthermore, studying models of architectural practices and experiences from other settings helps in reflecting on the context of the investigation, with a view to considering differences and challenges. In this respect, architectural practice and theory need to be integrated in order to come up with design solutions that serve the society and individuals.

Moreover, fieldwork research could be considered as a means to generating awareness among people and their understanding of their environment and how architecture, as a creative industry and process, can impact positively on individuals.

The discussion findings of this study, as summarised above have led to the following recommendations:

1. It is necessary for decision makers including government and local authorities (Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Works, Municipalities Affairs and Urban Planning) to:
 - a) implement strategies that encourage practitioners and stakeholders to consider immaterial and cultural issues to set their design intentions.
 - b) facilitate policies that actively involve people in taking decisions, especially when designing state housing schemes and community projects.
2. Architects and design professionals ought to:
 - a) consider the immaterial descriptors to be as important as the material ones from the early stages of design; this could also lead to reflecting on the immaterial aspects of the design when measuring the progress of buildings, and evaluate it after being inhabited as a way of assessing architecture, materially and immaterially, and proposing future solutions
 - b) think about architecture as a device in sustaining the local culture and social setting, in a way that could lead to a socially responsible practice; within this approach there is an intention to acknowledge that architecture is not just an art, but it also has to serve a purpose and has a big impact on people's lives.
 - c) encourage the integration between the contemporary design solutions and the local context specificities, in order to come up with architecture that does not alienate the people and their context.

- d) be willing to test and examine the global impact on the local context and its architecture, and be able to take what is convenient and leave what is not.
3. Educators have a role to play in this and in order to discharge it they need to:
- a) design and deliver curricula that teach future generations how to appreciate the specificity of their context, including culture, heritage and architecture
 - b) show commitment to preserving Islamic identity in architecture through the educational system, in schools, universities and from books and media
 - c) encourage researchers to disseminate and publish research in Arabic, which explains the meaning and essence of the users' spatial experience.
4. The media can play a vital role in order to:
- a) raise awareness and knowledge of the importance of appreciating culture, heritage and identity.
 - b) enhance people's knowledge of well-known architects, like Fathy, and their achievements in producing architecture that is user and culture centred.

Ending a research in human sciences is often an impossible task. The argument in the field of immateriality and spatial experience could never be complete anyway, however, the main objective of this thesis is to raise the right questions rather than give complete answers.

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Appendix A: A sample of the questions that formed the basis of the semi-structured interview

Part 1: General information

1. Age group:

18-25

26-40

41-65

Over 65

2. Gender

Male

Female

3. Occupation

4. Where were you born? And where do you live now?

5. What type of dwelling do you live in?

House

Flat

Other

6. Do you own this property?

7. Please state the number of family members according to age group:

Less than 18

18-25

26-40

41-65

Over 65

8. How many rooms are there in the dwelling?

Bedrooms:

Living rooms:

Bathrooms:

Kitchens:

Part 2: Meaning of *home*

9. What does your home mean to you?

10. To what extent does your home give you a sense of belonging?

1 2 3 4 5

Low

High

11. What makes you belong or feel attached to this home?

12. Does your home reflect your identity? If so, how?

13. Based on the assumption that a house refers to the material side of a dwelling, while a home refers to both material and immaterial aspects, in your opinion, when would a house become a home?

14. Do you have any intention to move from this home? Why? What would make you stay and what would make you leave?

Part 3: User participation

15. Did you contribute your opinions and ideas to the process of planning/ designing your house?

16. Did your opinions get considered?

17. Could you provide a self-evaluation of that contribution, if any?

18. Did you take part in the construction of the building?

19.

a) Did you negotiate with the designer/builder?

b) If yes, did you convince them/get convinced by them?

20. In your opinion, how should the designer-user relationship be and why?

No relationship

Two-way relationship

Others/ (Please state)

Part 4: The ideal home

21. How do you describe your dream home? And do you live in it now?

22. What are the best and worse characteristics in your home?

23. What is/are the most unique feature/s of your home?

24. If you got the chance to redesign your home, what would you add, remove, keep or alter?

Appendix B: Examples of semi-structured interview transcripts (summarised and after translation from Arabic)

Example (1):

Participant 7

Male

Age: 25

- Attached to social life and qualities
- Attached to previous house where he was born and raised:

The extended family house, grandparents' house

Still visits it weekly

The house has been through organic extension, never ending process, continuous, upon need and desire = needed some structural changes, add and remove vertical access (staircases)

Change the location of the bedrooms

House having different functions:

Inhabiting (extended family)/gathering/events, big kitchen to serve big family

Housing labour

Trading/social practice

Letting

Gardening

Cowshed/stockyard

The house reflects the grandfather's personality; never having a long-term plan, which puts him in a continuous process of change, where he finds his joy

House as refuge, weekly visit/gathering of all aunties, uncles and cousins

- Living in temporality, waiting for state housing for more than twenty years
- When moved to the state housing the same analogy used, change in space, in case they might need it in the future, it becomes a lifestyle
- In the state housing, no user input, Ministry of Housing design and build
- Lack of space is the major problem, three bedroom house for a family consists of parents, twenty-five years old about to get married son, twenty-four years old, second son, two more teenagers (boys), and two young girls living in the master bedroom
- The location of the state housing within the built community (housing project) comes with toss/lot
- The condition of the state housing is not ideal but better than what we had before
- Thinking of extending vertically to build an apartment (about to get married)
- Good relationship with community members and neighbours, apart from the difference in backgrounds, (some Sunnis, some Shias, some Bahrainis and others naturalised)
- Neighbourhood has great importance in my considerations, guaranteeing good neighbourhood means a lot
- Dream/ideal home

Large ground

Open space

Garden

Extended family

Segregation between genders

Privacy

- Experiencing urban spaces

People don't walk, because they are lazy, and the affordability of the car

Example (2):

Participant(s) 14

Family interview

Father: 50s

Mother: 40s

Two girls: 20s

Young boy: teens

- Used to have community bases building/construction

Strong social bonds

Neighbourhoods mostly relatives

Collaborating to build a house while the owner will offer them meals; breakfast, lunch and dinner

Not anymore

Weaker social bonds

More money available

People will see those who build their own houses as low-class

- Dense urban layout in the traditional settlement, houses were attached to each other with internal doors between, used as shortcut by boys

Doors always opened

Hospitality

Never make an appointment, women always at home

- Changes in the demographic fabric of the country with the migrants and naturalised people introduced changes society and lifestyle

- Sense of trust has been changed, before, level of trust between people is high, which positively affected sense of security, so doors are always unlocked during day times especially
- Traditional meaning of home and kind of activities it inhabits, like gathering, friend visits, entertainment, reading

No TV, no smart phones, no games

Games used to take place in alleyways between houses

More social life before the availability of TVs, even radio encouraged gathering and social life, but the TV isolated people inside their houses as it fixes them in one space

Before, one had more free time without restrictions, now everyone plans their time schedules according to appointments, TV news time or a certain programme

- Climate is not the reason behind the limited used of roads by pedestrians, but the social, cultural and economic changes
- Description of the old traditional house with courtyard, cowshed, laywan, well
- Getting used to A.C. and enclosed spaces
- Walking and using roads in foreign countries but not locally
- Some great advice by a British architect: the house you will build should reflect your identity
- Identity reflects who I am, Islamic identity
- Description of the process of planning the house, last for a year
- Describing the journey of building the house, by the participant himself during 1980s, with the help of relatives and some labourers

Searching, traveling, shopping abroad, making abroad, shipping...

Lasted for four years

- User having direct input in designing and building his home
- No basement, if only
- Connectivity of space

Unity

Freedom

Openness

Open vision

- Solving the privacy issue in the garden
- Achieving uniqueness in design/finishes/furniture, the father didn't depend on what's available in the Bahraini market, he ordered/executed/made/bought items from abroad, and he didn't depend on the contractor to build the house, he used labourers, his relatives and himself
- "I know every single block in this house, and every single detail, this house is my life," the father
- The father spent lots of money to create what he actually wants/loves/feels comfortable with, money at that time was not a big issue to him, he used to be employed by a bank with good salary
- For the mother this house means: rest, security and contentment

Twenty-five years of living, time line increases sense of belonging

- The mother lived in the house directly after marriage until now
- When she got married she found the house ready, didn't add anything, that was in 1989
- In 2002, renovation/refurbishment process took place, and the mother was leading
- As the father was the one who created/chose everything when building the house, he gave the chance for the mother and the kids to lead the renovation/refurbishment process
- The mother grew up in the traditional layout house, feels she belongs to both, father's house and husband's house to the same extent
- Night dreams always in the old traditional layout house
- The mother regrets demolishing the old traditional house, while her mother (the grandmother) feels happy with the new building replacing the traditional house, this could be due two reasons according to the participant:
 - The grandmother was looking forward to reunion, as her sons with their little families distributed around in rented properties, so she wanted to gather the extended family under one roof
 - The traditional house was massive (area wise), and the grandmother was the head/the one who is responsible for everything, cleaning... even if she got collaborators, but its not easy anymore specially she is getting progressed in age
 - They were happy/welcoming modernity, modern house with modern material/finishes: marble, new sanitary wares, new furniture/ carpet rugs...
- Social gathering/bonds/weekly gathering
- Ideal/dream house:

Could be with traditional layout but not open/courtyard covered

New lifestyle/furniture... Doesn't match with exposed spaces, exposed to dust and outside environment

Courtyard could be covered with glazed dome (little teen son reply)

Garden as important/essential house component

- Copy and paste in house designs in Bahrain today
- Standard design that suits everyone doesn't exist
- Some of the cultural/social habits tend to disappear, like the gender segregation, and taking off shoes when entering the house as the finishing material changed habits/lifestyle changed as well

Example (3):

Participant 19

Female

Age: 50s

- Terminology, understands from holy Quran
- Home as refuge, life, pride, glory, my kingdom

What I always protected and will always do

Never exchange with anything, any other house, even with greater and better settings

- Grew up in old traditional layout house/father's house

Central courtyard: sleeping, events, weddings, meals, feasts, cowshed/stockade, car park, children's playground

Memories

Love

Events

Gathering

Extended family = extended problems

Attachment/connection to place more than now

Organic extension

Strong relations with neighbours / internal doors between houses (doesn't exist anymore)

Organisation in traditional house

- In extension
- In use (rooms)
- In distribution of functions
- Layout

But, not applicable anymore because of the climate (heat, dust, rain, etc.)

New furniture style (western) need to be protected from the outside environment

Plus, the traditional layout doesn't go well with the current lifestyle and progress; each era has its own specificity

- The unpleasant experience of moving house, flats until she got to this house, which her husband owns

Before suffered from:

Temporary living

Lack of space

Lack of ownership (letting)

Lack of the ideal home!

- How does this house reflect the participant's identity?

Privacy (as religious issue)

Gender segregation

Toilet seats never face *qibla* direction

Hate the smell of cooking, created three kitchens organically, just to isolate the smell, away from the rest of the house

Example (4):

Participant 24

Male

Age: 60s

- Grew up in the traditional layout house, a massive big house with only three rooms, one big room in the ground floor and two upper rooms

The ground floor room used to be for the kids, boys and girls, there were eleven of them

The upper rooms for the parents

Big courtyard where the life used to be based with all kinds of activities: playing in sand, planting vegetables and fruits, cowshed/stockyard

It used to be like a countryside house

Organic extension, creating library, rooms for the married son and his wife, and the married daughter and her husband. Extended family

- After marriage moved to USA for higher studies, then came back to settle in Bahrain, with his family wife and two little kids, rented several places (apartment and house...) around the same area of the parents' house, temporary living, until the traditional house had been demolished and replaced with family-owned apartment block, where the participant and his married brothers had an apartment each. Add to that there was an apartment for the parents, apartment for the unmarried daughters, and huge *majlis* (guests hall) with services
- "When the traditional layout house was demolished, each one of us felt as if part of his history destroyed"
- After living in that apartment for almost thirteen years, two of his brothers and himself bought three adjacent plots of land, and built their own houses
- In the new house the spirit of the old traditional house was reflected:

Garden and open front yard exposed to the sky

The internal layout of the house is spacious and wide

Most of the facilities are open and connected

The main idea and the base was the participant's, then the architect/engineer added the structural requirements/plan

The idea came after an extensive study, being exposed to many western and eastern references, books and magazines, and being exposed to different cultures as had been studying abroad (Iraq, Egypt, USA)

The whole process of studying the design made him, and his two brothers aware of the desired spatial experience which they happily created, and they are fully satisfied until now

Privacy

Privacy for females, although spaces are open to each other

Privacy for the swimming pool which is located at the backyard and hidden/covered by the actual building of the house, although the designer suggested that it should be located in the front to give a nice view, but the participant disagreed strongly, as he wanted it to be private and protected from viewers, to be used freely by the females

Flexibility in the spatial experience upon need, in the case of daily experience and the case of events/weddings

Gender segregation upon request

- Privacy as a religious and cultural issue as the outdoor spaces/front yard exposed to views.

Need to consider future development/adding to increase privacy

- Privacy: traditional vs. modern houses
- The dominant design nowadays is imported and imperious on the local culture and environment, reasons are:
 - Architects and designers are mostly educated abroad, thus they brought with them the western/global design as an outcome of their studies

- The size of the plots of land are limited compared to what it used to be in the case of the traditional layout, so people left with few choices and preferred to have more space for rooms than for courtyard
- Many culturally specific issues left out/ignored, i.e. the toilet seat direction
- Architects make no reference to cultural/religious/social needs of people
- Meaning of home expressed through terminology, Quran scripts
- Ideal/dream home:

The same idea will remain, spaciousness and wideness

Bigger facilities to house the extended family

- Progress and developments by time affects home components and functions, i.e. he created a big library where he housed his books, and the number of physical books is increasing, but he thought that with the technology and the availability of paperback for most of his books, he don't need such a large library
- Multiple kitchens, dirty kitchen and light duty kitchen
- The idea of extended family:

Adds more life to the house

Can't imagine that I live in this large house only with my wife

My son with his little family have their part in the house

My daughter and her husband have their part in the house

My other two daughters who are living in their husbands' houses still have their rooms ready to house them anytime they want

- When the participant and his two brothers where looking for lands to buy and build, their late father heard about their plan, so he talked to them with a sad tone, "Are you really leaving us?"

The participant replied saying, "We are not leaving you, we are just seeking more spacious places," and that's affected the decision of the house location, not far away from the parents', and the lifestyle after moving, almost visiting parents' daily.

- Timeline and sense of belonging, the longer you live in a space the more your sense of belonging to it increases.
- What this home means to the participant:

Rest

Contentment

Reflecting identity and personality

Feeling that he produced the main ideas and design (his achievement)

Nostalgia when being abroad

Defects of modern design is being standard, and everyone copies the other

Appendix C: Example of semi-structured interview transcripts (in Arabic)

ح . ع . ح .
شاب في مقتبل العمر 25 سنة،، (خاطب) يصف نفسه بالاجتماعي،، بالنسبة له الحياة الاجتماعية مهمة،، منذ نعومة اظفاره كان يعيش في بيت جده،، الذي تركه و هو بعمر 18 عاما ليكمل دراسته الجامعية في السعودية،، تزامناً مع تخرجه انتقل والداه الى بيت الاسكان (نموذج على تأخر استلام الطلبات الاسكانية لاكثر من 18 عاماً)،، حالياً هو يخطط لبناء شقة في بيت والده (بيت الاسكان) ليسكنها بعد زواجه

ح س:
انتقلنا الى بيت الاسكان 2009،، يعني اننا عشنا في بيت المعامير (المعامير نسبة الى المنطقة) ما يقارب 21 سنة،،

ح:
نسبة انتمائك الى كل من البيتين؟

ح س:
طبعاً نسبة انتمائي الى بيتي الحالي تزيد بازدياد المدة،، كلما عشت فيه فترة اطول زاد عندي الاحساس بالانتماء،، ولكن اشعر اني انتمي له بنسبة 20% بينما احساسي بالانتماء لبيت المعامير يشكل 80% في بداية انتقالنا،، كنت اشعر بالانتماء لبيتنا الحالي بنسبة 10%،، بينما 90%

ح:
صف لي بيت المعامير

ح س:
البيت ملك جدي،، بيت كبير و نحن نسكن في شقة فيه،، (ثم طلب مني المشترك ورقة وقلم لرسم مخطط البيت)
البيت مر بمراحل كثيرة،، كل مرحلة فيها اضافات مختلفة،، بيت بطابع تقليدي على ارض كبيرة،، مساحة بيت الاسكان تساوي ربع مساحة بيت المعامير،،
الطابق الارضي،، واجهة البيت عبارة عن متاجر (retails) للتأجير (بعض الناس قديماً كانوا يستثمرون البيت في مشاريع تجارية بغرض زيادة الدخل)،، البيت ليس متصل بأي بيت آخر،، أربع الجهات مفتوحة،، شارعين اساسيين و شارعين فرعيين،، وبذلك البيت له أربع أبواب،، الجيران معظمهم من الاهل،،
البيت لم يكتمل الى يومنا هذا،، عمره اكثر من خمسين سنة،، ولكن تعود صاحب البيت على اضافة او ازالة الغرف والمرافق حسب الحاجة و تغيرات الزمن،،
رسم البيت ليس بالسهل،، الكثير من التعقيدات،، قد يوصف بالمتاهة،، به شجرة كانت في الفناء المفتوح،، زرعها العمدة الكبيرة عندما كان عمرها سبع سنوات،، وبعد التغيرات التي حصلت في البيت وتغطية سقف البيت لم تزال الشجرة (فكأنما البيت به غرف و في وسط الغرفة شجرة!!!)
الطابق الأول،، على اليمين السلم للطابق الاول،، هناك مجلس رجال به المرافق من حمامات و غيرها،، المجلس له باب من الداخل و باب خارجي،، الكثير من الابواب و النوافذ التابعة للمجلس،، النوافذ تطل على زراعة امام البيت و تابعة ليه،،
داخل البيت هناك مجلس للنساء،، بالقرب منه مطبخ و مخزن،، و تابع للمطبخ هناك امتداد له يؤدي الى مطبخ خارجي،،
ثم الحمامات و غرفة الغسيل المفتوحة على الفناء،،
كان هناك ليوان (المشارك لم يعرف سبب تسمية هذه المساحة بالليوان خصوصاً ان معالم الليوان منها مختلفة،، يبدو انها كانت ليوان في السابق و حتى بعد التغيرات لم تفقد التسمية،، الجدير بالذكر ان الليوان هو المساحة المستطيلة التي تفصل الغرف عن الحوش،، تكون عادة مغطاة السقف و جهة بها ابواب الغرف و الجهة الثانية اعمدة تطل على الحوش)

أحد الابواب الرئيسية للبيت لم يكن موجودا منذ البداية،، بل تمت اضافته لاحقا و ذلك بسبب حاجة الجدة (ربة البيت) الى الذهاب الى بيت الجار المقابل لتلك الجهة بشكل دوري وبذلك فتح لها باباً و بعد فترة بعد الانتهاء من الحاجة اليه حذف الباب (أغلق)
(المسألة تجريبية نوعاً ما ،، حسب الاحتياجات المتغيرة للأسرة و حسب تغير الزمن يتم تغيير البيت تبعاً لذلك،، كما ان هذه التغيرات تجريبية،، ان نفعت ظلت على ما هي عليه و ان لم تنفع كما يجب ازيلت) الجد و الجدة (أصحاب البيت) يغيرون غرفة نومهم بين فترة و اخرى،، حسب الاحتياج
في البداية كان السكان الجد و الجدة،، أم الجد التي توفت بعد فترة،، 3 من اولادهم بأسرهم زوجاتهم و اولادهم ،، والعمات و اللاتي تزوجن تبعاً

(المشارك كان في قمة السعادة و هو يصف البيت و الحياة فيه،، و عندما قلت له اراك فرحاً مسروراً و انت تتكلم قال نعم لان البيت جميل)

بالنسبة لوالدي ووالدتي فقد سكنا في غرفة في الطابق الارضي من بيت جدي في بداية زواجهما،، ولكن بعد ذلك انتقلنا للطابق الاول وذلك بعد ان تتخذا غرفتين لهما ليكونا بشكل شقة،،
جزء من الطابق الارضي للاستثمار،، به متجرين احدهما لبيع المواد الغذائية و آخر لبيع مواد بناء،، احد المتجرين له نافذة داخلية مشتركة مع البيت بغرض التواصل مع اهل البيت في حال احتياج امر معين خصوصا الامور المتعلقة بالضيافة حيث ان هذا المتجر كان مقصد لبعض رجالات القرية يتجاذبون فيه اطراف الحديث (كان للمكان بعد اجتماعي اضافة الى البعد التجاري)
الجدير بالذكر ان صاحب البيت لديه سجلات قانونية تسمح بالبيع استخرجها منذ بداية بناء البيت،، ولكن لو ارد تجديد هذه السجلات قد لا يتمكن من ذلك بسبب ان هذا المنطقة سكنية حالياً و لا تعطى فيها سجلات تجارية

هذا البيت يعكس الكثير من ملامح شخصية جدي،، مثل انه لا يخطط على المدى البعيد ،، يبني ما يحتاجه حالياً و بعد شهر مثلاً يكتشف انه بحاجة الى شيء ثاني او شيء اضافي فيضيف و يزيد،، يعني ان الخطة غير مدروسة من البداية بحيث ان التنفيذ يستوفي جميع الاحتياجات من جانب قد أرى هذا الشيء سلبي ،، ولكن من جانب آخر قد يكون ممتعاً وهذا ما اراه على جدي،، يفرح كثيراً و مستمتع بعملية الاضافات و التعديلات اللامتناهية وكأنها تضيف جواً جديداً على حياته،، بين فترة و اخرى يفكر و يقول لنبني غرفة هنا أو سنضيف باباً هنا ،، هذه العملية بعد ذاتها ممتعة بالنسبة لجدي
هذه القرارات هو الذي يتخذها بنفسه،، ولكن في النهاية يستشير زوجته في بعض الامور

الطابق الثاني له مدخلين من سلمين بالطابق الارضي،، في الماضي كانت حظيرة المواشي (غنم ودجاج) في الطابق الثاني،، كان جدي شديد الاهتمام و الرعاية بالمواشي
في البداية كان الطابق الاول يطل على الطابق الارضي،، و هذا الطابق مكون من غرف للأعمام والتي تحولت الى شقق لهم فيما بعد،، كما هناك مكتبة لجدي ،، وغرفة لها باب و سلم خارجي لعامل اسوي كان يعمل ككهربائي لدى جدي،، كان هذا العامل الآسيوي (هندي) كفرد من افراد العائلة،، كان اعمامي ووالدي يسهرون معه،، وكان اذا سافر الى الهند لا يرجع الا محملاً بالهدايا،، وكان دائماً من المدعوين في المناسبات الخاصة

كانت هناك غرفة مخصصة فقط للتلفاز وموجودة في الطابق الاول وغرفة لنوم جدي وجدتي قبل ان ينتقلون للطابق الارضي،، معها حمام ،، الغرفة مكونة من قسمين،، قسم قد يطلق عليه عام و يمكن ان يدخلوه افراد الاسرة و قسم خاص جداً لا يدخله احد سوى الجد و الجدة "ولكنني دخلته!"

وكانما الغرفة لها حدود معينة لا يمكن تجاوزها

الشقة التي كانت لنا في الطابق الاول عبارة عن غرفة كبيرة بها غرفة اصغر، ولها حمام ولكن لم يكن بها مطبخ في بداية الامر، عندما احتاج والدي لمساحة زيادة في شقتنا فغطينا جزء من سقف الفناء الداخلي الارضي ولكن مع المحافظة على وجود الشجرة التي زرعتها عمتي، فأصبح عندنا مطبخ و صالة صغيرة وغرفتين وحمامين، والمساحة في الطابق الارضي استغلت كغرفة معيشة (صالة) خصوصا ان الاسرة زادت افرادها مع تزوج الاوداد وقدم الاحفاد كل تغيير يتم وتم ورائه و تبعاً له تغييرات اخرى،، تغييرات في الطابق الارضي مثلاً، اضيفت بعض المخازن،، تغيرت مواقع بعض الابواب مثل الباب بين مجلس الرجال و الجزء الداخلي للبيت لزيادة خصوصية الجزء الداخلي و حجب الرؤية،، تغيير موقع باب المطبخ ليكون اقرب لمجلس النساء،، بعض المواشي تمت تصفيتهم وذبحهم و اكلهم،، عدت و ادوات الذبح موجودة في الفناء الداخلي،، كما ازيلت بعض الاشجار الكثير من الولايم تعد في البيت فنحتاج الى الكثير من ادوات الطبخ التي تخزن في المخازن التابعة للمطبخ

جدي استغل غرفة خارجية لعمال اسويين تابعين لشركته و عمله ففتح له باباً خارجياً (البيت ليس للسكن فقط، بل يستغل لجميع انواع الحاجيات الاستثمارية)

من كثر عدد الغرف بالبيت كانت كل غرفة كان لها اسم معين حسب صاحبها مثل غرفة محمد علي او حسب وظيفتها مثل غرفة التلفاز او غرفة القراءة

غرف الطابق الأرضي اصبحوا لاستقبال البنات المتزوجات عند زيارتهم للبيت،،

كما استحدثوا شقة كاملة بها غرفة و حمام ومطبخ لها باب خارجي و اغلقت جميع الابواب الداخلية التي تربطها بالبيت واصبحت شقة مستقلة بذاتها و أجرت على شخص خارجي ليس له علاقة بالاسرة،، بعد فترة احتاج المستأجر الى مساحة اكبر فوسعت شقته و زادت قيمة الاجار بعض الاضافات والتعديلات قد تحتاج الى اضافة اعمدة فأصبح بذله تغيير في هيكل البيت ككل،، خصوصا مع ترميم الطابق الارضي مع وجود الطابق الاول فاحتاج الموضوع اضافة الاعمدة ما يميز البيت مع التعديلات الجزئية المتكررة انه اصبح يحمل طابع قديم جدا و طابع متوسط القدم وطابع حديث،، مزيجا من اكثر من هيئة واحدة

السقف اصبح به قبة مربعة او مكعبة الشكل،، بها 4 نوافذ من جميع الجهات،، لتدخيل الضوء الى البيت عوضا عن الفتحة الكبيرة ظلت الشجرة موجودة الى هذا اليوم وممرت عليها تطورت باضافة و تركيب ثمر مختلف عليها،، كان بها خلية نحل

بعد انتقالنا الى بيت الاسكان جدي استغل شقتنا القديمة التي في بيته للتأجير أيضا وذلك بغلق جميع مداخلها وفتحاتها الداخلية و اضاف لها سلم خارجي (أجرت هذه الشقة على عمال أسوية تابعين لعمال احد أعمامي)

ح:

بما ان والدكم نشأ في بيئة بها الكثير من عوامل التجريب (أو الاختباط) خصوصا في توزيع المساحات و استغلالها،، هل ترى ان هذا ينعكس على سلوككم الحالي من منزلكم الحالي (بيت الاسكان)؟

ح س:

نعم كثيراً، لازلنا نضيف و نغير بمنزلنا الحالي ولكن بخبرة اكثر ، ، كما ان والدي يستشيرني كثيراً ، ، و بعملية بحيث ان الحلول التي نقوم بتنفيذها دائمة ولا نود تغييرها بعد فترة بسيطة بعكس بيت جدي حيث ان كل تغييراتهم تقوم مبنية على نظرية وجود احتياط او مجال للتغير في المستقبل سواء القريب او البعيد

ح :

ماذا يعني لك هذا البيت (بيت المعامير)؟

ح س :

هذا البيت تاريخ ، ، اعتبره ملجأ لي حتى بعد انتقالنا لبيت الاسكان ، ، حتى الآن املك مفتاح البيت ، ، فهو ملجأ تاريخ حياة تعلمت منه اشياء كثيرة ، ، و لأن شقتنا ضيقة اصبحت اعرف كيف اخطط و ارتب البيت او المكان الضيق واجعله يبدو واسعا حتى الآن الكل يعتبر هذا البيت ملجأ ، ، عماتي يزورونه بشكل يومي و انا لا اتخلف عن الزيارة الاسبوعية ، ، عنصر التجمع الاسبوعي مهم جدا عند عائلتنا

ح :

البيت و المسكن و الدار و المنزل

ح س :

المسكن هو اي مكان ممكن يسكنه الفرد أو المنزل هو اي مكان ينزله الفرد حتى وان كان مسافراً ، ، حتى وان كان مؤقتاً ، ، عندما كنت مسافراً للدراسة في السعودية سكنت في شقة قريبة من الجامعة ، ، نزلت فيها فهي مسكن او منزل ولكنها ليست بيتي ، ، قد تكون استراحة اسكن فيها و قد لا ابيت فيها

الدار والبيت لها معاني متفقة مع بعض ، ، الدار هو مكان الذي تدور فيه الحياة ، ، والبيت مكان المبيت ، ، وقد نقول بيت فلان فهو ليس مجرد بناء هو بالناس الذين فيه ويشمل الاشياء المعنوية و المادية الدار أعم و اكثر اتساعا وبعد زمني معين ، ، دار علي وفاطمة في بعض الاحاديث وردت هذه المفردة

ح :

بيتك الحالي ، ، وبداية بناءه من قبل وزارة الاسكان ، ، هل تم اخذ رأيكم؟

ح س :

لقد استلمنا البيت من الوزارة وهو كامل البنيان ، ، كان هناك اكثر من خيار ، ، بيت بخمس غرف وبيت بثلاث غرف ، ، مساحة الارض واحدة ولكن مساحة البناء الداخلي مختلف ، ، والوزارة توزع البيوت على حسب عدد افراد العائلة ، ، وكان من المفروض ان نحصل على بيت بخمس غرف وذلك تبعا لعدد افراد عائلتنا ، ، ولكن مع الاسف وزعت جميع الوحدات ذات الخمس غرف و لم يتبقى لدينا سوى خيار البيت ذو الثلاث غرف او ننتظر دفعة جديدة من البيوت ، ، وبسبب الانتظار الطويل الذي يتعدى العشرون عاما وبسبب الضيق الذي كنا نعيش فيه قررنا استلام هذا البيت الذي هو في الاصل بثلاث غرف فقط

اختيار موقع البيت بالقرعة

فأبدا ليس لنا اي خيار في التصميم ، ، عندما استلمنا البيت كان بالطبع افضل من الشقة ، ، ولكن لم يكن البيت الذي كانت العائلة تطمح له ، ، سكنا به فترة معينة ثم بدأنا بتغييرات في المساحات ، ، اضفنا جزء من الفناء الخارجي للصالة او غرفة المعيشة و تبعا لذلك توسعت الغرفة فوق الصالة (في الطابق الاول)

غيرنا باب موقع باب المجلس

قد نغير ايضا في المستقبل في الطابق الارضي و ذلك باضافة الفناء الخلفي للبيت و نقل المطبخ للخلف و اضافة مساحة المطبخ الحالي للصالة

ح :
حاليا انتم مقبلين على احتياجان جديدة خصوصا انك مقبل على زواج و
تحتاج الى شقة؟

ح س :
الاتساع سيكون باتجاه عمودي، افكر في بناء شقة في طابق ثاني،،
المخطط سيكون محكوم بما هو موجود في الطابق الاول

ح :
لو كنت وزير الاسكان،، ماذا تستحدث من قوانين لارتقاء بمستوى هذه
البيوت لصالح المستخدم؟

ح س :
أولا أوسع مساحة الارض لانها صغيرة،، ثانيا أوزع الاراضي قبل بنائها و
اتيح الفرصة للمستخدم بان يضيف احتياجاته و يضيف للميزانية اذا
اراد حتى و ان كان هناك ضوابط وحدود من قبل الوزارة

ح :
هل لكم علاقة بجيرانكم؟

ح س :

نعم بالطبع،، أحد الجيران يعمل في الجيش (المجنسين)،، لذلك اتوقع
ان مسألة توفير خيار اختيار الجار شيء مهم
انا من الاشخاص المهتمين بمسألة الجيرة كثيرا،، لدرجة اني كنت افكر
في اقتراح من احد الشباب هو الاشتراك في شراء ارض كبيرة و بعد ذلك
نقسمها فيما بيننا وبالتالي نضمن جيراننا،، لكن الاقتراح كان مكلفاً

ح :
البيت المثالي؟

ح س :
أرض كبيرة،، بها قسم مبني،، وقسم منها حديقة بحيث ان تكون بها قسم
للاشجار و الثمار و جسم للجلسة،، وبها مسبح،، واذا بها مجال سيكون
بها ملعب لأكثر من استخدام multipurpose
ملحق للمجلس،، الطابق الثاني لغرف النوم (للخصوصية)
يكون للبيت اكثر من مدخل و مفتوح من اكثر من مدخل،، مدخل مجلس
ومدخل للبيت ومطبخ خارجي وداخلي
مجلس رجال و مجل نساء
مكان لعب الاطفال
هناك مبدأ مهم اود تحقيقه في بيت احلامي،، من يدخل البيت ليس
بالضرورة يمر او يرى اي كل اجزاء البيت،، طبعاً هذا يعزز عنصر
الخصوصية

أردت توضيح شيء تابع للتغيرات في ثقافتنا،، في القديم كانت القرف
حول حدود البيت و الفناء في النصف اما الآن بالعكس البناء في النصف
و الفناء حول البيت مما جعله مكشوفاً و هذا الشيء ينتهك خصوصية و
حرمة البيوت

ح :
لماذا لا نمشي في البحرين؟

ح س :
ثقافتنا تحتم علينا حالياً عدم المشي،، توفر وسائل الرفاهية و اصبح
الناس بهم من الكسل ما يكفي ليجعلهم يستخدمون السيارة لما يمكنهم
ان يذهبوا له ب 10 دقائق مشي
السيارة غير غالية ومتوفرة و الوقود غير غالي
من يقول (بطلع اتمشي) يقصد انه (يتمشي) بالسيارة وليس على القدمين

ح :
هل لديكم اي تعليق او اقتراح؟

ح س:

البيت الاول كان يعكس هويتنا لانه على النظام التقليدي وكانت الحياة فيه و في الفناء بكل حرية و راحة و لا يوجد ما ينتهك الخصوصية،، محافظ على التراث و الحياة الاجتماعية،، انا احب هذا الشيء الذي اعده من العوامل المهمة لو كنت سأبني عمارة للأسرة المركبة سوف اوفر حوش في النصف و ابني حوله الغرف،، وجود الشمس و دخول ضوءها مهم جدا عندي،، الحديقة او عنصر الماء يضيفون حياة للمكان،، الطابق الارضي لكبار السن و المجالس و المطبخ،، والطوابق العليا للشقق و الاسر،، يعني اني سأدمج الطراز التقليدي بالطراز الحديث

الملاحظات:

قراءة الساعتين و النصف

اشعر انه من البديهي ان تزيد نسبة انتماء الشخص لبيته كلما زادت المدة،، وبذلك اشعر ان البعض يستغرب سؤالي وكأنني استفسر عن شيء من المسلمات!!

تصميم بيت المعامير القديم قد يدل على قليل من الاحتياط،، الكثير من الغرف التي لا تربطها ممرات بل ان باب الغرفة يكون بداخل غرفة أخرى،، كما ان مسألة اضافة او حذف بعض الابواب حسب الاحتياج بيت المعامير كان كبيرا يوفي احتياجات كثيرة ،، للسكن،، للزرع،، للتجارة و للاستثمار،، و كان هذا شيئا مميزا في هذا البيت خصوصا ان مساحة البيت تستحمل هذا الاستغلال حتى وان كان هذا الاستغلال غير مدروس بحيث ان البيت اصبح شبيه بالمنازل او تصميمه عشوائي

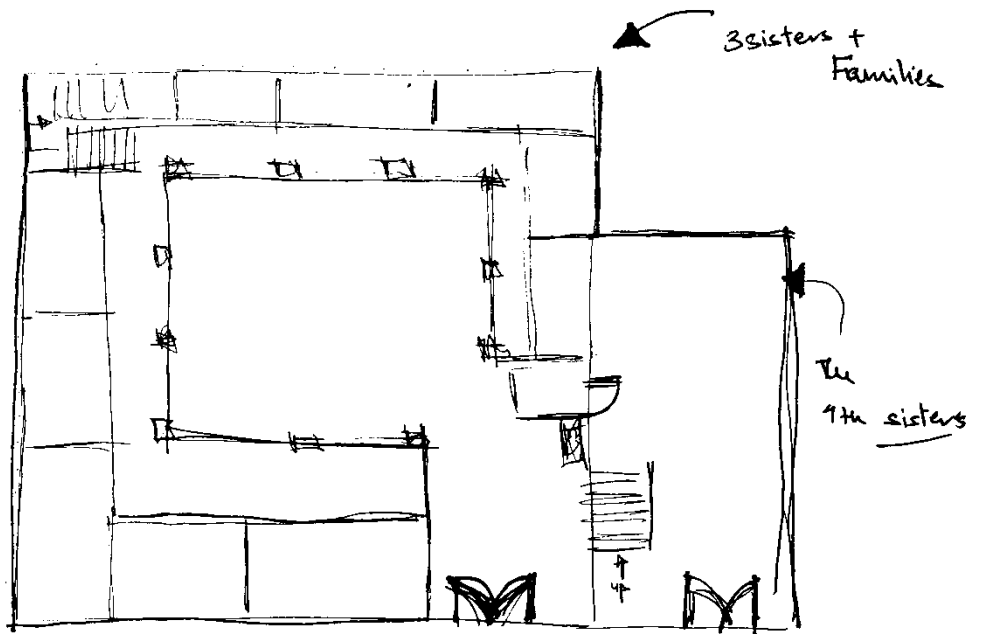
اهم ميزات بيت المعامير ان البناء لا يخرج من البيت طوال السنة،، التعديلات لا تنتهي

جزء من متعة سكان بيت المعامير وبالاخص الجد و الجدة هو التغيير في البيت و في مساحاته و فتحات ابوابه،، او قد يتعدى ذلك الى تغيير الغرف،، الجد و الجدة يغيرون غرفة نومهم من فترة لأخرى او حسب الاحتياج،، كانت في الطابق الاول و لكن بعد تقدم السن و لعوامل صحية نقلت الى الطابق الارضي

كانت من اطول المقابلات و قد اصفها بالانجح،، العديد من المعلومات الخاصة بأسلوب حياة اسرة معينة،، قد تتكرر مع عائلات اخرى خصوصا مسألة تأجير جزء من البيت،، قد تلجئ لهذا الحل بعض العائلات للحصول على مورد مالي

التغييرات التي تطرأ على البيت ليست حسب ما يجري بالبيت فقط،، لكن حتى حسب مجريات الامور الخارجية،، احد الجيران كان لهم تجمع اسبوعي معين و الجدة احبت حضور هذا التجمع ففتح باب في جهة مقابلة لبيت هؤلاء الجيران!!!

مع انه شاب وعمره لا يتجاوز الـ 25 عاما الا ان طريقة تفكيره تحكمها الكثير من الموروثات الثقافية،، يقدس الخصوصية و الاستقلالية و يحب استقبال الضيوف في مكان منعزل و منفصل.

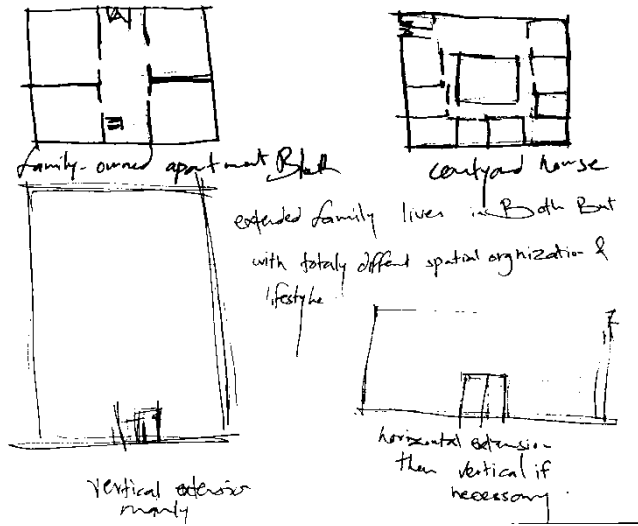
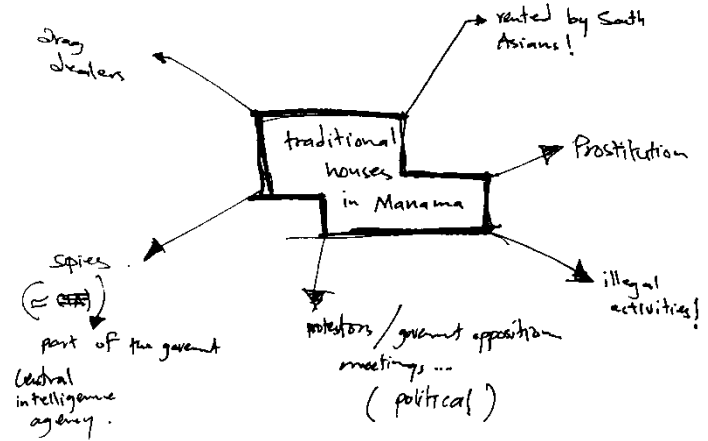


- * traditional Bahraini house
- * housed 3 families, the housewives were sisters married to cousins.
- * the attached house is for the fourth sister who was married to a man from another family.
- * the area of the house around 16m x 2m
- * The open courtyard witnessed most of the family's wedding including members who don't live in the house.
- * At early stages, the courtyard housed a yard where Livestock kept (cows, hens...)
- * The house now is locked, used only for gathering during some seasons like 'Ashura'a'

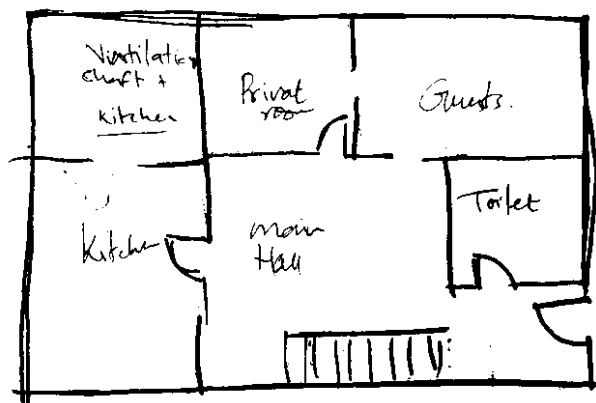
Courtyard:



Traditional houses in Manama which are used by Non-Bahrainis :-



Interview Participant 6



house within the old Manama

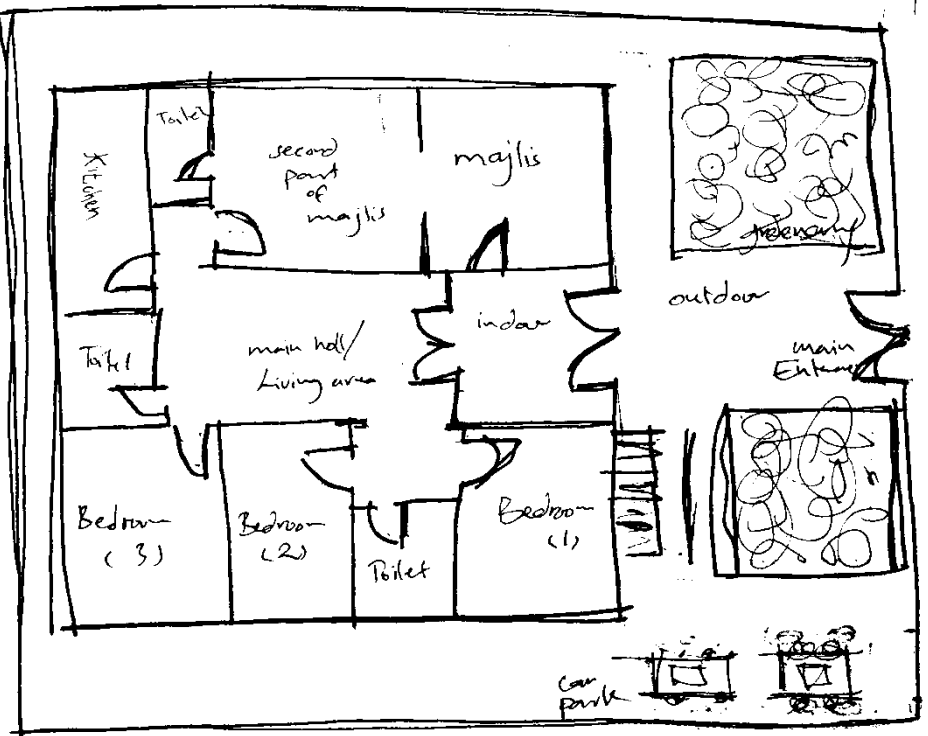
Area 7m x 10m = 70 m²

3 floors

vertical extension

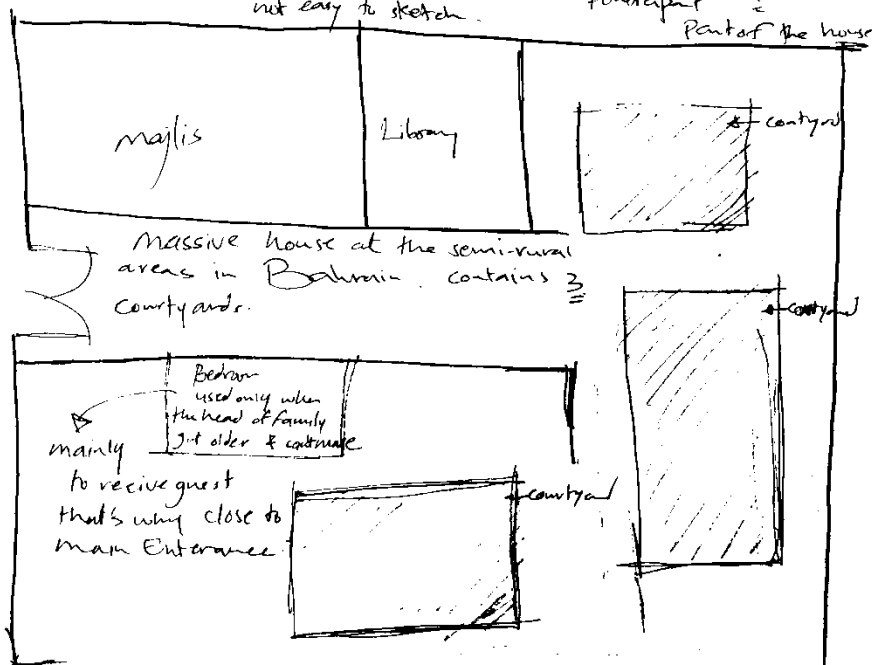
Interview Participant 4

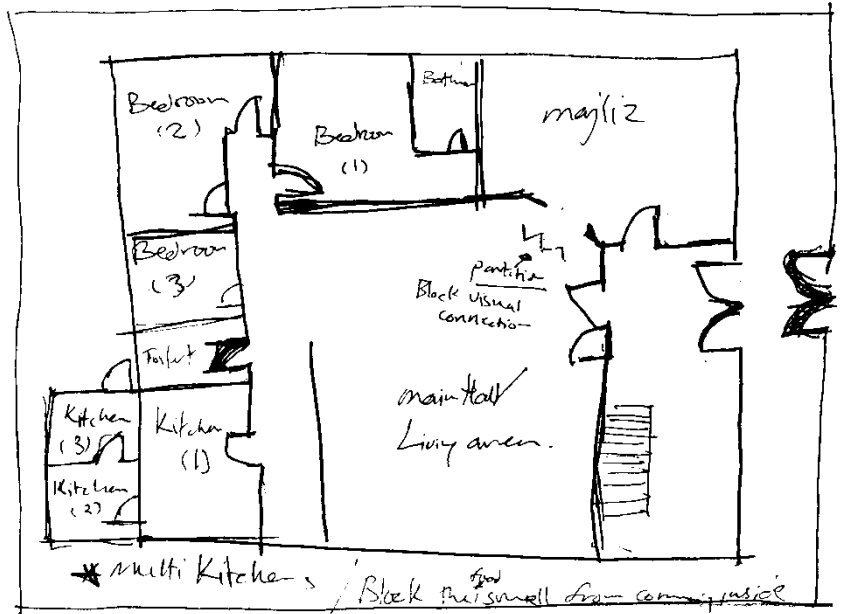
Area ≈
20m X 15m
≈ 300m²
2 ~~floors~~
floors



not easy to sketch

Participant 9
Part of the house



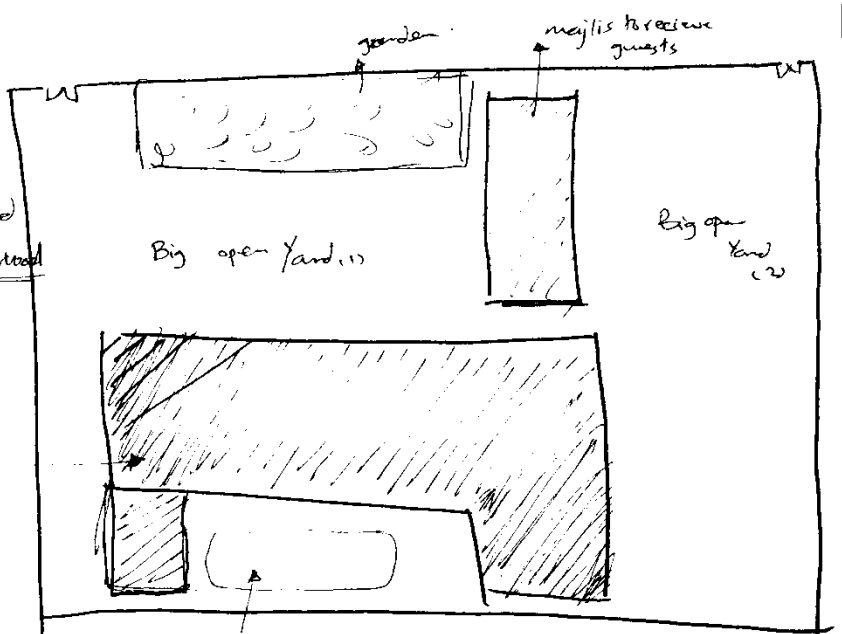


Both Yards
cannot be
used to hold
~~the~~ female
events as
Both exposed
By neighbourhood

Issue of
Privacy

main
house
mass

Participant 24
25
26



swimming pool protected by the house mass to
ensure privacy But still worried about the
southern side in case neighbours were building
higher.

Appendix E: Other themes drawn out of the interviews which could be used in further research

- The housing designs nowadays in Bahrain are copy-and-paste.
- The idea of a “standard design” that suits everyone does not exist.
- The commercial housing projects are purely for the purposes of marketing and profit; the users’ spatial experience is taken into consideration last.
- Comparison of the social bonds between the East and the West.
- Comparison between the traditional and modern layout of houses.
- To some interviewees, their feeling toward their space is not clear; one participant could explain her feelings and the immaterial aspect of her spatial experience very well regarding two houses she moved from but could not do so regarding one of the houses she lived in temporarily.
- What is modernity and progress? And why do people always relate progress to copying the West?
- Lack of outdoor entertaining places in Bahrain created a need of garden/yard in houses.
- Shopping malls vs. Manama traditional market; fresh-air outdoors entertaining places vs. enclosed air-conditioned places.
- Reference to user, social and cultural aspect in design/architectural education.
- The difference between theory at the university and practice in real life: the client is the governor of the design process, as s/he owns the money.
- Religious architecture/component within the city impacts on the immaterial aspects of the users’ spatial experience: increasing a sense of belonging, ownership, love.
- Manama during the three holy months.
- Out of the values of hospitality, new phenomena emerged: *madhayef*, small booths distributed in the alleyways of the old city of Manama offer meals for free during special occasions.
- The organic extension of houses nowadays and the need of providing flats/apartment for the sons when they got married.
- One of the interviewees does not like living on the upper floor, she feels that she is suspended, but she had to because the ground floor of her house is occupied by her in-laws.
- Sense of gathering around meal time, especially lunch, gives a special kind of bond between the family members and adds another level of the immaterial values to the idea of home. This idea used to be dominant in the traditional setting, it tends to diminish with time, but there are many families who still celebrate it.
- As a child, to monitor the progress of building the house acts as building a sense of attachment and belonging.
- In Bahrain nowadays, everyone is coping, in terms of designs.

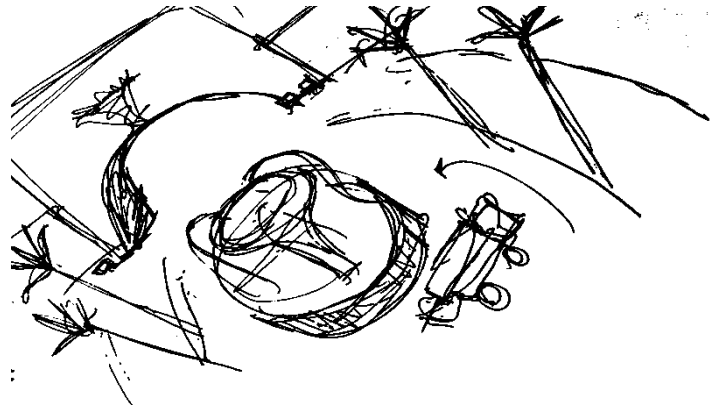
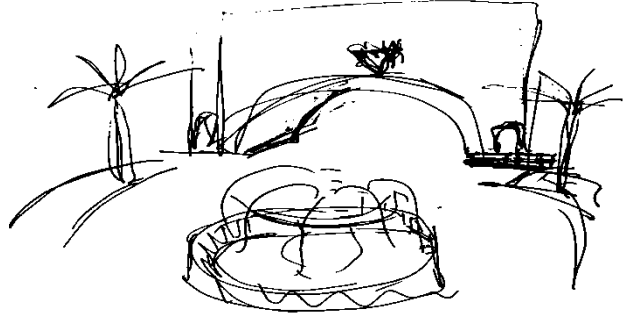
- The component of the traditional vernacular architecture in Bahrain contains: *mushrabiya*, *orsi*, and *badgir* (wind tower), well-ornamented windows and doors, courtyard, ornamented roof and different building materials. All those aspects disappeared with the modern houses and lifestyle.
- One of the interviewees compared the life in the city and village in the 1980s. She stated that she used to live in Manama, where her father lived, and then after her marriage she moved to live in a village with her husband. First of all, she noticed that the level of education of people in the city is higher and people are more open-minded, and the economic status for people is much better and local markets are available. However, the level of religious awareness was stronger in the village; a sense of hospitality and generosity was higher, even though their economic status is lower. In the village the buildings are more or less residential, and sometimes they would have a small market.
- Contradicting the traditional social and cultural conditions, some people today prefer to be isolated from the community, hide themselves inside their homes, and escape from the outside world. They argue that they need to have rest and be away from people for a while and in this case home would act as a refuge for them (only a small number of people had this attitude and mentality).
- The use of housemaids is changing many of the social and cultural settings and creating a big impact on people's lifestyle and therefore on architecture.
- Housemaids and location of laundry room: religious issue, supervising/achieving *Tahara*.
- Some interviewees were not that into understanding their identity, and how it could be reflected in their spaces/places. Most of the responses to such questions would be about taste, paint, colours and furniture style.
- Some female interviewees said that their husband did not take into consideration their opinions, thoughts and suggestions during the planning phase of the house. This might reveal a traditional cultural issue that was dominant before, which states that planning/building the house is the responsibility of males and they take every decision in this regard, and the female voice is not heard.
- In some houses, the level of privacy increases vertically. The ground floor contains the living room, *majlis*, or a room to receive guests, kitchen and bathroom, meaning that this floor can be used by all family members and guests. The first floor contains the family bedrooms, which mean that it could be used by all family members. The second floor in some case contains a flat/s for the married sons, which means that this level is not used by all the family members, only the ones who inhabit it. In this case, when the young family/ies living in the upper floors receive guests, they would have to go through the middle private floor, which is not preferred.
- Privacy in using home garden and swimming pool.
- Fashion in architecture creates a lot of chaos, as everyone wants to use different shapes, looks and appearances in his/her house, as people are getting obsessed with being unique, and the end result

is a chaotic urban fabric. On the other hand, houses used to be similar before and offered a harmonious appearance to the streetscape in a very dense urban fabric.

- In Bahrain nowadays, people want to be unique. Everyone is trying to express his/her own taste in their home design and the exterior. This has resulted in a chaotic urban look, as every house elevation looks different.
- The old villages and towns have a very dense urban fabric, with houses in close proximity to each other. This causes many problems for a modern lifestyle, affecting privacy as the house layouts are of modern configurations.

Appendix F: Observation sketches and a selection of photographs

- Manama Souq
- Bahrain City Centre shopping mall

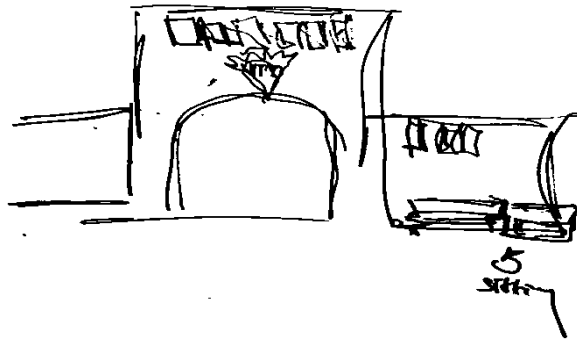


26 Feb 2014

* 10 am

* I had to accept an offer to get my car washed in order to get a parking!





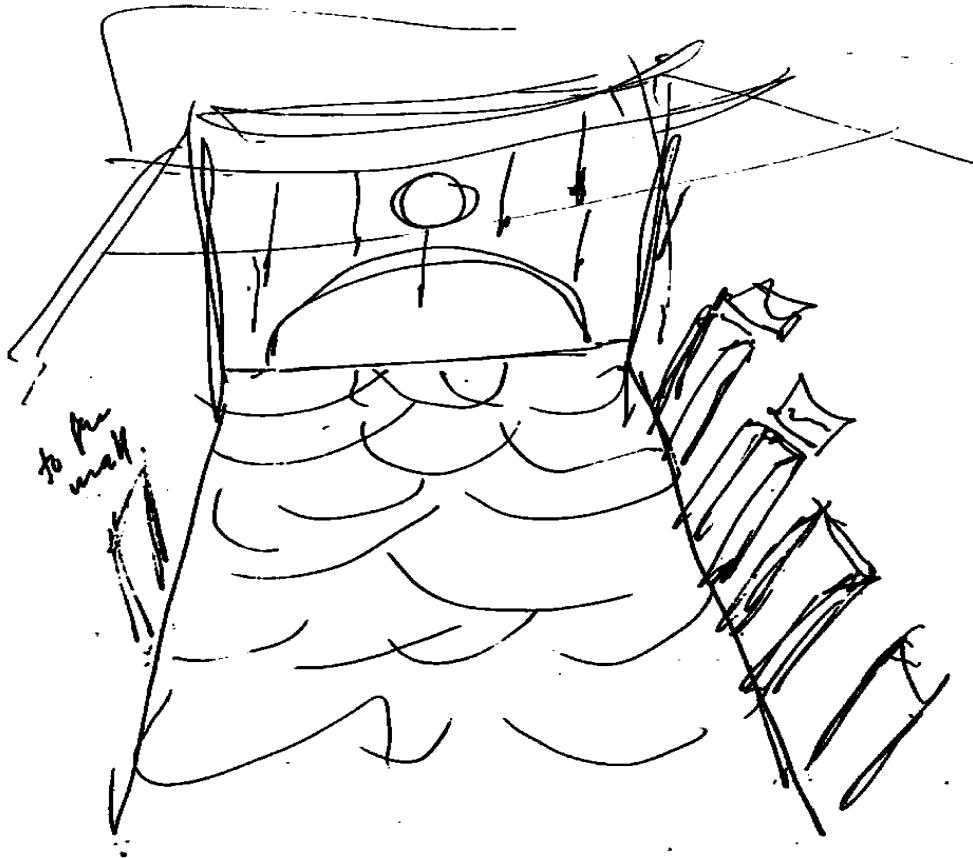
→ car washing usually is not a 'career' for a Bahraini
it's usually ~~for~~ ^{for} Low income Asian ...

→ Surprisingly .. The man who offered me the car park
was Bahraini.

I paid him ~~1 B.P~~ £ 1.40

→ It was not that easy to sit down, stand & people
write down & document what I was seeing.

Manama Souq



building scattered around ← well planned & structured skyscrapers mostly commercial / governmental agencies



Bab Al-Bahrain

2-3 stories in height ← developed organically very dense mostly residential with main market @ the heart

Qatar







Bahrain City Centre shopping mall







Appendix G: Research Paper

The *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* ' (IJAS) academic conference in Paris (11-14 April 2016)

Abstract:

Experiencing the domestic space: Through the eyes of the users

Dr. Hocine Bougdah

Hawra Salman

Cities in the Gulf region in general have been through major transformations throughout the last four decades. As a result, the urban space, which was mainly shaped by the tribal structure and the economy that is based on fishing, pearl trading and/or farming; has been modified beyond recognition. This rapid urbanisation is in the form of a checkerboard of architectural styles and global signature designs dominated by tall skyscrapers and western style shopping malls. Some argue that this has led to a loss of appreciation for architectural heritage, and social alienation of the citizens.

The work described in this paper is part of a research project that looks at the spatial experience of city dwellers with a view to considering how that experience relates to the culture in which those spaces exist. Using Manama as a typical city from the Gulf region, semi-structured interviews and organised city walks with participants were undertaken to investigate users' spatial experience with a view to exploring the aspects and meanings of space both in the place of dwelling, as a private space, and public spaces in the city. For the purpose of this paper, only the work relating to the domestic space is being investigated. However, a discussion of the impact of the urban transformation on people's everyday life in the urban space is undertaken by way of contextualising the study.

In the first instance, a pilot study was undertaken using a trial questionnaire with nineteen participants of different age groups. The pilot study was used to gauge people's awareness of their domestic spatial experience with a view to fully developing the research questionnaire and iron out any logistical issues that may be present. The questions were refined further and used in the second part of the study, which made use of semi-structured interviews with forty-four participants. Each interview consisted of twenty-three questions organised in four parts, dealing with various aspects of users' experience of the domestic space.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed and the data from the interviews was analysed. The analysis clearly shows that both the technology used in the dwelling (TV, internet, digital entertainment, etc.) as well as the introduction of the single occupancy dwellings (apartments/flats) as opposed to the big family house have impacted on people's experience of the space and their sense of social and cultural belonging.

Finally, the paper argues for a reconsideration of some aspects relating to the design of the built environment that up to now have been ignored. Such aspects include an understanding of the socio-cultural values of the people who inhabit the cities that are being built.

Conference Certificate

