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POLITICAL INFLUENCES AND PARADIGM SHIFTS

in the Contemporary Arab Cities:
Questioning the Identity of Urban Form

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SUMMARY

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POLITICAL INFLUENCES AND PARADIGM SHIFTS

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INTRODUCTION

We live in physical places. Unless there are particular meanings embodied in these places, we cannot feel that we belong to them. The meanings we give to the physical forms do not exist, in reality, in the forms themselves. But they exist in our minds and are generated from our past experience and significant events related to these forms. In this sense, culture, history and architecture are interrelated concepts and we cannot understand any one of them in isolation from the other.

This paper is concerned with all these concepts. However, we need to discuss some of them in a preliminary way here so as to introduce the issue of identity in the Arab cities, its roots and its consequences. It presents the issue of identity as a phenomenon associated with the drastic transformation of social and physical traditions in Arab cities. We are looking for continuity and change of political and social identity and its impact on the urban form of these cities. Concepts such as traditions, modernization, and westernization will be addressed with special consideration of their role in enhancing the search for identity in the Arab cities.

Searching for social and urban identity in contemporary Arab cities can be seen from the debate that took place in the beginning of the twentieth century when Arab intellectuals questioned the local situation and tried to adopt western culture. This debate goes back to the beginning of the nineteenth century when Mohammed

Ali (the governor of Egypt) took over after French withdrawal from Egypt. What we are trying to say here is that the crises of identity in the contemporary Arab cities need to be understood through the political and cultural situations that influenced the formation of modern Arab cities and architecture.

In general the study addresses four paradigms that Arab urbanization has passed through. These paradigms are closely linked to the political events that took place in the region. This is because, as Stewart (2001) said: "in the Arabic-Islamic cities there is an interconnection between spiritual and political"[1]. In this sense, it is difficult to understand what happened in the Arab towns without understanding the connection between religion and politics. In this study a number of examples are from the Arab cities presented, but there is a special reference to Saudi urban experience, especially when we come to the modernization of the Arab town in the second half of the twentieth century.

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[1] STEWART, D. (2001) *Middle East Urban Studies: Identity and Meaning*, Urban Geography, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 175-81.

TRADITION VERSUS MODERNITY
IN THE ARAB CITY

Many traditional societies have been influenced by the process of modernisation, especially in the twentieth century. Traditional societies in the Arab world have been transformed from isolated regions constituting small towns and villages scattered here and there, to modern countries with large cities and huge social and economic networks. This has influenced the traditional political, economic, and social orders and increased the gap between traditional orders and the new orders[2]. A new way of thinking was created within the old societies contradicting the previous one. Traditional societies were dependent on traditions and customs as codes for organisation, while contemporary modern societies are strongly influenced by rationality. The faith of modern societies is usually based on science, pragmatic reasoning and utilitarianism, while traditional societies tend to believe in the legitimacy of scriptural teaching and traditional norms[3].

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[2] LIPSKY, G.A. (1959) *Saudi Arabia: Its People, its Society, its Culture*, New Haven, HRF Press.

[3] LERNER, D. (1958) *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*, New York, The Free Press, pp. 48-9. Also SHILS, E. (1966) *Political Development in the New States*, Paris, Mouton & Co. Shils indicates that the traditional societies are 'attached to beliefs and rules which guided past practices, and which are regarded as guides to right practice in the present. The attachment

While tradition contrasts with modernity, they cannot both exist in isolation in a society. This can be contrasted with C.B. Wilson's (1988) statement that 'society cannot be both modern and traditional at the same time'[4]. The 'strands of tradition', however, may continue in modern societies even when the society to which they belong has disappeared, but we should realise that these strands do not reflect the whole tradition[5]. The view that sees traditions able to continue in modern societies can be linked to what Shils suggests when he stresses that the ambiguity and flexibility of traditions had enabled the new concept to survive and develop. In that sense, traditions

"…often possess sufficient ambiguity and hence flexibility to allow innovations to enter without severely disruptive consequences. Then, too, patterns of traditional beliefs (and their accompanying practices) do not form such a rigorously unitary whole; some parts are more affirmative toward modernity, or at least less resistant toward innovation. Many traditional beliefs are not so much objects of zealous devotion to symbols of the past as they are the resultants of a situation without alternatives. Once alternatives become visible and available, what appeared to be an immobile tradition might well yield to a new practice"[6].

Despite the common belief that a society becomes modern only when it totally rejects its traditional socio-cultural bonds, continuity of traditions in modern societies is essential. This is not

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to these beliefs is firmer or more intense than it is in modern societies, and it is more widely shared throughout the society' (p. 31).

[4] Cited in FU, C. (1990) *Regional Heritage and Architecture - A Critical Regionalist Approach to a New Architecture for Taiwan*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh, p. 15.

[5] Ibid., p. 15.

[6] SHILS, E. (1966), op. cit., p. 32.

to say that the society will be both traditional and modern but, as Popper explained, tradition emerges as a result of our need for a certain predictability in our social life. In this regard tradition provides order and regularity in our social environment, and it provides us with the possibility of communication[7]. Without tradition 'there can no longer be reliance on the accepted norms'[8]. However, 'tradition is not a matter of a fixed or given set of beliefs or practices which are handed down or accepted passively'[9]. Rather, as Wright (1985) has argued, 'tradition is very much a matter of present-day politics...'[10].

Continuity of traditions or their strands in modern societies can be seen as a sort of internal resistance by people to balancing between deep rooted values and the new. Nasr shares this view and adds that tradition 'is related etymologically to transmission' and contains within the scope of its meaning the idea of 'transmission of knowledge, practice, techniques, laws, forms and many other elements of both an oral and written nature'[11].

Tradition, in this sense, is seen as a mechanism which has no authority but 'forms the most important source of our knowledge

[7] POPPER, K. (1968) 'Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition', in his *The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, New York, Harper and Row, pp. 120-35.

[8] RAPOPORT, A. (1969) *House Form and Culture*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, INC, p. 6.

[9] MORLEY, D. & ROBINS, K. (1995) *Spaces of Identity*, London, Routledge, p. 47.

[10] Cited in Ibid., p. 47.

[11] NASR, S.H. (1981) *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, p. 67.

and serves as the base of our thought and action'[12]. Rapoport defined tradition as a model resulting from the 'collaboration of many people over many generations.' For him, tradition 'has the force of law honoured by everyone through collective assent'. Therefore, respect for tradition by the community members gives 'collective control', which works as 'discipline' for a community[13].

Rapid urban growth is usually associated with socio-economic change[14]. Similar to other developing countries, the conflict in the Arab world is between borrowed elements, which are largely physical, and inherited elements, which are mostly values and beliefs[15]. This has produced numerous social problems for Arab town urbanization. What has happened to Arab cities in the last century is an almost total urban transformation. It is debatable whether this physical change caused the social change or vice versa[16]. What is clear is that an obvious contradiction appeared in

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[12] AL-HATHLOUL, S. (1981) *Tradition, Continuity, and Change in the Physical Environment: The Arab-Muslim City*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, MIT, Cambridge, p. 254.

[13] RAPOPORT, A. (1969), op. cit., p. 6.

[14] PAYNE, G. (1977) *Urban Housing in the Third World*, London, Leonard Hill, p. 3.

[15] JARBAWI, A. (1981) *Modernism and Secularism in the Arab Middle East*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Cincinnati, University of Cincinnati, p. 33.

[16] Behavioral-environmental studies addressed three views regarding the impact of physical environment on people's behavior, including environmental determinism, environmental possibilism, and environmental probabilism. Environmental determinism insists on the deterministic nature of the built environment on human behavior. Possibilism argues that the physical environment 'provides possibilities and constraints within which people make choices based on other, mainly cultural, criteria'. Probabilism suggests that the physical environment provides 'possibilities for choice and is not determining, but that some choices are more probable than others in given physical settings'. RAPOPORT, A. (1977)

Arab society between tradition and modernity. Thus, the ability of the contemporary built environment to meet the cultural demands of Arab society may be questioned.

WESTERNIZATION AND CRISIS OF IDENTITY IN THE ARAB CITY

There is some confusion about the distinction between westernisation and modernisation; it is a world wide phenomenon largely due to western writers who frequently define any modernisation process as an adoption of western cultural, economical, and political models[17]. Klapp, for example, indicates that the problem of identity is the price which developing societies have to pay for technological advancement. He said:

"… it is ironical to see underdeveloped countries marching into the future as though they were going to receive the blessing of technology and abundance without the price of self-doubt that seems to go with them. Probably they would say, 'Give us the tractors first and we'll be glad to take on the luxury of worrying about identity problems'"[18].

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[17] EISENSTADT, N. (1966) *Modernization: Protest and Change*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall. He writes: 'Historically, modernization is the process of change towards these types of social, economic, and political systems that have developed in Western Europe and North America from the seventeenth century to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the South American, Asian, and African countries', (p. 1). Also, PAYNE, G. (1977), op. cit., pp. 13-20.

[18] KLAPP, O. (1969) *Collective Search for Identity*, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., p. 4. He illustrates several examples from non-western societies (Japan and India). In these examples he explains how these societies become confused about their identities. These societies stressed the old traditions as a

Costello also indicated the western influences on Middle Eastern Countries in the second half of twentieth century[19]. Generally, western influences have developed a desire to maintain the local culture all over the world[20]. Hakim shares these views and he indicates that, three decades after World War II, a backlash between the traditional and modern values spread over the Arabic-Islamic World, which brought the issue of identity in the built environment to centre stage[21].

The major argument of western studies about modernisation stresses that non-western societies become modern only when

refuge from the sense of rottenness (pp. 15-6). In the Arab world, Daniel discusses the concept of 'Westernization must mean modernization'. He indicates the resistance of Arabic societies to modernization due to its western origin. He states 'Arabs… can hope to modernize in a way characteristic of their own cultural history. Their profound resentment at a hundred years of political, economic and cultural interference will ensure that they will take Western technology with a minimum of Western Ideas…' DANIEL, N. (1971) 'Westernization in the Arab World' in Michael A. *The Middle East*, London, Anthony Blond, pp. 516-25.

[19] COSTELLO, V.F. (1977) *Urbanization in the Middle East*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 1.

[20] For example in Japan it was expected that 'economic transformation necessitates a transformation in society which shifts Japan inevitably closer to the ideals, values, and ways of the West. In due course, the homogenizing spread of Western culture will absorb the remnants of an Eastern tradition… [what happened is] that the distinctiveness of the Japanese outlook on life still persists and that, in the minds of ordinary folk, things have changed less radically than crude social and material manifestations might suggest'. JEREMY, M. & ROBINSON, M.E. (1989) *Ceremony and symbolism in the Japanese home,* Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, p. xi.

[21] HAKIM, B. (1994) 'The 'Urf' and its Role in Diversifying the Architecture of Traditional Islamic Cities', *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 108-127.

they interact with western societies, especially when they are 'invaded, defeated and exploited by the West'. What is clear is that the west is 'evidently, a name always associating itself with those regions, communities and peoples that appear politically or economically superior to other regions, communities and peoples'[22].

It is necessary here to clarify that an overlap between the concept of 'modernisation' and 'westernisation' is widely found in non-western societies. However, western scholars originally generated this misinterpretation. Many western scholars attributed the modernisation process to western culture. This can be clearly understood from the statement of Shils, that is: '"modern" means being Western without the onus of dependence on the West'[23]. This view is shared by Rustow when he states 'modernisation began in Europe in the Renaissance and spread overseas in the wake of Europe's expansion'[24]. Also, Larrain discusses European cultural identity. He states: 'This identity conceived of place as the centre where history was being made and it was able to place and recognize everybody else as peripheral'[25].

It is assumed in much of the literature that, as earlier modernisation took place in western societies, it is somehow an intrinsically western process. Only a little thought clarifies the

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[22] MORLEY, D. & ROBINS, K. (1995), op. cit., p. 159.

[23] SHILS, E. (1966), op. cit., p. 10.

[24] RUSTOW, D. (1967) *A World of Nations: Problems of Political Modernisation*, Washington D.C., Brooking Institution, p. 1.

[25] LARRAIN, J. (1994) *Ideology & Cultural Identity: Modernity and the Third World Presence*, Cambridge, Polity Press, p. 141.

difference between modernisation as a process that may occur at any time in any society, and westernisation, which appeared in the colonial era, and by which those societies governed by western governments were forced to adopt western living standards.

Modernisation, in that sense, 'is very much a westernization process; a process which depends largely on imitation rather than on innovation'[26]. It was a term applied only to non-western traditional societies, and their modernisation efforts were judged by western criteria. This meant that for any society to be modern it should adopt a western model for modernisation. Recoeur (1967) criticises this tendency when he indicates the impact of universalization on local cultures. He states that:

"The phenomenon of universalization, while being an advancement of mankind, at the same time constitutes a sort of subtle destruction, not only of traditional cultures, which might not be an irreparable wrong, but also of what I shall call for the time being the creative nucleus of great civilizations and great culture, that nucleus on the basis of which we interpret life, what I shall call in advance the ethical and mythical nucleus of mankind"[27].

This view is supported by Rapoport when he criticises the impact of westernisation on other cultures. He states:

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[26] JARBAWI, A. (1981), op. cit., p. 3.

[27] Cited in, FRAMPTON, K. (1980) *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, London, Thames and Hudson, p. 314.

"There is a danger in applying western concepts which represent only one choice among the many possible, to the problems of other areas, instead of looking at them in terms of local way of life, specific needs, and ways of doing things"[28].

Modernity as a philosophical concept is widely integrated with the concept of westernisation in the Arab World. These two concepts were ambiguously connected in both literature and people's minds, which increased resistance to the physical changes in the contemporary Arabic city. Thus, the issue of identity arose as a result of the association between the modernisation process and westernisation. It is thus argued here that the need for identity in the Arab World is widely associated with the threat that people felt as a result of the rapid changes that traditional societies have experienced in the last two centuries.

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[28] RAPOPORT, A. (1969), op. cit. p. 129. Also Lomax and Berkowitz had criticized this phenomenon when they said: 'Man's total heritage of life-styles can contribute to the future, without giving precedence any longer to the European social and aesthetic practices that accompanied the rise of industry.' LOMAX, A. with BERKOWITZ, N. (1973) 'The Evolutionary Taxonomy of Culture', *Ekistics*, Vol. 36, No. 213 (August), pp. 77-84.

PARADIGM SHIFTS
OF THE ARAB CITY

What is clear for the researcher is that the concept of modernity in the Arab world became very sensitive and usually generated what we can call an "internal resistance". One of the characteristics of this resistance was the conflict between imported values and forms and the existing ones. This created an ambiguous situation and led to an urban conflict in the Arab cities. The following will highlight some of those conflicts.

The Cultural Shock: Origin of Urban Modernity in the Arabic city

Many researchers attributed the beginning of modernity in the Arab world to the French expedition to Egypt in 1798. However, Abu-Lughod mentioned that Cairo remained without major change up to 1863 when Ismail took over[29]. The French historian André Raymond supported this idea when he did not attribute the process of modernisation that took place in Egypt to the French invasion. He said that this is not completely right[30]; it is, instead, the role of Mohammed Ali, who took over Egypt in 1805 and

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[29] ABU-LUGHOD, JANET (1971) "Cairo, 1001 years of the city victorious" Princeton University Press – New Jersey, p. 83.

[30] RAYMOND, ANDRÉ (1993) *Le Caire*, Librairie Artheme Fayard.

started modernizing the society and urban form in Cairo, that is to be taken into consideration.

On the other hand, the impact of the Ottomans on the Arab world cannot be denied; especially that westernisation of Istanbul in the 19th century influenced even the remote areas of the Arab world. Starting from 1840 new organisations and legislation were introduced into the Ottoman administration[31]. Accordingly Istanbul was divided into 14 districts; one of them (district 6) was selected as a model to which the new imported plans (mainly from Paris) would be applied. This attempt created a gap between new and old Istanbul, and established ground for cultural conflict. Nevertheless, this conflict was not limited to Istanbul, but spread also to a number of cities in the area such as Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad and also the remote cities, such as Hofuf in the Eastern part of Saudi Arabia. In Hofuf, for example, a new neighbourhood was planned in 1904 and it was a copy of the *Assalhiyyah* neighbourhood in Damascus[32].

We called the first paradigm "cultural shock" because the confrontation with the West, which was introduced to the area in 1798 by Napoleon Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt, continued to provoke a search for identity in the Arab region. The idea of "cultural shock" came from the situation of the Arab societies at that time. They were very traditional and belonged to the "Middle Ages", while the west had started its Industrial Revolution. Despite that urban and social changes in the nineteenth century were limited to

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[31] CELIK, ZENEP (1988) "The Impact of Westernization on Istanbul's Urban Form, 1838, 1908" Unpublished Ph.D Thesis University of California, Berkely, p. 82.

[32] AL-NAIM, M (1994) "Lessons from Traditional Built Environment: Study of *Assalhiyyah* Neighborhood in Hofuf, Saudi Arabia", *Alma'athourat Al-Sha'biyyah*, GCC. Folklore Center, Qatar, No. 33, (January 1994), pp. 7-29 (Arabic).

Figure 1
*A view of Paris (urban form of Paris influences
many Arab cities in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries)*

Source: *The author's personal archive.*

the main cities, especially Cairo and Damascus, which were exposed to direct western influence. Indirect impact was also noticed in many small Arab towns. For example the Hejaz Railway was an important political and economical event towards the end of the nineteenth century, while the origin of this idea goes back to 1846[33]. This project was very important for the region and was supported by the whole Islamic world, although it took a long time to reach Almadina Almunawara (Western region of Saudi Arabia). The Railway Station in Almadina was opened in 1908, a delay which reflects the political and economical difficulties at that time.

Figure 2
Image of Assalhiyyah (Damascus).
It was planned and built in late nineteenth century

Source: *The author's personal archive*.

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[33] ISMAIL, ADEL (1993) *Hejaz Railway Station in Almedina Almunawara: Historic Report*, Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia (Arabic).

Figure 3
A plan of Alismailiyyah (west Albalad),
Cairo (planned in the second half of the nineteenth century)

Source: *Suha Hawas.*

Figure 4
Midan in the middle of Cairo (Alismailiyyah)

Source: *The author's personal archive*.

One of the important events that took place in the region at that time and left an impact on the urbanization of the Arabic cities was the "Arab Movement". However, the Arab movement which was lead by Sharif Husain in the early twentieth century created new cities such as Amman in 1921, when King Abdulla, the son of Sharif Husain, selected it as a capital for Jordan[34]. The first two decades of the twentieth century can be considered a period of redefinition of the Arabic city. At that time there was an attempt to define the "Arab Identity", and the physical expression of that identity was very important especially in the urban form.

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[34] ABU ALSHÉR, H. and ALSAWARIYAH, N. (2004) *Amman in the Hashemite Era (1916-1952)*, Amman Municipality Publication, p. 10 (Arabic).

What is really interesting is that most of the Arab towns remained in their traditional context without any change up to the end of the second half of the twentieth century, when independence movements spread in the region and the need for modernization became a national need. Maybe we need to look at the new situation that Arab societies witnessed at the turn of the nineteenth century. There were new images and mechanisms of producing the urban form never experienced before in the Arabic cities, images and mechanisms which need to be rediscovered to explain their impact on how local people accepted the imported urban forms.

The experience of industrialization that characterized European cities since the middle of the eighteenth century had created different types of urban form in western cities. New ways of land subdivisions and functions caused cities to expand beyond their traditional boundaries. When the process of Western urbanization was imported to Arab cities it was resisted by local people; the case was different, and only the large cities were influenced by what had happened in Europe, not in their economic and political roles, but rather in their urban and visual characteristics.

Identity Vs Modernity

The second paradigm started when the conflict between traditionalists and modernists dominated at the beginning of the twentieth century. We should clarify that the concept of Identity in Arabic language is *howiyyah* which is derived from the word *howa* (he), while in most Latin languages the notion "identity" derived from "I" or from the Latin word "Idem". Identity in the

Arabic culture then has much to do with the position of others and how they are seen. This debate had a profound and critical influence on the new cities and architecture that appeared at that time.

One interesting example is Heleoplis (new Cairo), *Misr Aljadida* in Cairo, which was planned by Belgian planners and architects in the early twentieth century. A deep conflict had been established between what people believed and the imported values and lifestyles. This was a conflict inflamed by the colonial era which had encouraged local people to resist the idea of modernization[35]. This example was very important in showing how European influences became very critical on both the political and economic levels. The main Arab cities at that time became more dependant on western aid and economic support. However, it is important to differentiate between indirect and direct colonial influence on the Arab cities. In the former, the conflict was internal, resistance was mainly hidden, and the search for identity was limited to the intellectuals, whilst in the second the cultural and physical resistance was popular.

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[35] In 1905 the government of Egypt licensed Baron Emban from Belgium to develop 2500-5000 hectares to develop a new neighbourhood in Heleoplis oasis in Cairo and to link it with the existing city by trains (trams). The suburb was divided into two neighbourhoods, one for the foreigners and the other for the locals, who were mainly craftsmen, and it was called *Ezbat AlMuslmeen*. AL-TAYYEB, MUJAHID (2004) "*Misr Aljadida* Suburb", *Amkenah (6)*, A non periodical book, Alexandria, pp. 317-28 (Arabic).

Figure 5
Building in Misr Aljadida, Cairo (mix of styles)

Source: *The author's personal archive.*

Figure 6
Building in Misr Aljadida, Cairo (Italian architecture)

It is difficult to define a specific date for indirect and direct colonialism in the Arab World, because this differs from place to place. For example, the French occupied Algiers in 1830 and between 1840 and 1880 built the European city[36]. This created a dual city, having both the traditional and the European part. This

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[36] HADJRI, K. and OSMANI, M. (2004) "The Spatial Development and Urban Transformation of Colonial and Post Colonial Algiers", in ELSHESHTAWY, Y. (2004) *Planning Middle Eastern Cities: An Urban Kaleidoscope in Globalizing World*, Routledge, London, pp. 29-58.

was considered a "freezing of (the) image of society in time and place" aimed at maintaining a physical differentiation between the colonizer and the colonized[37].

Figure 7
Building in Damascus of the colonial era
with local Islamic architectural elements

Source: *The author's personal archive*.

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[37] ELSHESHTAWY, Y. (2004), op. cit, p. 4.

The colonial cities presented a new urban form and lifestyles to the region, with a mixture of identities that developed due to the colonial impact. In Tripoli, Libya, for example, an area called Giorgimpopli was developed in 1912 and an American Air Base (Wheelus) was constructed there. The American lifestyle was reproduced and "nothing is lacking to make homesick Oklahomans feel at home"[38]. This example shows how deep was the impact of western culture on the Arabic cities and life style between the two world wars. We can argue that the concept of modernity was not promoted in the Arab city before World War II and the rise of the Arab Nationalism Movement (1950-1970). The political situation at that time created a different paradigm in the Arab world.

In many cases the underdevelopment of the Arab city was attributed to colonialism. However, Elsheshtawy (2004) stated that studying the Middle East city in relation to the broader perspective of colonialism leads one to realize that "colonization may not be the sole factor responsible for the underdevelopment of the Middle East city"[39]. This may not be entirely the case as colonial influence had an effect not only on the physical environment, but went deep into the mechanism of education, planning and ways of producing physical and non-physical contexts in the Arab cities.

Still we think it is important to understand the impact of western interventions in the Arab countries after World War I. In this sense we can identify between pre and post war colonial influences on the Arab cities. We admit that, despite most Arab cities being under occupation

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[38] WARD, PHILIP (1969) *Tripoli: Portrait of a City*, England, The Oleander Press, p. 64.

[39] ELSHESHTAWY, Y. (2004) op. cit, p. 3.

after the War, the process of modernization was fast and the desire to build modern cities was very clear. This may be attributed to the economic changes and the discovery of oil in some Arab countries.

In Saudi Arabia, for example, the origin of contemporary residential settlements stems from the early part of the last century, when Aramco (Arabian-American Oil Company) built its housing projects in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia between 1938 and 1944[40]. These projects introduced for the first time a new concept of space and a new home image. It is possible to say that this early intervention has had a deep but not immediate effect on the native people. It made them question what they knew and how they should behave. In other words, this early change can be seen as the first motive for social resistance to the new forms and images in the contemporary Saudi home environment.

Figure 8
a) The early American camp in Dhahran (1930s);
b) American camp in Ras Tanurah (1950s);
c) One of the early houses in the American Camp in Dhahran
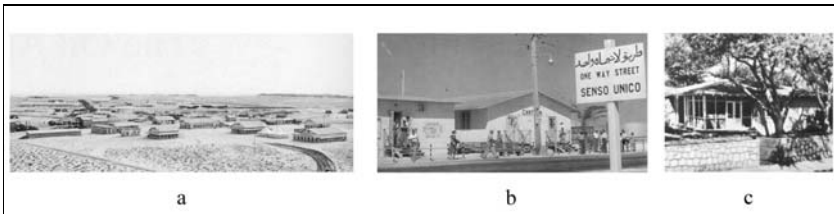
Source: *Aramco*.

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[40] Aramco built its first camp in Dhahran in 1938, followed by Ras-Tanura in 1939, and by Abqaiq in 1994. SHIBER, S.G. (1967) 'Report on City Growth in the Eastern Province, Saudi Arabia', in his *Recent Arab City Growth*, Kuwait, p. 428.

The significant impact of this experience manifested itself in conflict between the old and the new in local society. The threat to the social and physical identity from interfering outside elements created, for the first time, a social reaction towards the physical environment. Resistance to the new is expected in the early stages of change, but we need to know how people reacted to the changes and how deeply the people's image was influenced by them.

The conflict between traditional cultural values and the newly introduced western physical images was very limited at the beginning of modernization; the native people followed what they knew and tried to implement it in their daily lives, including their homes. However, the contrast between traditional images and the new images in the minds of local people can be considered to mark the beginning of physical and social changes in the Saudi home environment.

The first indication of a conflict between the local culture and western culture can be ascribed to Solon T. Kimball, who visited Aramco headquarters in 1956. He described how the senior staff (American) camp in Dhahran was completely imported from United States. He said:

"No one westerner would have difficulty in identifying the senior staff 'camp' as a settlement built by Americans in our south-western tradition of town planning. It is an area of single-story dwellings for employees and their families. Each house is surrounded by a small grassed yard usually enclosed by a hedge"[41].

This American camp, which introduced new spatial concepts,

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[41] KIMBALL, SOLON T. (1956) "American Culture in Saudi Arabia", *Transaction of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Ser. II, Vol. 18, No. 5, (p. 472).

contrasted strongly with the surrounding home environments in the old cities in the region, Hofuf and Qatif. The native people still persisted with their own spatial concepts and images and resisted the imported ones, which they considered strange. Therefore, when Saudi workers and their relatives 'moved in, they took over any empty land available and erected basic shelters and fences of locally available material, separated from each other by narrow irregular footpaths'[42]. This created 'a community of mud-brick and timber houses, built in a traditional and comfortable way'[43].

Figure 9
Saudi Camp in Dhahran in 1930s and 40s
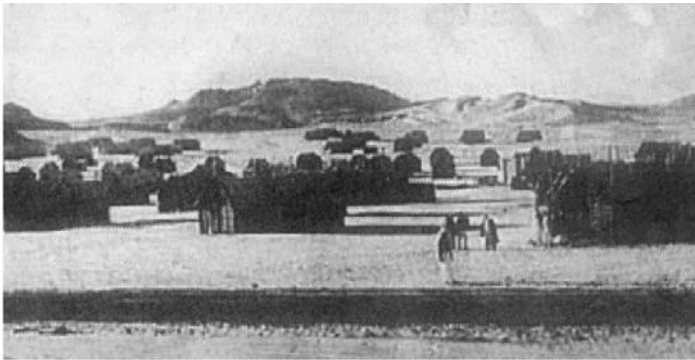
Source: *Aramco*.

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[42] SHIBER, S.G. (1967), op. cit., p. 430.

[43] SHIRREF, D. (1980) 'Housing-Ideas Differ on what People Want', *Middle East Annual Review*, in J. Andrews and D. Shirref *World Information*, Essex, England, pp. 59-62. Also, AL-HATHLOUL (1981), said: 'The initial growth of Dammam and Al-Khobar in the late 1350s[H]/1930s and early 1360s[H]/1940s was not planned in an orderly fashion. As the population grew, people took over any available land and erected basic shelters and fences of local materials. Following the traditional pattern of Arab-Muslim cities, the streets were narrow and irregular' (pp. 145-6).

Kimball observed this community and described the Saudi camp which was built adjacent to the senior staff camp as 'neither planned nor welcomed'. He added that 'these settlements represent the attempt by Arabs to establish a type of community life with which they are familiar. Here the employees, mostly Saudis...'. Kimball recognised the insistence of the native people on their own identity through his description of the Saudi camp as 'an emerging indigenous community life'[44].

We need to mention here that in the first two decades of change, several alterations appeared in local people's attitudes towards the home. What Kimball described is the position of native people from the first direct contact with western culture. People, at this stage, refused change and stuck with what they knew. This is not to say that the new images did not influence people; however, they were in the process of developing a new attitude towards their homes. This attitude was not yet fully formed to reflect how deeply the new images broke the old idea of home.

The government and Aramco were not happy with the growth of these traditional settlements[45]. Therefore, by 1947, the government had asked Aramco, who employed American engineers and surveyors, to control growth around the oil areas. This created the first planned cities in Saudi Arabia, which followed a gridiron pattern, Dammam and Khobar[46]. The spatial

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[44] KIMBALL, S. (1956), op. cit., (p. 472).

[45] Ibid., p. 473.

[46] Shiber (1967). He describes the plan of Al-Khobar: 'It covered only about one quarter square mile North of the company pierhead storage yard. The blocks averaged 130 by 200 feet with separating streets of 40 and 60 foot widths.' Moreover, he indicated

concepts and house images that were introduced into these two cities accelerated the impact of the new housing image on the local people, not only in these two new developments, but also in old cities in the surrounding area.

Figure 10

Planning System of Al-Khobar. We note that native people were still influenced by what they knew. Traditional patterns were used in the large blocks and a traditional house form was used

Source: Candilis, *Draft Master Plan*, Al-Khobar, 1976, p. 45.

how the new plan ignored the existing Saudi settlements. He states 'Here again, the gridiron pattern was oriented north-south. No consideration was given to the mushroom growth of temporary structures and those were demolished to open the new streets' (p. 430). Also, AL-HATHLOUL (1981), op. cit., p. 146.

From Modernism to Neo-Traditionalism

The direct and indirect impact of westernisation on the Arab world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries inflamed the identity crisis in the main Arab cities, which led to the creation of two intellectual parties, Traditionalist and Modernist[47]. This, in turn, led to confrontation between those who wanted Arab countries to follow western ideology and lifestyles and those who persisted in traditions of Arabic-Islamic values. These two ways of thinking had a profound impact on the way the urban form was produced, and pushed many architects to "reinvent" the traditional Arab town and architecture.

Some of the Arab architects at that time, including Sayyed Kuraim (modernist), Hasan Fathy (traditionalist), Mohammed Makkya, Rifat Al-Jadirji and others, represent the peak of this deep inner conflict between tradition and modernity, old and new, authentic and false. This conflict still exists in Arab architecture and takes different forms according to the political and economic situations. For example, in the 1960s (period of Nationalism) there was an attempt to use the Arabic-Islamic heritage in architecture, but this attempt was very superficial and turned out to be a decorating movement rather than an urban trend generated from deep roots in history and culture[48].

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[47] AL-NAIM, M. (2001) "Transformation of Architectural Identity: Culture and History in Contemporary Gulf Architecture", *Al-Mustagbal Al-Arabi*, Lebanon, No. (January 2001) (Arabic).

[48] CHADIRJI, R. (1994) *From al Ukaider to Cristal Palace*, Riyad Alrayes, London(Arabic).

Figure 11

Building in Sharja (UAE) constructed in the 1960s
and influenced by the Nationalism Movement

Source: *The author's personal archive*.

Figure 12

Court building in Sharjah (UAE)
constructed in the 1960s (Mix of styles)

Source: *The author's personal archive*.

The conflict between tradition and modernity continuously fuelled the reproduction of exotic architecture in the Arabic cities. What was noticeable is that old and new, traditional and modern forms were found in the same place and time, which increased hesitation about the identity of place and architecture. However, one important change occurred in the late 1970s when a rich country like Saudi Arabia adopted traditional styles for major government buildings. This strengthened traditional thought in Arabic architecture, especially when young architects, such as Abdulwahed Elwakeel (Egyptian), Rasem Badran (Jordanian), and Ali Al-Shuaibi (Saudi), were commissioned to carry out some of these projects[49]. Now all these three architects and many others became well known in the area, and their thoughts spread throughout the Arab world. In Egypt, for example, Abdulhalim Ibrahim (who won the Aga Khan Award in the early 1990s for his "cultural garden" project), undertook some projects in Saudi Arabia and Egypt with traditional spirit and form. This led to the emergence of a new paradigm in the Arab cities characterized by "back to the roots", or "traditionalism in Arab architecture".

The third paradigm, then, witnessed the rise of "neo-traditionalism" in the Arab world. This can be dated to the nineteen fifties and sixties (Nationalist movement in the Arab world), but it became a real trend in the mid seventies, when a rich country like Saudi Arabia adopted this trend and used it to express its identity by utilizing its main governmental buildings and creating metropolitan cities such as Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam.

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[49] AL-NAIM, M. (1996) "Culture, History and Architecture: Qasr Al-Hokm District in Riyadh", *Ahlan wa Sahlan (Magazine of Saudi Arabian Airlines)*, Vol. 20, No. 9 (September), pp. 12-17.

This paradigm was also characterized by massive government intervention in city planning. The idea of a "master plan" was not developed until the late 1960s in most Arab cities.

It is clear that the social resistance that emerged from the overlapping concepts of modernisation and westernisation in the Arab world has encouraged many researchers and architects to search for identity in contemporary Arab cities. In this regard, Kalpp mentions five reasons for which the struggle for identity can be intensified in any society. Two of them in particular can be used to understand what has happened in the recent Saudi built environment[50]. The first is 'the breaking up of old traditions in connection with modernization and acculturation'. The second is the 'mobile pluralism' which is a 'great movement of persons from one status, subculture, class, community… This means pressure to adjust one's identity with situations, rather than holding fast to one's image'[51].

Two main questions arise; has the need for identity in the Arab world emerged to say, 'Here we are, despite the drastic changes and foreign influences; this is our identity'? Or has it emerged as a kind

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[50]For other reasons see KLAPP, O. (1969), op. cit., pp. 15-20. Also he lists twelve identity problems as follows: 1) a feeling of being blemished, or that there is something wrong with one's self, 2) self-hatred, 3) touchiness, over sensitivity, being easily wounded, 4) excessive self-concern, 5) a feeling of alienation, 6) not feeling realised (nobody appreciates me), 7) hankering to be somebody else, 8) excessive consciousness of role-playing in real life, 9) excessive other-directedness, 10) the grounds of one's self-assurance are shaken, 11) an unresolved ethical dilemma so severe that it is in fact an identity crisis, 12) despair in the absence of a physical threat to existence or career (pp. 11-3).

[51] Ibid., pp. 15-7.

of vestige of the superior western culture that directly influenced the social and physical orders in Arab countries? It is important to clarify here that the following discussion is not intended to answer these two questions; rather it will try to discuss them broadly so as to establish a context for our discussion of the built environment.

For example, a sense of not belonging became the main issue in the Saudi Arabian cities, as a result of the rapid change in the 1970s, since people suddenly found themselves in a completely different physical environment. Ben Saleh (1980) indicated the loss of traditional identity in the Saudi built environment. He said:

"Recent buildings have lost their traditional identities and have become hybrids of exotic character in their urban form, main concepts, arrangement of spaces, organization of elements, and building techniques employed"[52].

Konash agrees with this view and he criticises the lack of knowledge of local culture amongst western firms in Saudi Arabia, and suggests a collaboration between Saudi and foreign architects[53]. Al-Hathloul also studied the impact of western urban concepts in the contemporary Saudi cities. He suggested that Arabic-Islamic traditions, which formulate the needs of Saudi families, should be respected in any future building regulations[54]. Fadan goes further

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[52] Cited in AL-GABBANI, M. (1984) *Community Structure, Residential Satisfaction, and Preferences in a Rapidly Changing Urban Environment: The Case of Riyadh*, Saudi Arabia, Unpublished PhD, Michigan, University of Michigan p. 275.

[53] KONASH, F. (1980) *Evaluation of Western Architecture in Saudi Arabia: Guideline and Critique*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Albuquerque, New Mexico, University of New Mexico.

[54] AL-HATHLOUL, S. (1981), op. cit., (the study introduces for the first time the impact of western urban concepts on the Saudi-home environment. Also, it

in his criticism and attributes the loss of traditional identity to the social changes in Saudi society. He states 'attraction to Western life-style has drawn Saudi attention away from developing a clear and concise understanding of the evolution of a traditional living environment'[55]. These studies agree on the negative impact of western images on Saudi cities.

At the time concerned, however, people were fascinated by western images. For example, Boon mentions that contemporary homes in Saudi Arabia were strongly influenced by colonial villas in the Middle East[56]. Al-Gabbani, in his study about Riyadh, finds that 'most of the housing units constructed follow western models which symbolize prestige and use costly imported materials'[57]. Abu-Ghazzeh indicates that modern architecture in Saudi Arabia is seen to be 'culturally destructive'. He criticises the desire by Saudi architects to reflect images of economic and technological development through the adoption of 'western design'. He attributes this situation to the 'disassociation of the privileged business elite from their cultural roots.' These people tried to express themselves in the home environment by images mainly borrowed from the west. This then encouraged the middle classes to imitate the western images that were created by the business

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suggests that 'urban form within the Arab-Muslim city is to be found not within the physical elements themselves but within their system of arrangement (the rules of conduct), then these elements can be adapted or can even change so long as their system of arrangement or their relationships remain constant' p. 266).

[55] FADAN, Y.M. (1983) *The Development of Contemporary Housing in Saudi Arabia, (1950-1983)*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, MIT Cambridge, p. 15.

[56] BOON, J. (1982) 'The Modern Saudi Villa: Its Cause and Effect', *American Journal for Science and Engineering*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 132-143.

[57] AL-GABBANI, M. (1984), op. cit., p. 275.

elite group[58]. This is not to say that people did not express their socio-cultural values and did not express themselves in their homes, but that people experienced new things for the first time, and hence they were attracted to them. Personal and social identities were expressed through extensive alterations to those houses later on.

In the 1980s a mix of western, traditional, and historical (mostly Arabic-Islamic) images were found in the Saudi home environment[59]. This reflects the consciousness by designers and people to create visual identity in the Saudi Architecture[60]. Mofti, for example, criticised the situation of new buildings, which derived their physical forms from different resources. We can see some buildings strongly influenced by the world wide prevailing trends in architecture, such as postmodernism and regionalism. Other examples are extremely formal and far from local cultural

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[58] ABU-GHAZZEH, T. (1997) 'Vernacular Architecture Education in the Islamic Society of Saudi Arabia: Towards the Development of an Authentic Contemporary Built Environment', *Habitat Int.*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 229-253.

[59] Musa'ad Al-Angari (the former mayor of Riyadh) mentioned in 1983 that Riyadh had several architectural styles such as European, Islamic, and vernacular ASSYASA (Kuwaiti Newspaper) (6-2-1983).

[60] We can link the consciousness of traditional and historical forms in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s to the criticism of modern architecture by many architects and historians. For example, Venturi (1966) in his book 'Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture' paved the way for postmodern architecture. Malcolm attributes the failure of modern architecture to its inability to understand the relationship between the physical space and social space and its ignorance of the traditional pattern and historical continuity. Frampton shares these views and he stresses that modern architecture isolated itself from society due to its rational and industrial tendency. FRAMPTON, K. (1980), op. cit., p. 9; KAUFMAN, J. (1982) '*Post Modern Architecture*' *An Ideology*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Los Angeles, University of California; MALCOLM, M. (1974) *Crisis in Architecture*, London, RIBA Publications, pp. 16-7.

images, such as Greek or Roman classical images. In the best cases, we can see some buildings imitating traditional forms or borrowing some forms from Arabic-Islamic architecture such as Mamluk architecture[61].

Most of the studies on the built environment in Saudi Arabia have attributed the lack of identity to borrowed physical elements. The focus was on the impact of borrowed forms, on visual identity, rather than paying more attention to relationships between people and the surrounding physical objects. Therefore, most of the suggestions for maintaining identity in the contemporary architecture were centred on re-using traditional images. Boon, for example, suggested that in order to have an identity, it is important to revive urban traditional images[62]. Al-Nowaiser reached the same conclusion when he indicated that, in order to reflect 'a genuine sense of identity', it is necessary to find 'valid features of urban heritage' to incorporate into the contemporary Saudi Architecture[63].

These views helped and accelerated the emergence of an urban trend in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s[64]. This trend concentrated on

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[61] MOFTI, F.A. (1989) "Transformation in the Built Environment in Saudi Arabia", *Urban Futures*, Vol. 2, No. 4, pp. 17-26.

[62] BOON, J. (1982), op. cit., p. 142.

[63] AL-NOWAISER, M.A. (1983) *The Role of Traditional and Modern Residential Urban Settlements on the Quality of Environmental Experience in Saudi Arabia: Unyzeh and New Alkabra in Alkasseem Region*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, California, University of Southern California, p. 328.

[64] We can go back further and attribute this trend to the Doxiadis plan for Riyadh city in 1968. This plan suggested that 'in any new comprehensive planning legislation, special building rules and regulations should be drafted to ensure the

external images and specifically on recycling traditional images in the new buildings. However, this trend is still removed from the real needs of people in Saudi Arabia. Recently, one of the local newspapers[65] discussed this matter under the title 'Issue: our contemporary buildings have no identity'. The editor stated that 'the urban crisis of our contemporary buildings increases day after day… a confusion of images is the only description for our contemporary buildings'.

We can argue here that what happened, and is still happening, in the Arabic city is a reaction to this sense of lost identity[66]. Borrowing from the past is used as a tool to maintain visual identity in Arab cities. This is clearly understood from Al-Shuaibi's statement[67] that 'designers of various disciplines always borrow from the past, whether ancient or recent'[68]. Abu-Gezzeh also encourages those buildings which he calls 'hybrid regional architecture'. For him, this type of building 'reflects both modern and traditional influences'[69].

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maintenance of the basic principles of local architecture (i.e. internal courtyard, etc.) without necessarily mimicking old and absolute architectural forms and construction techniques' (Cited in AL-HATHLOUL, S. (1981), op. cit., p. 174).

[65] AL-YAUM (Arabic newspaper), No. 8698 (2/4/1997) (see App. VI).

[66] Early attempts to re-use traditional images in contemporary buildings started in the late 1970s especially in governmental buildings. This can be attributed to the worldwide raised awareness of local cultures.

[67] Saudi Architect.

[68] SALAM, H. (1990) (Ed) *Expressions of Islam in Buildings*, Proceedings of International Seminar, Sponsored by the Aga Khan Award for Architecture and the Indonesian Institute of Architects, Jakarta and Yogyakarta, Indonesia, p. 38.

[69] See ABU-GEZZEH, T. (1997).

This trend is very close to people because it conveys sentimental meanings and communicates people's collective identity. However, it is characterised by its direct use of traditional and historical elements which lead to a repetition of the same images and configurations and end up boring and "lacking the element of surprise". Although we blame the Arab architect who created this situation due to "uncooked" design and studies of historical and traditional architecture, we also blame the people themselves who do not demand what we may call "different" architecture, even if it is generated from local or historical forms.

Figure 13
Building in traditional style in Kuwait, built after 1990

Source: *The author's personal archive.*

Figure 14
*Image of King Abdulaziz Cultural Center
in Riyadh (built in mid 1990s)*

Source: *The author's personal archive*.

Globalization and the rise of a Consumer Identity

The recent paradigm has mainly appeared due to developments in information technology and the rise of globalization which calls for global economic and cultural environments. These have changed our attitude towards the urban form. Arab cities, like other cities in the world, are influenced by the new ways of life brought by globalization. The problem of the Arab city is that it became a city for consumption without a clear development on the production side. A city like Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, brought to the area a new vision in planning and architecture, and opened the whole region to global competition, at the same time encouraging a consumer culture[70].

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[70] ELSHESHTAWY, Y. (2004), op. cit.

It is really important to see the impact of the new slogans in architecture on the Arab city in the twenty first century. Slogans such as "form follows technology" and "form follows information" will reform cities everywhere on earth, including Arab cities. Although it is difficult to identify any trend, we can say that the urban identity has moved towards the consumption phenomenon. The link with historic collective memory has become weaker and a new identity is growing in the region. Still we believe the political situation will drive the Arab city to an open-era which may be characterized by balancing the consumer identity with cultural identity and finding ways for economic and urban reformation.

Figure 15
The strategic plan for Riyadh up to 2020 prepared
by ArRiyadh Development Authority
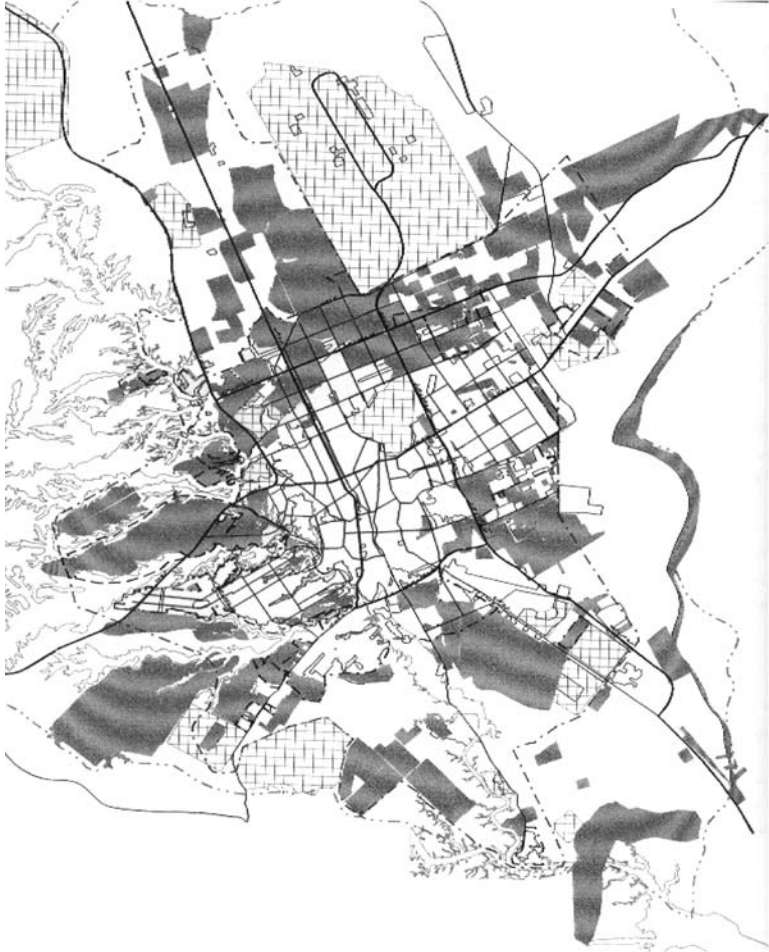
Source: *ArRiyadh Development Authority*.

POLITICAL STABILITY AND SOCIO-PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT: CASE OF SAUDI HOME ENVIRONMENT

Saudi Arabia was announced as united country in 1932 and the oil age began in 1938. Many people worked in the industry from that time onwards. Up to 1940, most of Saudi cities had seen no major changes, with the exception of the development of neighborhoods here and there. This new era had a profound influence on the suburbs which were built between 1940 and 1960, since it was not just physical external appearances which were now being influenced, but matters of lifestyle as a whole.

The political stability opened the way to direct contact with western culture. The impact of this contact on the home environment can largely be attributed to the attempts of Aramco to accommodate its American staff by building several camps between 1938 and 1944. Although these camps were erected in certain cities, such as Dammam and Khobar, in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia, they introduced a new image and life pattern to the area, which subsequently influenced the native people's image and created a deep conflict between the physical environment and people's values and past experiences.

Figure 16
One of the Aramco's employees' houses in Al'adama, Dammam (1950s)
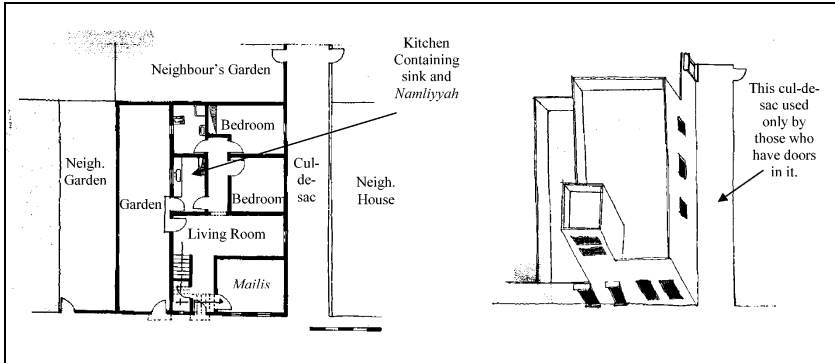
Source: *The author's personal archive*.

The demand for oil after World War II increased the revenues from oil from 1.2 million dollars in 1943 to 212.2 million dollars in 1952 (Table.1). This encouraged government expenditure in urban development[71]. This is clearly seen from the establishment of the municipalities in 1937 to deal with urban organization. This was followed by the road and buildings statute, which was initiated in 1941[72]. This statute was 'elementary in nature and, in practice, they were seldom resorted to since the standards they established were

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[71] The government planned and constructed two big urban projects in 1950s in Riyadh (*Annasriyyah* and *Almalaz*).

[72] The Royal order in 1937 limited the role of the municipality to 'the supervision of the town organization, their beautification, and the work needed to result in their having an enhanced scenic setting' also the municipality has 'the authority of general supervision for the public interest and for the betterment of utilities and services'. AL-HATHLOUL, S. (1981), op. cit., p. 191.

the ones usually followed in traditional cities'[73]. This organizational attitude by the government influenced the new developments in most Saudi cities at that time.

Table 1

Saudi Arabia's revenue from oil between 1943 and 1952

Year	Production (million barrels)	Revenue (million US$)
1943	4.9	1.2
1944	7.8	6.8
1945	21.3	4.3
1946	59.9	12.0
1947	89.9	18.0
1948	142.9	52.5
1949	147.0	39.2
1950	199.5	56.7
1951	278.0	110.0
1952	301.9	212.2

Source: Al-Elawy, I. S. (1976) *The Influence of Oil Upon Settlement in Al-Hasa Oasis, Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Durham, University of Durham, p. 245.

Maybe the most important regulation that influenced the semi-planned suburb in Saudi cities was the land distribution system which was issued for the two new cities, Dammam and Khobar, in 1938. This system reflected the early attempt by the government to become involved in the built environment. It introduced, for the first time, building licenses and building regulations. It confirmed the height of buildings to one storey, except those built on the sea

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[73] Ibid., p. 194.

front, and defined the materials that should be used in construction, by prohibiting the use of wood and palm leaves as main materials and encouraging the use of rocks and cement[74]. This attitude had a very deep impact on the development of the residential settlements. New images of house forms were introduced by those employees, which indirectly influenced the residences of most of people at that time.

Hybridizing the Local Home Environment

It is clear that the Saudi house in the 1940s became more functional because the family part occupied most of the house. The male reception space was limited to the hall and its entrance. The inhabitants of the hybrid neighborhoods were encouraged to reach such a solution partly because of the need to create a closer association with neighbors since the traditional *hara* (neighborhood) system had not yet developed in the area. A further reason for this change was that people were influenced by the new house image that was introduced in the new cities.

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[74] AL-SUBAI'EE, A.N. (1987) *Oil Discovery and its Impact on the Social Life of Eastern Province* (1930-1960) (Arabic), pp. 146-47; AL-SAID, F. (1992) *Territorial Behaviour and the Built Environment. The Case of Arab-Muslim Towns*, Saudi Arabia, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Glasgow, University of Glasgow, pp. 219-220.
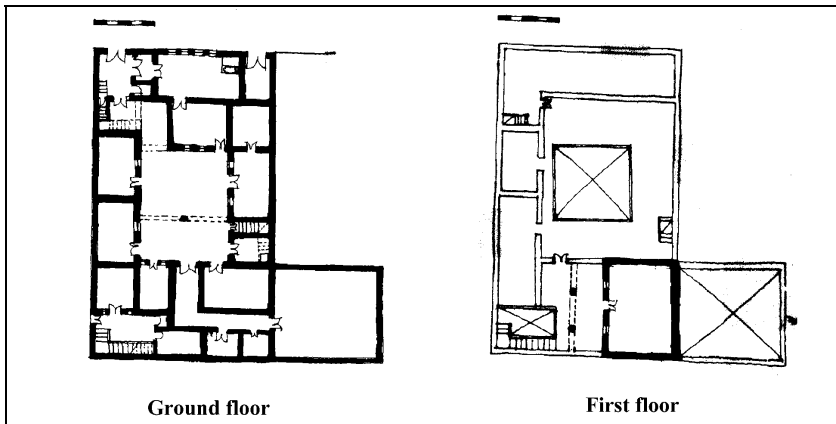
Figure 17

Main Street

Dehreez (Entrance) → *Majlis*

Courtyard

Internal *Sabat* →

Animal court

Front stage

Family Middle stage

Back stage

Guest roof

Agasi

Parents roof
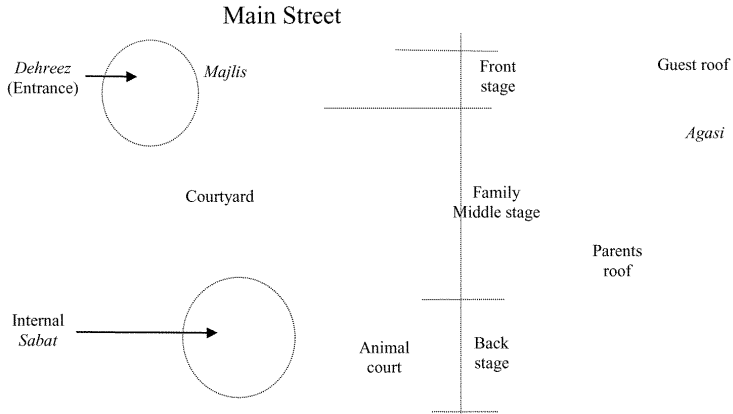
Source: *The author's personal archive.*

Figure 18
House in Hofuf (eastern region) constructed in 1940s

Ground floor   **First floor**

Source: *The author's personal archive.*

Figure 19
The main façades of a number of houses in Hofuf constructed in 1940s
(*continuity of the traditional perceptual identity*)

Source: *The author's personal archive*.

Because the male reception space was the most symbolic space in the house, it was continuously linked with external space, and worked as a connecting point between the family and the whole community. This role continued in the hybrid house. The family spaces continued without any change except that there was an increase in the number of the rooms in this part. Also, new equipment had been introduced to the kitchen such as the gas cooker, which meant a *daka* had to be built to hold the cooker.

Minimizing the male reception spaces and changing the level of association with the community support the finding that the perceptual identity of the male reception spaces is more dynamic than its associational one. However, the few changes that had occurred in the house in the 1940s were mainly an attempt towards absorbing more changes in the following years. This can be seen in the houses of the 1950s, when the columns, and beams are constructed with reinforced concrete while the roof is made of wood. People differentiate between this type and the other old type by calling it '*Bayt Arabi*' Arabic house. This naming can be seen as clear realization by people of the new images and their challenge to their traditional identity.

Figure 20
A house constructed in the late 1950s strongly influenced by the new images that had been introduced by Aramco's employees houses at that time
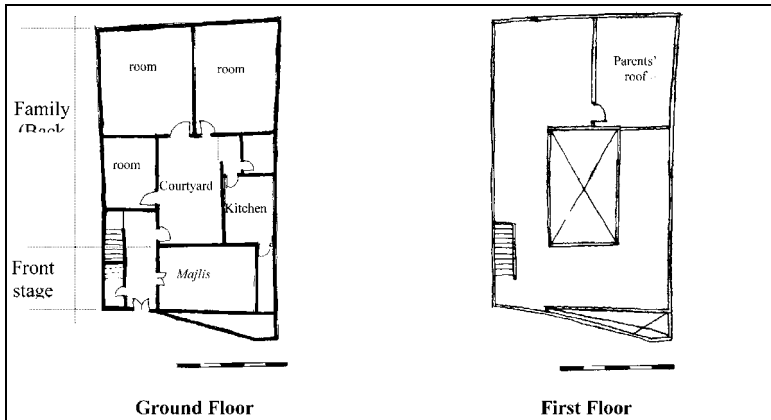
Source: *The author's personal archive*.

We should admit here that this latter type existed in the city since the early 1950s, but it was limited to the Aramco's (Eastern Region) and government employees (in Riyadh and Jeddah), and some well-to-do people who preferred to build their houses using reinforced concrete. Reinforced concrete became an important material for housing construction after the 1950s. People used it as a symbol of modernity and sophistication.

Resistance to the new forms and images was very high in the hybrid houses. People had persisted in the old images and lifestyle. Even when a new form became a symbol of social status (concrete gate) they integrated it with a traditional form. This massive challenge to the traditional perceptual and associational identity led to an unstable situation for the house form in both its external and internal characteristics.

Home Environment in Transition

Those families who were directly affected by the new development moved collectively into new suburbs and constructed small *haras*. It was during this period that the government began to increase in a much greater way its involvement in the physical environment, and this first became apparent in new areas. In that year too a set of building regulations were initiated. These mainly introduced setback for dwelling design, and the segregation of dwellings by application of grid patterns for the subdivision of land.

Most of the people who lived in traditional dwellings, which were far from the new streets remained in their houses until 1975 when the government started to subsidize private housing by

establishing the Real Estate Development Fund in 1975 to provide people with interest-free loans to build new private houses. This led to a collective migration from traditional areas between 1975 and 1985, which led to them falling into decline and ruin.

It is important to say that people before 1975 still preferred to live in the traditional settlements. This can be seen from the fact that the residential land value in traditional areas in the 1960s and early 70s still was higher than hybrid and transitional neighborhoods[75]. This can be attributed to the fact that the quality of life was acceptable in the traditional *haras*. This was not the case after 1975 when the opportunity to move became possible after the introduction of governmental subsidies for private houses.

The acceleration of change continued to drive people from their old traditions and experiences. The growth of the new identity which appeared in the 1950s houses continued in the 1960s and early 1970s houses. This can be seen from the increasing number of villas. The villa type at that time was perceived by local people as a symbol of wealth and modernity especially because the construction material was concrete.

However, the name 'villa' was not used in most of Saudi cities (especially medium and small ones) in the early 1970s, and instead people used the name '*bayt musallah*' which means the house constructed entirely of concrete[76]. As we have mentioned earlier, a

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[75] AL-ELAWY, I. (1976), op. cit., p. 359.

[76] AL-SHUAIBI, A.M. (1976) *The Development of the Eastern Province with Particular Reference to Urban Settlements and Evolution in Eastern Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Durham, University of Durham. He mentions that in

major shift had occurred in the perceptual identity of the private home through replacing the mud construction system with concrete. This shift was clearly seen in the 1960s and 70s, when the use of mud in construction stopped completely[77]. This indicates how visual taste of the local people was influenced by the new materials, which were associated from the beginning with wealth and education[78].

Similar to the *nuss-musallah* type, the *musallah* (concrete) type had a similar concept of space and the only difference between the two types was that the courtyard in the latter type was transformed to a covered hall called *sala*, used mainly as transitional circulation space, as well as family living space. The fascination by the villa type that spread in the main cities of Saudi Arabia was one of the main motives that encouraged people to move on and change the inner spaces. Air conditioners became common as house appliances

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Hofuf 'the villas... are situated almost entirely in the areas of new development and [only a] few houses of this type are designed in modern styles' (p. 237).

[77] AL-SHUAIBI, A.M. (1976) *The Development of the Eastern Province with Particular Reference to Urban Settlements and Evolution in Eastern Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Durham, University of Durham. He indicates that the cement production in Saudi Arabia had 'doubled between 1970 and 1974, increasing from about 600,000 tons to 1.2 million tons' (p. 44).

[78] AL-ELAWY (1976) indicates that in Hofuf houses of the 1960s and 70s 'the traditional decorations were not commonly used in these houses not because they are ugly, rather because people's tastes have changed and coarsened'. According to him people at that time considered 'anything new or foreign as a sign of progress and any thing old or local as backward' (p. 367).

and made it possible for people to change their courtyard into a sealed hall[79].

Figure 21
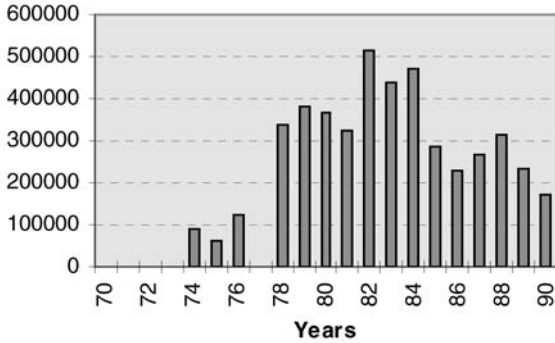*The number of imported air-conditioners to Saudi Arabia*
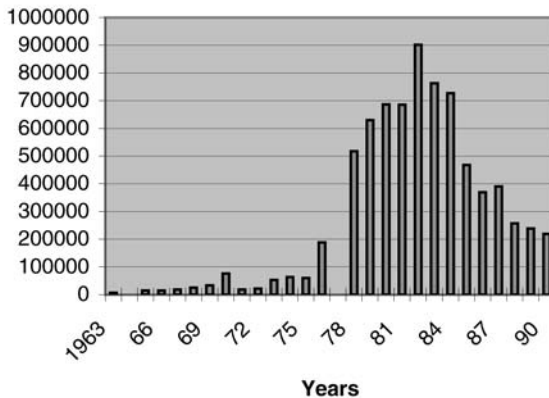
Source: *Developed from the Annual Statistical Reports,*
Department of Statistics, Ministry of Commerce.

The impact of modern technology was not limited to spatial change only. Although the kitchen and toilet remained in the back of the house, a complete new image was attached to them. The floor and walls of the kitchen were tiled with ceramic tiles. New modern appliances such as exhaust fans for ventilation fixed on one of the walls; a refrigerator and gas cooker became main elements in the transitional kitchen.

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[79] As a matter of fact, even traditional houses were influenced by the introduction of the air conditioner. Many people covered their courtyards to use air conditioners.

Figure 22

The number of imported refrigerators to Saudi Arabia

Source: *Developed from the Annual Statistical Reports,*
Ministry of Commerce, Department of Statistics.

Figure 23

*The weight of imported items of sanitary equipment to Saudi Arabia*
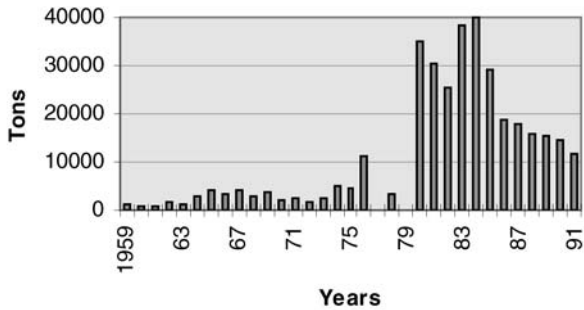
Source: *Developed from the Annual Statistical Reports,*
Ministry of Commerce, Department of Statistics.

Another space had been developed in the transitional house. That is the *mugalat*, which was located in the front stage although it was used as a multi-purpose room. However, it usually functioned as a women's reception space and on occasions as a dining room. What is really important about this space is that it was the beginning of the women's reception space, which later took its position and image as one of the most important spaces in the contemporary private home. This space was not completely new because in the traditional house, and especially in male reception space type of the two storey height house, more than one space was connected with male hall and one of them was called *mugalat*. What was new about this space is that it took a position in the front façade and was used as a women's reception space.

It is possible to say that the people of Saudi Arabia insisted on the traditional associational meanings that oriented them in the transitional house. The spatial organization of the transitional house indicated that people carried their past experiences with them when they decided to move from the traditional areas. This explains why the spatial organization of the transitional house seems more traditional than the *nuss-musallah* type in the 1950s. Although the traditional courtyard in the transitional house was transformed into a sealed living room, the back part of the house was reproduced as it previously was. This was because the inhabitants of the transitional neighborhood moved directly from the traditional areas, while *nuss-musallah* inhabitants kept the main two parts of the house, family and guest, in the 1950s because they were fascinated by Aramco's houses in the oil cities. Still, we can argue that, in both types, the past experience was strongly

influential in people's decisions on the form and the way that the internal spaces in their houses should relate to each other.

Figure 24
A transitional house built in early 1970s
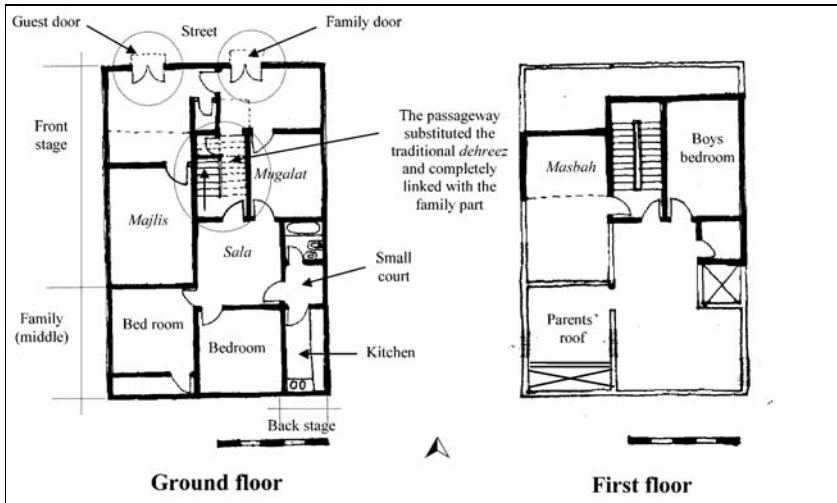
Source: *The author's personal archive.*

The introduction of the setback regulations changed the front part of the transitional house in both spatial and visual aspects. The *musallah* house design completely ignored the traditional way of approaching the house and instead the front setback was used to emphasize the male reception hall. This is clearly seen when the front spaces are occupied by the guest rooms and separated from the rest of the house by a passageway with a door that worked to some extent like the family zone in the traditional house entrances.

Figure 25

*Attempts by inhabitants of the transitional house in the 1970s to decorate
their house façades (their attempts appeared when concrete became the
only material for construction)*

Source: *The author's personal archive.*

What happened in the transitional neighborhoods was partially
imposed by the government and partially imposed by people's

collective action. Because the government had not yet established institutions to enforce the regulations[80], people selected what was suitable for their lifestyle. It is clear that a new perceptual identity developed in the transitional home environment. However, we notice the attempts of the inhabitants to embody old meanings in the new forms. The associational identity was very strong; hence, it continued with some alterations because people's lifestyle had changed with the introduction of regular jobs. All these social and physical changes paved the way for the new identity, which appeared in the 1940s and 50s and would grow and dominate the later home environments in 1960s, 70s and 80s.

Contemporary Home Environment

The economic growth in Saudi Arabia encouraged the government to start implementing five-year development plans, from 1970 onwards, in order to benefit from the oil revenues. The current plan, 2000-2005, is the seventh. These plans are intended to develop economic and human resources and enhance the social sector and physical infrastructure. The oil boom in 1973 made these plans more effective in transforming the physical characteristics of all Saudi cities. The national income increased from 8.7 billion dollars in 1973 to 39.2 billion dollars in 1974[81].

Several master plans were initiated for all Saudi cities between 1967 and 1976. These plans institutionalized the gridiron land sub-division and setbacks as the only way to deal with the home environment at its macro and micro levels. The villa became the only house type built in Saudi Arabia since 1975. The process of

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[80] The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs was established in 1975.

[81] TAYEB, F. (1983), op. cit., p. 59.

producing the physical environment had shifted from the incremental mechanism which used to occur daily on a micro level to a rigid process imposed on the macro level without a real understanding of people's cultural needs. It was a complete contrast to the traditional home environment, where communal relationships maintained the identity and consistency of the home environment at the macro level and, at the micro level, let the family adapt to changing circumstances in their lives.

In order to describe the identity of the contemporary home in Saudi Arabia, it is essential to consider the economic changes at the family level. People are now wealthier and more educated. This has influenced, in one way or another, the perceptual and the associational identity of the private home in the last two decades. In the past, for example, it was difficult for young men to leave the family house after marriage because they mainly worked in their fathers' farms, industry, or trade. They had no private property which made it difficult for them to leave the family house even if they wished to do so. This is not to say that every young man would leave if he was able to, because even in contemporary society many extended families still live in the same house.

Over the last two decades, the size of the average family has remained much the same. It was 6.9 persons in 1975[82] and is still the same today. It is clear that this factor has increased the size of the contemporary house in Saudi Arabia, especially now that every person in the family likes to have her/his own private room.

In fact there is some continuity of the old social structure, but this is not as strong as in traditional society. Nowadays, newly married couples prefer to have a separate house. To allow for this,

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[82] CANDILIS (1976) *Master Plan of Al-Hasa*, Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, p. 42.

people have developed physical solutions in their houses by creating one or two apartments on the first floor of their villas. An apartment is usually used as an additional source of income by renting it out until the oldest son gets married, when he then moves in with his new wife. If there is more than one apartment, the second son can use one, but if there is only one, the oldest son may leave the house and give the opportunity to his younger brothers. This solution has been developed recently by people to help their young sons economically by providing them with free housing and thus guaranteeing that at least one of their sons will stay with them.

Figure 26

One of the contemporary houses which consists of a villa style on the ground floor and two apartments on the first floor
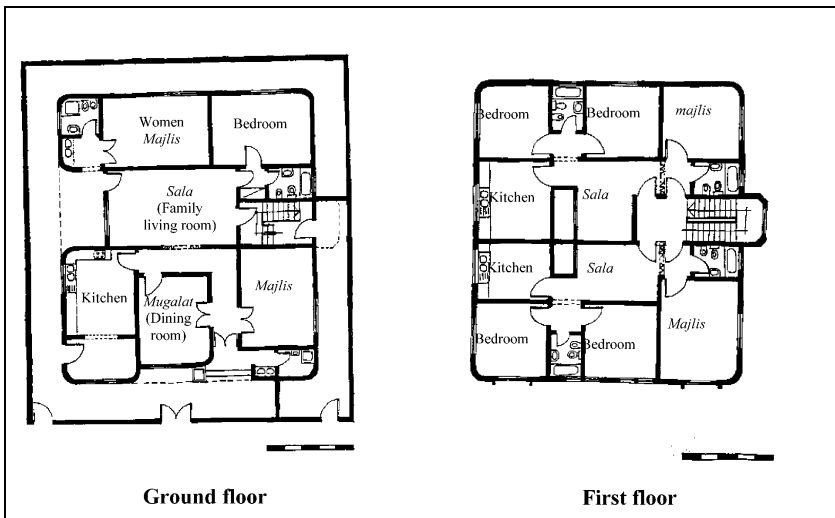
Source: *The author's personal archive.*

One of the major consequences of the ignorance of people's cultural needs was that the physical characteristics of the contemporary home environment reduced the domain of women and children[83]. The traditional home environment was very supportive of a lively social life for women and children. Through the roof footway women could meet their neighbours and socialize with them without using the external spaces. Parents also never stopped their children from playing outside the home because there were no hazards for them. Children knew the boundary of the area they lived in and practiced their activities within those intimate spaces outside their homes. This is not the case in the contemporary home environment where women have no outside space in which to meet their neighbours. Also, children are now forced to play inside their homes because people and places in the contemporary home environment have not yet been defined by the inhabitants.

What is really noticeable about the contemporary home environment is that people have striven to maintain their sense of group, their sense of homogeneity in the new suburbs. This has been accomplished by maintaining the intermediate relationships and reproducing the clustering system. Although the flexibility that existed in the traditional home environment has decreased, due to regulations which forced people to build individual

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[83] AL-NOWAISER, M.A. (1987), op. cit., p. 307. AL-OLET, A.A. (1991) *Cultural Issues as an Approach to Forming and Managing the Future Neighbourhoods: Case Study: The Central Region of Saudi Arabia*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Strathclyde, p. 230. AL-HUSSAYEN, A.S. (1996), op. cit., p. 143.

dwellings, as well as stopped them from making changes to their houses, people persisted in their way of socializing and resisted the changes by reorganizing themselves in the new suburbs[84].

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[84] AL-NAIM, M. (1998) 'Cultural Continuity: A Mechanism for Future Home Environments, Study of the Fereej System in Hofuf, Saudi Arabia', Paper presented at the 15th Inter-School Conference on Development, 29-31 March, Cardiff, University of Wales.

CONCLUSION:
ARAB CITY IN TRANSITION

In drawing together the conclusions of this paper, what this investigation tries to show is that searching for identity is not a simple matter. It cannot be accomplished by developing a set of regulations or borrowing images from the past, but rather it is, as one of the intellectuals has said, a matter of 'every day practice'[85]. He differentiates between two types of identity when he says that there is 'high or sacred identity' and there is 'practical identity'. High identity is 'idealistic' and never exists in reality. It exists only in the intellectuals' minds and is mainly associated with myth and legend, while practical identity is something which occupies people in their everyday life. This is why, when you ask the man in the street about his identity, he will answer you directly with down-to-earth information about his name, his nationality, his religion, his interests and his lifestyle. Searching for identity, as Al-Hamad explains, is not a problem for the public, but it is a problem for the intellectuals, who always think about some imaginary identity, which has no relation to the way the concept is understood in everyday life.

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[85] AL-HAMAD, T. (1988) 'Identity without Identity: Ourselves and Globalization', a paper presented at the Conference on Globalisation, Cairo (April 1988). Published in *Al-Youm* (local newspaper), Nos. 9086, 9093, 9100, 9107 (between 1-5-98 and 22-5-98).

In this study, we have criticised the current urban trend in the Arab World, a trend that borrows from the past as a way to revive urban identity; we recognised from the beginning that identity cannot simply be 'revived' by doing this, but it can be 'directed' by encouraging certain cultural experiences, which have become accepted over time. This view finds support in the contribution by Al-Hamad, where he claims that intellectuals have an impractical understanding of the nature of identity, and in this case the intellectuals are represented by the academicians and architects, who have tried in the past three decades in the Arab world to revive urban identity by recycling the traditional images. This nostalgic identity has never been appropriated as a practical identity by the people, who instead mobilise their past experiences and refine the new forms according to what they themselves accept, not according to what the architects attempt to impose upon them.

Arab cities facing the dilemma of tradition and modernity and future urban form in the area will respond to this debate. Therefore, any attempt to address contemporary architecture in the Arab countries should consider the sensitivity of local culture and should try to arrive at a compromise between the need for modern technology and the maintenance of local heritage. Our main question may consider this situation of tension in the Arab cities and how it will respond to globalisation. In the case of the Saudi home environment we have seen how people interact with all imported and local changes to make their homes liveable. This should be considered in any future planning for the Arab cities.

Finally we may repeat what William O'Reilly said: "local needs demand local solutions", which will make Arabs look towards their cities from the standpoint of the slogan "think global; act local"[86].

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[86] O'REILLY, W. (1999) (Ed) *Architectural Knowledge and Cultural Diversity*, Lausanne, Comportements, p. 7.

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