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CENTRO DI RICERCHE SUL SISTEMA SUD E IL MEDITERRANEO ALLARGATO
RESEARCH CENTRE ON THE SOUTHERN SYSTEM AND WIDER MEDITERRANEAN

MASHARY A. AL-NAIM



**THE HOME ENVIRONMENT
IN SAUDI ARABIA
AND GULF STATES**

*The Dilemma of Cultural Resistance.
Identity in Transition*

VOLUME II

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SUMMARY

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The Dilemma of Cultural Resistance. Identity in Transition*

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**The Home Environment
in Saudi Arabia and Gulf States**

*The Dilemma of Cultural Resistance.
Identity in Transition*

IDENTITY IN TRANSITION: CHANGE AND RESISTANCE IN THE HOME ENVIRONMENT (HOFUF AS AN EXAMPLE)

1. Prologue

In the previous volume we have discussed how the local people in the traditional home environment expressed their perceptual and associational identities. We found that people had produced a harmonised visual and spatial environment. Every space in the traditional home environment was ranked and classified by the inhabitants either as symbolic or utilitarian. There was a high compatibility between people and their home environment. Every form had a meaning. The decoding of perceptual and associational meanings in the traditional home environment always led to a collective understanding of spaces and images.

The questions which this chapter tries to highlight are: What was the situation when people in traditional Gulf environment moved from the old city to the new suburbs? To what extent did they maintain or change their identity in the new home environments? We will concentrate on one of the cities (Hofuf, Eastern Saudi Arabia) to build a clear picture of how people regenerate their images in the home environment. The people of Hofuf started moving from the traditional home environment as early as 1904 when they

planned *Assalhiyyah* quarter. The migration from the traditional areas continued throughout the twentieth century until 1975, when most of the inhabitants of the traditional area left it for new suburbs.

This study is concerned with the continuity and change of identity of Hofuf's home environment. The city, as have we said, underwent continuous change in the twentieth century. This brought the issue of identity to the centre stage. The question here is: Why and how did culture accept change? Warner Casket argues that any culture can accept change in two situations. The first is 'a consciousness of being inferior', which is important in creating the awareness for change and paves the way to grasp and learn from advanced cultures. The second is establishing 'contact between the two cultures [civilizations] at more than one point and for some length of time', which increases the need for change and learning from the advanced culture¹.

In the case of hybrid Hofuf, change became accepted by indirect contact with western culture. This indirect contact came about because of the influence of other cities in the Arab world, such as Damascus at the time of *Assalhiyyah* and later the oil cities near Hofuf in the post oil neighbourhoods that had been built between 1940 and 1960. Western culture, including western building designs and styles, had been at work in the development of these cities, in the case of Damascus on development in a long established city, and in the case of the oil cities on what were, as cities, new communities². This indirect contact with the western culture created a kind of cultural and specifically physical hybridity³ in the city of Hofuf,

¹ Cited in Jarbawi, (1981), *op. cit.*, p. 178 (Jarbawi parenthesis). This can be linked to the process of acculturation which is a process of contact between cultures. This process 'may involve either social interaction or exposure to other cultures by means of the mass media of communication'. Abercrombie, N. et al (1994), *op. cit.*, p. 2.

² For more detail about how Damascus was influenced by the western urban concepts see Lewis, B., Pellat, C., & Schacht, J. (ed.) (1965) *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Vol. II, London, Luzac & Co., p. 289.

³ Morley and Robins (1995) introduced the term 'cultural hybridity'. They link this term with the need to maintain identity when they say that searching for identity is 'a nostalgic attempt to revivify pure and indigenous regional cultures in reaction against what are perceived

where the desire to change and learn from the advanced culture mixed with past experience and traditional values and technology.

The impact of western urban concepts and images intensified after 1960. This led to a new identity emerging in Hofuf's home environment. This new identity consisted of continued, modified, and new experiences, traditions, and images. This chapter aims to understand how the people of Hofuf experienced the change in their home environment and how they resisted this change: how did they express their perceptual and associational identities in the transitional context that appeared in Hofuf between 1904 and 1975?

Generally the present chapter aims to implement a diachronic study of the development of the house form in Hofuf (as an example of the Gulf city) in the twentieth century, and specifically between 1904 and 1975. The emphasis will be on the ways that the people of Hofuf followed in order to absorb the new concepts and to redefine themselves in the home environment. We will also consider some aspects of the contemporary home environment, especially the production of the *fereej* system.

2. The *fereej* system in the hybrid neighbourhoods

In the hybrid neighbourhoods, the city of Hofuf was exposed to the indirect influence of western urban concepts. These influences brought new urban arrangements that changed the external domestic spaces from those in the traditional home environments. However, the traditional social structure was not influenced by this physical change because local people had adopted most of the change and no external forces imposed any urban or architectural solutions upon them. This minimised the change to the external space while the arrangements of the spaces inside the house remained to a large extent similar to the traditional home.

as threatening forms of cultural hybridity' (p. 8). We use this term in this study to indicate the parallel use of old and new traditions and images in the Hofuf home environment.

We call this home environment 'hybrid' because the traditional system and the new urban concepts had been used together in a parallel way. In these neighbourhoods, the identity of the home environment in Hofuf faced the first challenges. This is because, for the first time, the city was exposed to complete and sudden new forms and images, especially as regards the home environment in terms of external space. Initially, emphasis was put on the form and pattern of main streets, which were used to determine the settings of residential blocks. The actual size of each lot and the form of the house itself were left to the people, who obviously followed traditional norms. So the situation for a time was that the external setting of the home environment had undergone change in the new neighbourhoods, but inside things remained much the same. This parallel use of old and new had shifted in the post-oil neighbourhood towards more control over the land when the landlords subdivided the inner blocks and sold the land in individual lots. The following discussion tries to follow both cases and their impact on the spatial organisation of the external and internal domestic spaces.

2.1 Assalhiyyah Suburb (1904-40)

By the turn of the last century a group of people in *Arrif'a* decided to move from the walled city because the old city had not enough space to accommodate their extended families⁴. A new planned suburb

⁴ The second Ottoman occupation of Hofuf was between 1871 and 1913; during that time, the city was already under pressure to accommodate the growing population. In 1913, Abdulaziz Al-Saud regained all of Al-Hasa from the Ottoman. Throughout the early period of national consolidation, Hofuf remained the seat of administration for the region. One of the most important reasons for the construction of the *Assalhiyyah* at the beginning of this century was the limited area of the old city. Hofuf was surrounded by walls and most of the large houses were divided into small houses to meet the social requirements and population expansion. But the city was overcrowded and no place was left for any expansion. This encouraged the people to think about extending their residential settlements to outside the walled city. This suggestion had found agreement among many *hamolas* in *Arrif'a*. The selected location was unsuitable for cultivation and well defined between two cemeteries to the north and the south; at the same time it was considered a natural expansion of the old city.

was founded as a result of this decision with a planning system totally different from the adjacent traditional area (Fig. 1.1)⁵. It is important for this study to understand how the inhabitants of *Assalbiyyah* interacted with the introduced physical forms, and which experiences and meanings people carried with them into the new area, and why. The first question that needs more investigation is why the physical planning of *Assalbiyyah* adopted different systems⁶.

The planning of the new suburb was indirectly influenced by the westernisation of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century⁷. The land subdivision system that was applied in *Assalbiyyah* was borrowed from Damascus which was influenced by the Western urban concept when it was under the Ottoman era⁸. A committee

⁵ The first house was constructed in 1904 and its early core took almost thirty years to be completed. In fact groups of extended families moved from *Arrif'a* to the new suburb, but some of them reserved their blocks and left them empty. In the beginning, people were frightened of living outside the walled city. However, after 1913 this changed and people moved collectively to the area. Interview with Sheikh Ahmed Ben Ali Al-Mubarak (19-7-97).

⁶ From the historical documents we found that Hofuf had a municipal council as early as 1900. Al-Subai'ee (1987) found that the first municipal work was started in Hofuf in 1900 (1320 H), when the Ottoman government established the Municipality. The function of the municipality was very limited. From a historical document dated (1329 H) 1909, the municipality functioned as police to solve any dispute between people which indicated that the municipal council was not the cause behind this difference between the new neighbourhood and the surrounding traditional areas. This council was mainly concerned with security and cleaning rather than planning.

⁷ Celik, Zeynep (1984) *The Impact of Westernization on Istanbul's Urban Form, 1838-1908*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Berkeley, University of California. This study shows how the city of Istanbul was influenced by western urban concepts in the nineteenth century. In the last century many of the main Arab cities, such as Cairo and Damascus, were influenced in one way or another by western urban concepts.

⁸ Rashed Al-Mubarak, who suggested the location of the new suburb, went to Istanbul to ask permission from Sultan Abdulhamid. In his way back he passed by Damascus and saw the new suburb of *Assalbiyyah*. This suburb has gridiron-planning. He liked the place, its organisation and width of its street; hence he decided to imitate it in the new suburb in Hofuf. Al-Naim, M. (1994) 'Lessons from the Traditional Built Environment: A Study of Assalbiyyah Quarter in Hofuf, S.A.', *Al Ma'tburat Al Sha'biyyah*, Qatar, G.C.C. Folklore Centre, No. 33 (January), pp. 7-29, (Arabic). The researcher believes that Sheikh Rashed was ready to be

was formed to plan *Assalbiyyah*. It consisted of a number of religious scholars who had traditional knowledge about astronomy (Fig. 1.2)⁹.

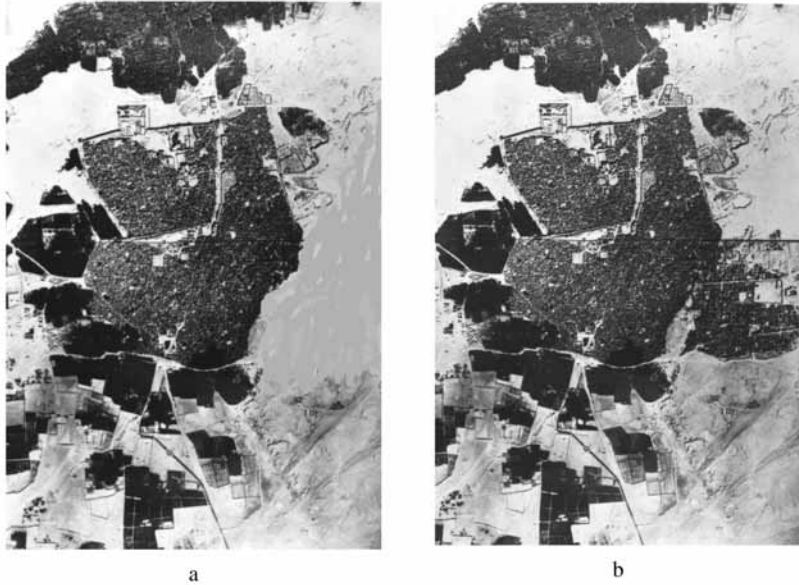


Fig. 1.1. Hofuf between 1904 and 1935. a) Hofuf before 1904 (*Assalbiyyah* not yet developed). b) Hofuf in 1935 (The core part of *Assalbiyyah* already completed).

Source: Aerial photograph 1935 (one modified), Aramco.

influenced by what he saw in Damascus because he already noticed the planned streets in Istanbul and he wished that his new residential settlement would become similar to what he saw. The researcher visited *Assalbiyyah* in Damascus in 1996 and he found that the width of the streets is mostly similar to that in Hofuf. Also, he noticed that the inner streets there were more regular than those in Hofuf.

⁹ From the interviews with a number of Al-Mubarak family, they informed the researcher that the committee defined the main street in *Assalbiyyah* by using the stars in the night. The main work was done in the night by defining the blocks by ropes, then in the day time they put in the main marks.

2.1.1 Physical Characteristics of Assalhiyyah

Differently from the traditional system, the planning committee of *Assalhiyyah* divided the suburb into almost equal rectangular blocks surrounded by streets of around 10m in width¹⁰. The committee also identified the locations of the local Friday and *Eid* mosques. The orientation of the streets mainly followed north-south and east-west directions. The blocks were not divided from inside. They left it to people to decide the areas they needed for their houses and the arrangements they preferred for their external space (Fig. 1.2).

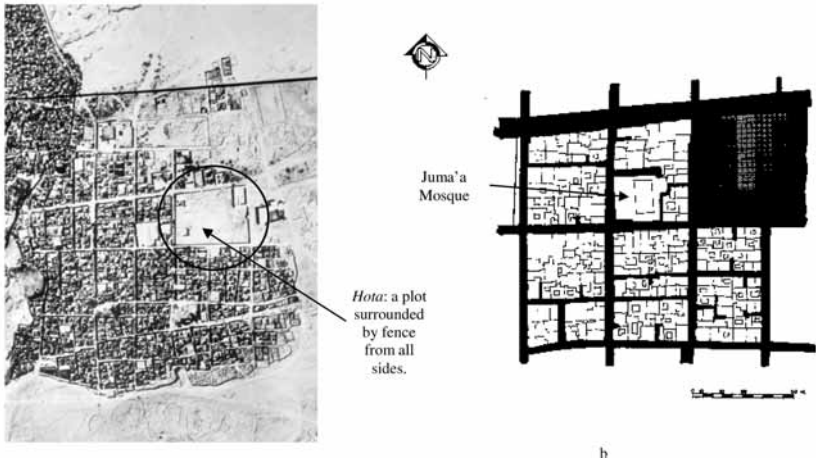


Fig. 1.2. a) *Assalbiyyah* Neighbourhood in 1935 (Gridiron pattern with a traditional system inside the blocks). Source: Aerial photograph 1935, Aramco. b) The first blocks in *Assalbiyyah*. Source. Developed from aerial map (1985), Municipality of Al-Hasa.

¹⁰ According to Sheikh Ahmed Ben Ali Al-Mubarak, the width of the streets in *Assalbiyyah* had been divided following the prophet's saying 'If you disagree about the width of a street, make it seven cubits'. This principle was applied because it allowed two loaded camels to pass through a street without harming each other. See also Hakim, B. (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 146.

Those extended families that moved to *Assalbiyyah* were given land by the committee. This is not to say that the committee identified the location and size of every piece of land that was given to each family, but every *hamola* was allocated in one or more adjacent blocks. The *hamola* members decided among themselves about the location and the size of every house inside the block¹¹. The committee only supervised the construction to guarantee that no encroachment over the main streets or the locations of the mosques took place. Most of those prominent families who used to live in *Arrif'a* reserved one or more blocks for their extended family. Some of them even reserved their blocks and surrounded them with a fence for future use¹². Those who reserved a complete block divided the block among the extended family.

Each block in *Assalbiyyah* is called *hota*¹³. The dimension of a *hota* is about 110m by 75m. The planning committee to allow flexibility stressed this large dimension for a *hota*. As has been mentioned earlier, planning of *Assalbiyyah* was only of the street and the boundaries of the *hotas*; therefore, the extended families and other small families took undivided lands and divided them among themselves according to their need. However, there was no system for land division except the traditional system, which depended on the ability of the family to build a house.

The interaction between the western planning system and traditional land development created a hybrid urban context reflecting both the gridiron pattern at the macro level and the traditional system

¹¹ Each family had constructed its house according to its need and ability.

¹² Some families moved after 1940 but their blocks remained empty and only surrounded by a fence. There is a religious principle enabling people to own empty land if they just surround it by a fence but they should later do some construction or plant some trees in it. This principle is called *ihya* (revivification) which means 'utilisation of dead land by building or planting it ... and not necessarily through the ruler's permission'. See Akbar, J. (1988), *op. cit.*, p. 256.

¹³ The word *hota* in Arabic means any land surrounded by a wall or fence. The name of *hota* was used in *Assalbiyyah* because the extended families who planned and moved to the new suburb had surrounded their lands to identify them from those which would be distributed to other people. This word was used until recent times even when the word 'block' became common in Hofuf.

at the micro level. This integration between the new urban concept and the organic-traditional system helped *Assalbiyyah* to face in harmony with the adjacent traditional quarters. Even western visitors who visited Hofuf at that time did not recognise the difference between *Assalbiyyah* and the traditional quarter, or they ignored *Assalbiyyah* completely (Fig. 1.3)¹⁴.

The physical external characteristics of *Assalbiyyah* were quite similar to adjacent traditional areas. People used their technical and perceptual experiences to express their perceptual identity in the new suburb. The only difference between *Assalbiyyah* and the traditional areas was that the physical environment of *Assalbiyyah* was divided into isolated masses while, in the traditional home environment, every quarter created one physical mass.

Despite this physical division, we can argue that the people of *Assalbiyyah* expressed their collective perceptual identity very strongly in the new neighbourhood. This can be seen from the fact that most of those who visited the city while the suburb was growing did not notice the grid pattern. Because people moved collectively, the collective perceptual identity was established immediately,

¹⁴ Around 1917, for example, Philby visited Hofuf and said that the city 'with its reputed 6000 houses ... is by far the biggest town in the dominions of Ibn Sa'ud; roughly oblong in shape and completely enclosed by a wall of unequal height ... and falls into three well-marked division: the Kut, the Rifa' and the Na'athil quarters, to which may be added the extra-mural suburb of Salihyya'. Mackie, for example, did not notice *Assalbiyyah* in 1924. He described Hofuf thus: 'The town is divided into three main quarters, Kut, Rifa', and Na'athil. The Rifa' and Na'athil quarters contain the houses of the merchants, shop-keepers, and indeed all except the Government officials, the personal staff of the Amir, and a few artisans and others who are permitted to live inside the Kut quarter and so make it self-supporting in case of trouble'. The researcher believe that Mackie had considered *Assalbiyyah* as an extension of *Arrif'a*; therefore he did not even mention it. Cheesman also ignored *Assalbiyyah* in 1926 when he described *Arrif'a* quarter. He said 'At the back of the bazaar lies the Rifa' quarter, the eastern side of the town, with merchants' houses and some slums, through which a busy thoroughfare takes the caravans setting out for and returning from Oqair'. Philby, B. (1922) *The Heart of Arabia: A Record of Travel & Exploration*, London, Constable and Company LTD, Vol. 1, p. 27; Mackie (1924), *op. cit.*, p. 197; Cheesman, O.B.E. (1926), *op. cit.*, p. 73. Sheikh Ahmed Ben Ali Al-Mubarak said that *Assalbiyyah* occupies the empty area east of Hofuf where the caravans used to go and come from Oqair (old port).

especially as inhabitants of *Assalbiyyah* had the same background and had moved from the same area.



Fig. 1.3. Physical characteristics of *Assalbiyyah*. a) Main street in *Assalbiyyah* (In the 1980s many inhabitants of *Assalbiyyah* demolished their old houses and built new ones. b) Main street (showing how the traditional houses were replaced by villas. c) Internal irregular *sikka* inside one of the *hotas* in *Assalbiyyah*. d) Traditional house in *Assalbiyyah* with upstairs loggia. e) Traditional house gate in *Assalbiyyah*. Source: Author.

Every *hota* in *Assalbiyyah* can be seen as a repetition of the traditional environment because the inner streets that developed inside those *hotas* were a result of the traditional system. For example, *sabats* were only found inside the *hotas* and not between them. This is because traditional building techniques, which were also used in the construction of *Assalbiyyah* houses, had limitations. Therefore, people were not able to overbridge the main streets to create *sabats*¹⁵. This physical constraint forced people to develop new solutions to reproduce their *fereej*s. In the following discussion we will try to understand the ways that people adopted to organise

¹⁵ From the interviews people mentioned that it was impossible for them to create the *sabats* between *hotas* because of the width of the streets. Rapoport (1969) indicates that building materials had a strong influence on the house form. He states: 'The availability and choice of materials and construction techniques in an architectural situation will greatly influence and modify the form of the building'. (p. 104).

themselves and how they expressed their perceptual and associational identity in the new neighbourhood.

2.1.2 *The Fereej System in Assalhiyyah*

In the previous discussion we tried to discuss the external environment of *Assalhiyyah*, its physical and spatial characteristics. Still, we need to understand how people interact with the new physical concept that had been introduced in this suburb. It is the purpose of this study to consider whether people's traditions and past experiences played a role in conveying meanings in external and internal domestic spaces, or a new experience was established.

What is crucial for this study is to know those cultural meanings that people ascribed to the new physical forms and the pattern of people's behaviour in the external and internal environment and their associated physical configurations. As has been mentioned earlier, the *fereej* was used by inhabitants of the traditional home environment as a mechanism to identify groups in the home environment. This system was very deeply connected to people's daily lifestyle and was very compatible with every person's role in society. Also, it was compatible with the physical characteristics of the traditional home environment. The question is to what extent the isolated *hotas* enabled people to reconstruct their *fereej*s in *Assalhiyyah*.

The *homola* system continued in *Assalhiyyah* suburb. Compared to the traditional system, the three levels of relationships, primary, intermediate and communal, continued in the new development because, as we have said, several extended families had moved collectively from *Arrif'a* to *Assalhiyyah*. Starting with the concept of resistance, what happened in *Assalhiyyah* can be considered the first resistance by the people of Hofuf to change. Despite the fact that new physical planning had been applied, people still perceptually expressed their traditions and experiences. In fact, people not only resisted the perceptual change but also they continued their social systems and tried very hard to make the physical environment

compatible with their values and lifestyle. Maybe one of the factors that enabled people to interact actively with the physical environment was the flexibility that enabled people to subdivide their *hotas* and create their own external domestic spaces.

There was a need to develop the *fereej* system for *Assalhiyyah* society to satisfy the need of the extended families. However, as we have noticed, physically, *Assalhiyyah* was mainly divided into rectangular blocks defined by streets on all sides. This new physical system was different from the traditional system that had no clear boundaries to define the masses of *fereej*s. The planning committee let people decide the internal form of their *hotas* and some of the extended families took more than one *hota*. This physical solution was used since the beginning, which paved the way for people to create more defined *fereej*s either within or between *hotas*.

The physical demarcation between *hotas* did not mean that the social homogeneity that characterised traditional society changed in *Assalhiyyah*. The concept of *fereej* worked as a system of expressing group identity and continued in *Assalhiyyah* in several forms: firstly as complete *hota* as one physical unit, occupied in many cases by one *hamola*. In such a case the *hota* by itself constituted the *fereej* and identified the family itself¹⁶. For example, several informants mentioned that the roof route was usually found within the *hota* houses if the members of the same *hamola* or related *hamolas* occupied them. Secondly, in some cases one extended family occupied two or more *hotas* and formed one big *fereej* such as *fereej AlMubarak*. The *hota* in some cases consisted of two or more *fereej*s. This occurred with the small families who moved individually from old Hofuf (Fig. 1.4).

¹⁶ For example there was *hotat Alboday*. The name of the family was attached to the *hota* as people used to do in the traditional *fereej*.

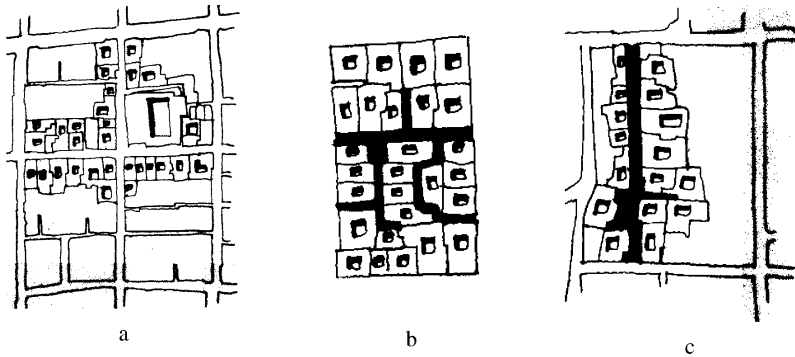


Fig. 1.4. a) *Fereej* developing in the edge of several *hotas*. b) *Fereej* occupying a complete *hota*. c) *Fereej* developing inside one *hota*. Source: Author (based on several interviews and Aerial map (1985), Municipality of Al-Hasa).

The interesting point here is that street organisation in these *hotas* was developed to satisfy the need for identification by these small families. For example in some *hotas* we found two main *sikkas*, each *sikka* representing one small *fereej*. Also, the inhabitants had established *fereej*s in the intersections of the main road. Those houses which were located in the corner of each block were considered potential zones for the *fereej* to be developed. This type of *fereej* is not limited only to those corner houses but it may extend to include several houses in all directions. In this case social bonds aggregated the physical demarcations of *hotas*.

The inhabitants who moved to *Assalhiyyah* maintained their traditional collective perceptual and associational identities. For example, one of the informants explained how he defined his *fereej*. He moved from the traditional quarter of *Arrif'a* to *Assalhiyyah* after 1940. Originally his *hamola* had its *hotas*. When he moved to the area he immediately defined his own *fereej* because he constructed his house in his family empty *hota*. To understand how and why he defined his own *fereej*, we tried to reconstruct his case (Fig. 1.5). His house A is located in a corner zone in the block. In the opposite corner is a related house B (from another related *hamola*). When he

moved to the area, already two main *fereej*s had been established (his and his related *hamolas*). He immediately defined his own *fereej*, but he also retained strong ties with his related area. Later when other people from different families moved to the area he did not consider them as members of his *fereej* although they were physically very close.

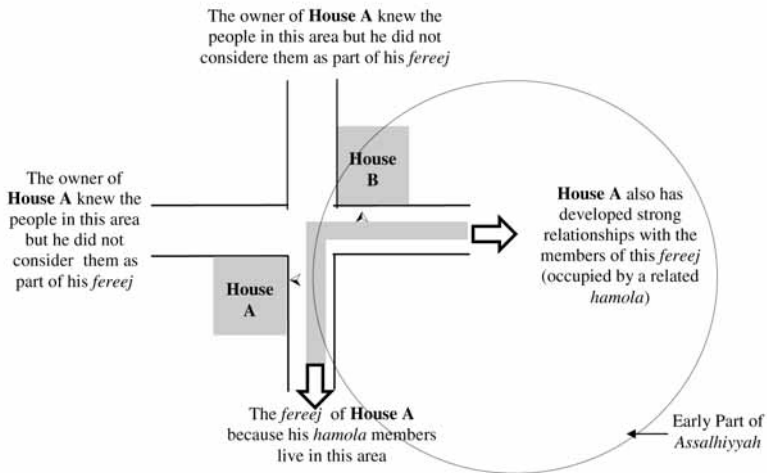


Fig. 1.5. Development of the *fereej* system in Assalbiyyah neighbourhood.
Source: Author.

The desire to maintain the traditional perceptual and associational identities was not limited to the external space only; the house was completely traditional. In Assalbiyyah all the three traditional house types existed, *majlis* with a courtyard, two storeys height *majlis* hall, and upstairs *majlis* (Fig. 1.6)¹⁷. A complete traditional life style existed in the new neighbourhood. The rituals and ceremonies of the

¹⁷ The upstairs *majlis* type had developed in both old Hofuf and Assalbiyyah in the first half of the twentieth century.

male reception spaces and family spaces continued without any change¹⁸.

In volume I we discussed territorial behaviour in old Hofuf. We have mentioned that the *Assalbiyyah* was considered by local people in Hofuf as the fourth old quarter. The inhabitants of the *Assalbiyyah* behaved as one group when they interacted with other quarters in the old city. This enhanced the sense of belonging not only to the new neighbourhood but also to the whole city.

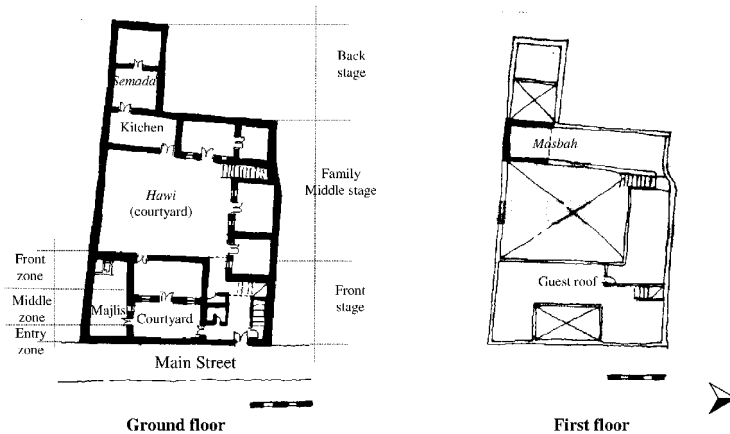


Fig. 1.6. A traditional house in *Assalbiyyah*. Source: Author¹⁹.

We can argue here that the new physical form did not stop the inhabitants of *Assalbiyyah* from using their traditions and past experiences. This strong continuity was attributed to two main reasons. Firstly, it is the people themselves who select the location,

¹⁸ From the interview with the original inhabitants of *Assalbiyyah* (many families left *Assalbiyyah* in the late 1980's to a new neighbourhood called *Albusairah*) we found that a complete traditional lifestyle had continued in the new suburb. For example, the division of large houses into small ones; the *shufa'a*; definition and naming of the external spaces in the *fereej*; naming of the internal spaces in the house had continued.

¹⁹ The scale bar in all floor plans indicates 5m.

form, and organisations of their new settlement. The second reason is that people moved and reconstructed their previous environment collectively. Even those who moved later in 1940s had their own lands beside their extended families, which in consequence became members in the community immediately.

However, we need to distinguish here between those who moved later but had their *fereej*, and those small families who moved as individuals. In the former case people only decided to remain longer in their traditional areas while their extended families left *Arrifa* to *Assalbiyyah*. In the latter case, they had no extended families or they came from several traditional *fereej*s which took a longer time to establish their new *fereej* in *Assalbiyyah*. In both cases, the collective perceptual identity was established immediately because they applied their traditional images and technique to building their houses (Fig. 1.7).

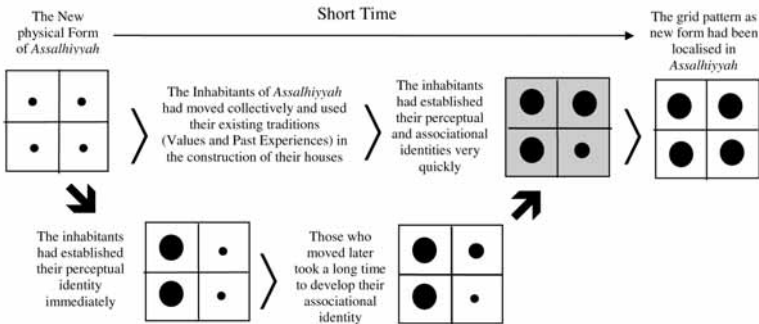


Fig. 1.7. Reconstruction of perceptual and associational identities in *Assalbiyyah*

2.2 The Post-Oil Neighbourhoods (1940-60)

The oil age began in the Hofuf area in 1938, and many people from Hofuf worked in the industry from that time onwards. Up to 1940, the city had seen no major changes, with the exception of the

development of the *Assalbiyyah* neighbourhood²⁰. 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 direct contact with western culture can largely be attributed to the attempts of Aramco to accommodate its American staff by building several camps between 1938 and 1944²¹. Although these camps were erected in cities other than Hofuf, 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 (Fig. 1.8).

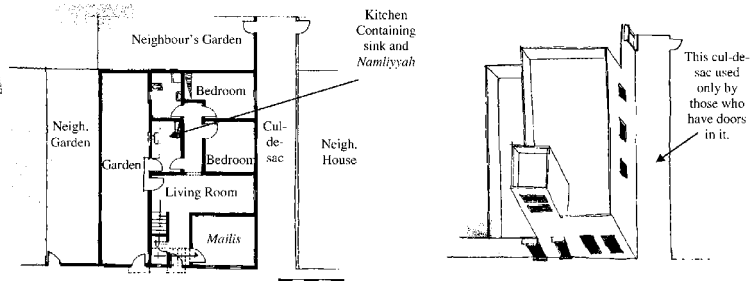


Fig. 1.8. One of the Aramco's employees' houses in *Al'adama*, Dammam (1950s).

Source: Based on interview and sketch by M. Al-Abdulla²².

²⁰ Hofuf at that time was the capital of the Eastern region. For example, Shiber said 'By 1934 the province had only one principal city, Hofuf – the capital'. Shiber, S.G. (196), *op. cit.*, p. 428. Until 1940, the city had no major changes except the construction of the main market *Al-Qaysariyyah* and some buildings such as *Alqusaibi* office. These buildings were part of King Abdulaziz scheme to rebuild Hofuf. See Mackie, (1924), *op. cit.*, p. 197; Cheesman, O.B.E. (1926), *op. cit.*, p. 73.

²¹ For more detail see volume I.

²² Mr. Al-Abdulla is an architect. He lived in this house with his family between 1961-69. The family originally rented this house from an Aramco employee at that time called Abdulrahman Al-Nagedi. Notice the bedroom placed to have an opening on the external

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 1.1). This encouraged government expenditure in urban development²³. This is clearly seen from the establishment of the municipalities in 1937 to deal with urban organisation. This was followed by the road and buildings statute, which was initiated in 1941²⁴. This statute was 'elementary in nature and, in practice, they were seldom resorted to since the standards they established were the ones usually followed in traditional cities'²⁵. This organisational attitude by the government influenced the new developments in Hofuf, especially those in the 1950s. For example, the regulations indicated that newly opened streets must 'not exceed the following width: main streets, not less than 15 m.; secondary streets, not less than 8 to 12 m.; and lanes, not less than 4 to 6 m'²⁶.

domestic space which severely reduced the privacy of the family members. Mr. Al-Abdulla informed the researcher that they used a very thick and dark curtain to provide the level of privacy they needed. He also said that they rarely opened the windows or even enjoyed the daylight. One of the interesting things about Aramco's houses in the oil cities is that they introduced a new image about the kitchen and the toilet. For example in the kitchen, a sink and wooden cupboard called *Nanliyyah* was introduced. The word *Nanliyyah* maybe originally came from Egypt. Mr. Al-Abdulla (his mother and his wife were from Egypt) said that this word was well known there. The researcher asked him to ask his wife about this word and its use in Egypt. Her description was identical to what we used to have in Saudi Arabia in the 1950s, 60s and 70s.

²³ As we discussed in volume I, the government planned and constructed two big urban projects in 1950s in Riyadh (*Annasriyyah* and *Almalaz*).

²⁴ 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.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 194.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Table 1.1: 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. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 245.

Because Hofuf is the nearest city to the oil cities of Dammam and Khobar²⁷, the impact of new western images was very strong but, in general, we can say that in 1940s urban change in Hofuf was slow. Maybe the most important regulation that influenced the semi-planned suburb in Hofuf 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 licences and building regulations. It confirmed the height of building to one storey except those built on the sea 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 cement²⁸. Although this system was limited to the new cities, the inhabitants of Hofuf were

²⁷ With the exception of Qatif which became part of Dammam metropolitan area.

²⁸ Al-Subai'ee, A. (1987), *op. cit.*, pp. 146-47; Al-Said, F. (1992), *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220.

influenced by physical images that had resulted from applying this system. They subdivided their land, for the first time, and sold them as individual plots for residential purposes.

At this stage, it is very important for this study to understand how the new developments in Hofuf were influenced by what was happening in the nearby cities, Dammam and Khobar. Tables 1.2 and 1.3 show the number of Aramco employees who came from Al-Hasa and also indicate that, until 1962, the number of employees from Al-Hasa who lived with their families during the working week was not more than 1.6%. This indicates that in the 1940s and 50s Al-Hasa employees only worked in the oil camps but they nevertheless lived and constructed their houses in Al-Hasa. This attitude had a very deep impact on the development of the residential settlements in Hofuf. New images of house form were introduced by those employees, which indirectly influenced the residents of Hofuf at that time.

Table 1.2: Percentage of Aramco employees who originally came from Al-Hasa (1962 and 1968)

Location of House residence	1962		1968	
	Estimated no. of employees	%	Estimated no. of employees	%
Qatif Oasis	3,473	32.4	2,790	31
Al-Hasa Oasis (Hofuf)	2,710	25.3	2,332	24
Company Town Site	1,736	16.2	2,429	21.8
Dammam	974	9.1	896	11.4
Khobar	1,101	10.3	691	8.8
Tarut	466	4.3	340	3.5
Other	254	2.4	137	1.4
Total	10,714	100.0	9,615	100.0

Source: Shea, T.W. (1972), *op. cit.*, p. 248.

Table 1.3: Proportion of Aramco’s employees living with their own household during the work week (1962 and 1968)

Place of Family Residence	1962	1968
Dammam	87.0	100.0
Tarut	0.0	100.0
Qatif Oisis	59.8	88.0
Khobar	88.5	86.9
Company town site	85.3	74.2
Al-Hasa Oasis (Hofuf)	1.6	24.3
Total	52.4	69.8

Source: Ibid., p. 249.

An informant was one of the early employees in Aramco (he is retired now) who built his house in one of the hybrid neighbourhoods (*Aththulaithiyyah*) early in the 1950s (Fig. 1.9). The external façade of the house was similar to any villa in Dammam at that time but the plan of the house was a mix of new and old images. There was a setback at the front but there was also a courtyard in the centre of the house. It was constructed completely with reinforced concrete. This house is considered an example of the Aramco’s employee houses in Hofuf at that time. If we compare this house with the Aramco’s houses in Dammam we will find that in the Hofuf case, there was inspiration from the external image of the new houses. This was not the case in the spatial organisation. In Hofuf, Aramco’s employees mobilised their long standing experiences which led to a severe refinement of the new form. A completely new house type, a mix of old and new images and spatial concepts, was developed in Hofuf at that time.

The indirect impact of Aramco’s urban development on the residential settlement in Hofuf in 1940s and 50s was very clear. It

may be considered the first real challenge for people's collective identity because what happened in *Assalbiyyah* was very minor compared to this situation. In the post-oil residential settlements, new concepts were introduced to Hofuf not only at the macro level, but they went very deep to influence the house spatial organisation and its external image. A mix of continued and new traditions, experiences, and images worked together to create the collective perceptual and associational identities of the home environment at that time. It is very important for this study to understand how people resisted and localised the new forms. The following discussion aims to build a spatio-temporal path for the development of the home environment in 1940s and 50s with special emphasis on the *fereej* system and the house form.

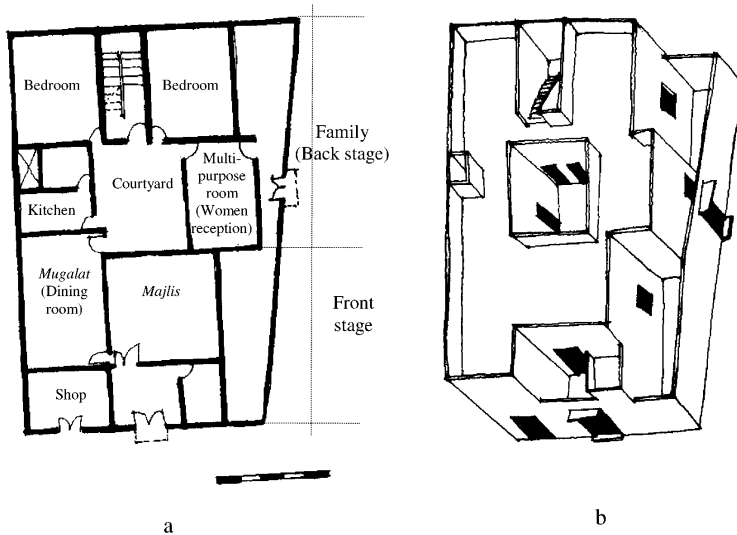


Fig. 1.9. a) A house built by an Aramco employee in 1950s (*Atbtbulaithbiyyah* neighbourhood). b) Isometric view shows the open spaces in the house (old and new images). Source: Author.

2.2.1 Formation of the Post-Oil Neighbourhoods (1940-60)

By 1940, Hofuf had started to expand from two directions, the south and southwest direction and northeast direction. At the beginning a large new settlement called *Arrigaygab* appeared south of the city wall. The name *Arrigaygab* was used to define the southern suburbs from the northeastern suburb, which is called *Alfadliyyah*. In addition to the Bedouin settlers, there was interurban migration from the old city towards the new suburbs in the south and the north. This study concentrates more in *Arrigaygab* suburb and specifically on those settlements, which were constructed by people who originally moved from old Hofuf. This is not to say that the study ignores the northern suburb, *Alfadliyyah*, but it has passed through almost the same process as the areas of local migrants in *Arrigaygab*²⁹.

Arrigaygab was a very big suburb and it was clear from the beginning that this name was continued to indicate the old location, the Bedouin camp, which later became a permanent residential settlement. It is important to mention that this suburb was developed over three decades. The aerial photograph in 1960 shows that there were four to five isolated settlements developed in this

²⁹ In the investigation of the physical transformation of *Arrigaygab* suburb, it is necessary to explain how this suburb came into existence. *Arrigaygab*, originally, was a camp used by Bedouin settlers from long time. Lorimer described *Arrigaygab* in 1908 as: 'a large camping ground always occupied by Bedouins of the poorer class; of these about 500 families are permanently resident and 1,000 more are added to their number in the hot weather'. Lorimer, J. (1908), *op. cit.*, p. 650. By 1940, a major change had occurred to *Arrigaygab*; the previous camping ground started to change to a permanent suburb. Vidal noticed this change and described the area in 1952 as: 'In more recent times, another suburb of Hofuf has grown to considerable proportions. This is al-Ruqayyiqah, a former Bedouin camping ground just outside the southwest corner of Hofuf wall. Al-Ruqayyiqah, as regular suburb, is probably not more than fifteen years old, although a few scattered *barastis* had been built in this area for a longer time'. Vidal, F.S. (1955), *op. cit.*, p. 93 (his italic). The word *barasti* or *barastag* refer to a type of houses mainly constructed from palm leaves (*jareed*).

suburb³⁰. In reality every settlement took some time to grow. This can be clearly understood from Vidal's description of *Arrigaygab* suburb in 1955. He said:

The southern and western borders are not defined. It seems likely that this suburb developed in a roughly concentric fashion, starting at a point close to the water well. As one approaches al-Ruqayyiqah from the south or west, one encounters first a series of tents pitched along the edges of the settlement. Proceeding towards the centre, one sees a series of compounds consisting of a mud or rubble wall courtyard with a variable number of *barastis*. In the central part of the community, these *barastis* have for the most part been replaced by permanent mud or masonry construction³¹.

What Vidal described, in reality, was more than one settlement. It is true that the Bedouin camp was on its way to transformation to a permanent residential settlement, but several permanent settlements had already developed around the old city. Those settlements were built by those who moved from the old city at that time. He also indicated the house types that had been developed in this neighbourhood. The mud rubble system prevailed in the 1940s, while concrete blocks replaced it in 1950s.

Because local people liked to live close to the old city, most of the palm farms that existed around Hofuf had been transformed to residential settlements. At the beginning satellite suburbs appeared on the empty lands; then these suburbs expanded over the farms around them (Fig. 1.10)³². By analysing the external physical characteristics of two settlements, *Aththulaithiyyah* and

³⁰ There were also small settlements, but we prefer to indicate those major settlements, which later formed distinct neighbourhoods. Three of these settlements were developed by local inhabitants (*Aththulaithiyyah*, *Almazrou'iyyah* and *Almansour'iyyah*) while two settlements were developed by Bedouins (later the south settlement was named by *Hay Almatar* while the south-west one kept the name of *Arrigaygab*).

³¹ Vidal, F.S. (1955), *op. cit.*, p. 94 (his italics).

³² For example Al-Shuaibi (1976) described one of the semi-planned suburbs, *Aththulaithiyyah* neighbourhood. He said that it 'was a suburb, with date gardens, but the new expansion after 1950 joined it to the main town at the southern boundary of old Hofuf'. (p. 227).

Almazrou'iyyah, we found that each neighbourhood had established a collective perceptual identity similar, to some extent, to the traditional home environment. This is because people had moved directly from the old city and the traditional construction technology was still prevailing at that time.



Fig. 1.10. Growth of the post-oil neighbourhoods. a) *Aththulathbiyyah* Neighbourhood in 1960 (scattered houses with predetermined streets and land size and shape). b) *Aththulathbiyyah* neighbourhood in 1967 (the *fereej* system had been established and the density of the area had increased). Notice how the green areas around the city had been abandoned to be used for residential purposes.

Source: Based on Aerial photographs (1960 and 1967), Aramco.

In their spatial layout, these two neighbourhoods were similar to *Assalbiyyah*. The only difference was that the blocks in the later settlements were determined by local inhabitants who subdivided the inner land plots in every block and sold them to people before the construction of their houses³³. This was the first time in Hofuf that land was subdivided and sold as individual plots. The flexible system that existed in *Assalbiyyah* had been vanished. This slowed down the

³³ Al-Shuaibi (1976) said that 'in Hofuf ... directly after 1950 some of the farmers burned or cut their plants and palms, and divided their land into smaller areas for the new urban areas of the towns, preferring to sell their land rather than to cultivate it'. (p. 228).

reproducing of the *fereej* system in these areas because people had moved individually and in small groups (extended family or very closely related families). People in this case took a long time to define themselves in their home environment.

We used an aerial photograph from 1960 to compare *Assalbiyyah* and post-oil neighbourhoods. In the physical sense, it is difficult to differentiate between *Assalbiyyah* and these settlements. However, we find that *Assalbiyyah* had more inner streets and more cul-de-sacs. This was expected because people had maximum flexibility when they formed their *fereej* within and between *hotas*, while in the post-oil suburbs, people were not so free to organise their external domestic spaces because the land had been divided and the final shape of the external domestic space had been decided by the landlord³⁴.

It is necessary for this study to understand how the *fereej* system was reproduced in the post-oil neighbourhoods. Until the late 1940s, the wall of the old city was not demolished. The existence of the wall was used by the people of old Hofuf to define themselves from those who moved to outside areas. The local people considered the new developments outside the wall of the city not part of Hofuf³⁵. Many people of Hofuf still joke about the name *albar* (desert) which they used for a long time to describe those neighbourhoods outside the old city³⁶. Some of them said that they considered those who moved from the inner city ‘mad people’.

³⁴ The land subdivision system in those semi-planned suburbs was completely dependent on the individual technological ability. In that sense, different from *Assalbiyyah* which had a central committee to control the land subdivision, the post-oil suburbs appeared less organised.

³⁵ This is supported by Vidal (1955) when he said ‘Some people claim that Hofuf consists only of the three quarters [*Alkut, Anna’athil, and Arrif’a*] ... and that neither al-Salihyah nor al-Ruqayyiqah, particularly the latter, can be considered parts of Hofuf. Although this statement might have some support, particularly from a historical point of view, we believe that this question is largely academic. To all intents and purposes, both al-Salihyah and al-Ruqayyiqah are administratively, geographically, and in the feeling of inhabitants themselves not independent settlements but fringe suburbs of Hofuf’. (p. 95). (The researcher’s Italics).

³⁶ The city walls had been demolished in 1947. Al-Shuaibi, A.M. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 225.

Compared to *Assalhiyya*, the semi-planned neighbourhood passed through a longer time to establish a definite *fereej*. One of previous residents of *Almazrou'iyyah* said that:

'There were no *fereej*s similar to what we had in the old quarter. Houses had appeared in our area in a very scattered manner. When we moved, a few houses existed here and there. The area took a long time to fill up. People did not move easily to the new areas because they call them *albar* (desert). When we decided to move from the old city, we selected a location for our house near the old area to feel security and to have connections with our relatives and friends'.

It is important to mention that the old city was very crowded at that time. People had no places to accommodate the increasing number of the *hamola* members. Despite that, people preferred to stay in the old city because they still had no alternative to reproduce their *fereej*s. What happened in *Assalhiyyah* was not possible in the 1940s and 50s because the availability of land was very limited, especially as most of the land around Hofuf was private farms. The land which was free in *Assalhiyyah* became very expensive and not everybody could afford to buy it.

Because the *fereej* system was vital for people's social life, the inhabitants of the post-oil neighbourhoods tried to create their own *fereej* system. Although the traditional clustering that existed in the traditional and *Assalhiyyah* quarters had almost disappeared in these settlements, a kind of *fereej* system developed through the interaction of the newcomers with each other, which led to a reproduction of the traditional lifestyle in the new areas. The collective background and lifestyle helped people to increase the social bond in the area. Also, in some parts of these neighbourhoods collective development occurred, especially in the 1950s, when a number from one *fereej* in *Anna'athil* moved collectively to *Almazrou'iyyah* and occupied land originally owned by one of the *hamola* members who preferred to sell it to his relatives. Still the reproduction of the traditional *fereej* system in these two

neighbourhoods was very limited because the main *hamolas* in Hofuf still persisted in living in the old *fereej*s.

Dwelling in the Hybrid Fereej

Because the block was subdivided, the shape of the house became more regular. However, in the spatial sense, the house kept its three parts, the guest, the family, and the animal spaces. The transitional spaces, the *dehreez* and internal *sabat* continued as regulator spaces to control and isolate the three parts from each other. It is obvious that the house became larger. This can be seen from the large number of *muraba'as* and *liwans* in the family zone. It is clear that the house in the 1940s became more functional because the family part occupied most of the house. The male reception space was minimised to the *majlis* hall and its entrance (Fig. 1.11).

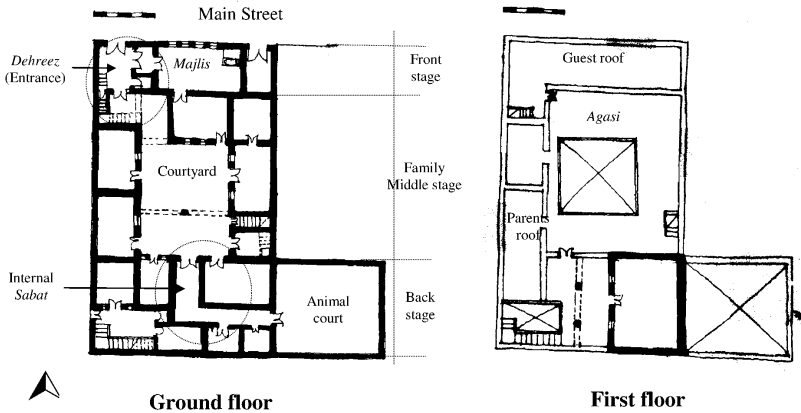


Fig. 1.11. A house in *Almazrou'iyyah* constructed in 1940s. Source: Author.

The traditional names of the internal spaces continued in the hybrid house of 1940s. The external spaces had some changes because the physical characteristics of the external domestic space had been changed completely. The hierarchy of spaces almost disappeared. No cul-de-sacs, *sabats*, or *barahas* were found in the

post-oil neighbourhood³⁷. The main *sikkeas* became main streets and were transformed from semi-public to public spaces. It is difficult to say that the control over the streets disappeared. A number of informants mentioned that they considered the streets around their houses as the boundary of their *fereej*. However, this does not mean that they had control over them like they had in the traditional *fereej*.

The *majlis* of the hybrid house of the 1940s was a single storey high and was located in the ground floor. It was linked with the external spaces by a number of windows opening directly on to the main street. This was the first time that private house in Hofuf had contained a window opening at ground level, a change which resulted in direct contact with external spaces. Now, guests could see and hear the activities that might take place in the external spaces, and those in external spaces could see and hear guests. The inhabitants of the hybrid neighbourhoods were encouraged to reach such a solution partly because of the need to create a closer association with neighbours since the *fereej* system had not yet developed in the area. A further reason for this change was that people were influenced by the new house image in nearby cities and by the design, in Hofuf itself, of Aramco employees, which had openings at the ground floor level.



Fig. 1.12. A number of hybrid house gateways constructed in the 1940s.
Source: Author.

³⁷ Some cul-de-sacs appeared in some cases when some houses were divided in the 1960s, but these cases were very limited.

The *debreez*, with its two zones, continued in the hybrid house to link the *majlis* with the external domain. The *debreez almajlis* (the guest zone) opened to the street but was sharply separated from the family zone by a wooden door. This increased the role of the *majlis* in the neighbourhood as a communal space. The gateway, with its gypsum decoration, continued its traditional role (Fig. 1.12). The whole composition of the front façade indicates the continuity of the traditional perceptual identity, but with the adoption of a new form (Fig. 1.13).



Fig. 1.13. The main façades of a number of houses constructed in 1940s (continuity of the traditional perceptual identity). Source: Author.

The *majlis* continued in its function as the front stage in the house. The hall of the *majlis* was divided, as in the traditional *majlis*,

into three zones: the front zone which contained the coffee place (*wijaq*), the middle zone, and the entry zone. The perceptual and associational meaning of the *majlis* continued with very minimum change, except the height and the way that the *majlis* was linked with external domestic space. It is possible to say that there was a complete continuity for the rituals and ceremonies of the male reception spaces at that time (Fig. 1.14).

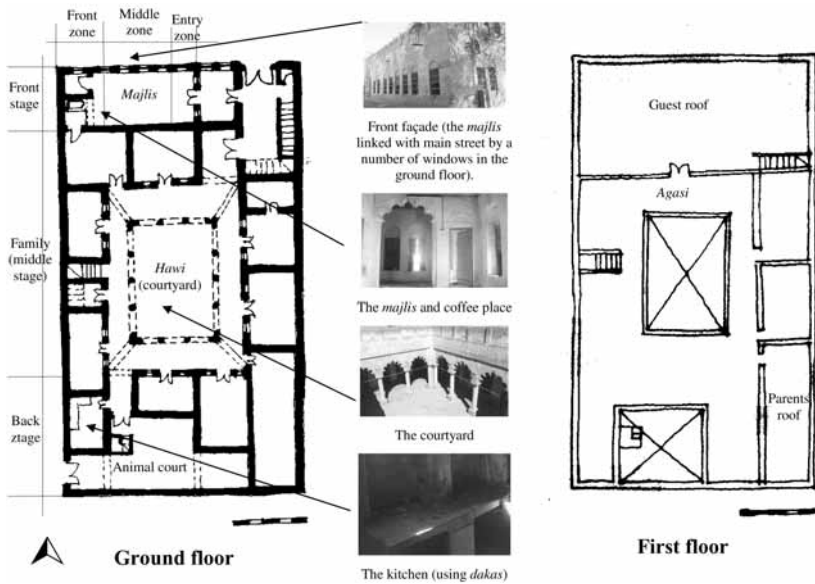


Fig. 1.14. A house in *Almazrou'iyyah* constructed in 1940s. Source: Author.

Because the *majlis* 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 (Fig. 1.15). 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. However, the location of the kitchen remained in the internal *sabat*.

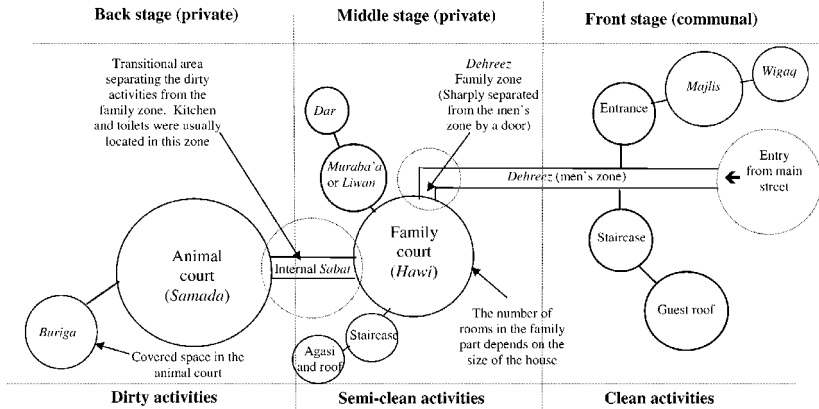


Fig. 1.15. The organisation of internal domestic space in the hybrid house of 1940s.

Minimising 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 animal space in the house almost disappeared. Different from 1940s houses, the hybrid houses of the 1950s contain only two parts, guest and family spaces. The animal space was transferred to the roof or the rear setback (Fig. 1.16). This type of house is called by local people of Hofuf *nuss-musallah* (half concrete). Its walls, columns, and beams are constructed with reinforced concrete while the roof is made of wood (*murab'a*). The local people differentiate between this type and the other old types by calling the houses in the traditional areas,

Assalbiyyah, and hybrid houses of the 1940s ‘*Bayt Arabi*’ Arabic house. This naming can be seen as clear realisation by people of the new images and their challenge to their traditional identity.

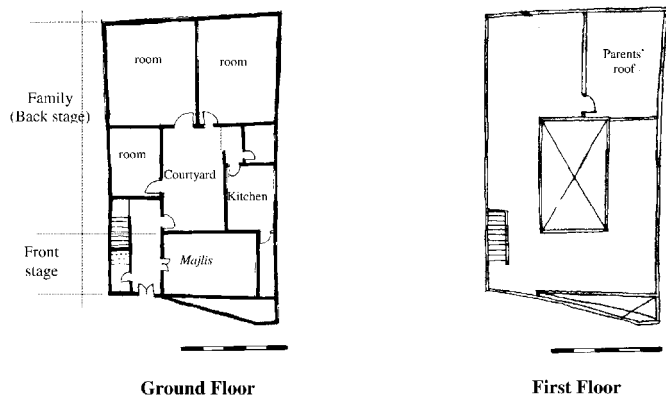


Fig. 1.16. A house constructed in the late 1950s strongly influenced by the new images that had been introduced by Aramco’s employees houses at that time. Source: Author.

The threat to identity at that time can be seen clearly from the name that is used by local people to differentiate the house type used in the old city, *Assalbiyyah*, and hybrid suburbs in the 1940s and 50s, from the new house type that started to appear in the city and was mainly influenced by the western house type. The *Arabi* house type reflected the need for Hofuf’s people to differentiate between the local house type that reinforced their identity and values



Fig. 1.17. Hybrid and *musallah* houses in 1950s in Hofuf. Source: Aramco.

from those strange house types that started to attack their home environment (Fig 1.17).

We should admit here that this latter type existed in the city since the early 1950s, but it was limited to the Aramco's employees and some well-to-do people who preferred to build their houses using reinforced concrete. For example, one household in *Anna'athil* decided to demolish its traditional house in 1953 and build another one using reinforced concrete (Fig. 1.18). Because the family had a very large house, the whole traditional *majlis* was kept and linked later with the new concrete house. Reinforced concrete became an important material for housing construction after the 1950s. People used it as a symbol of modernity and sophistication. One of the informants, for example, said that some people in the 1960's and 70's built their houses in concrete blocks and left them without plastering because they believed that it reflects a prestigious image for their houses.



Fig. 1.18. A house in *Anna'athil* built in 1953 (concrete and balconies with courtyard in the centre of the house). Source: Author.

The hybrid house of 1950s was a mix of traditional and new perceptual images but it was more traditional in its spatial organisation. Although the three parts that distinguished the private house in Hofuf were discontinued in this type, a partial continuity had been maintained by people when they retained the guest and the family spaces. The animal space disappeared, which led to the end of the internal *sabat*. The *majlis* remained in the front stage but the entrance became one zone. Placing a door to separate the entrance from the family courtyard continued the sharp segregation between guest and family parts. The family spaces continued with minimum change, except that the kitchen became part of the family part and opened directly on to the courtyard (Fig. 1.19).

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. The house façade in the 1950s, for example, indicate this tension between old and new in people’s mind: a concrete gate with traditional windows and loggias, a traditional gate with front setback (Fig. 1.20). This situation can also be seen in the spatial organisation when the animal space completely disappeared by the time of the late 1950s houses. It is clear that a new identity for the private house in Hofuf has emerged since that time.

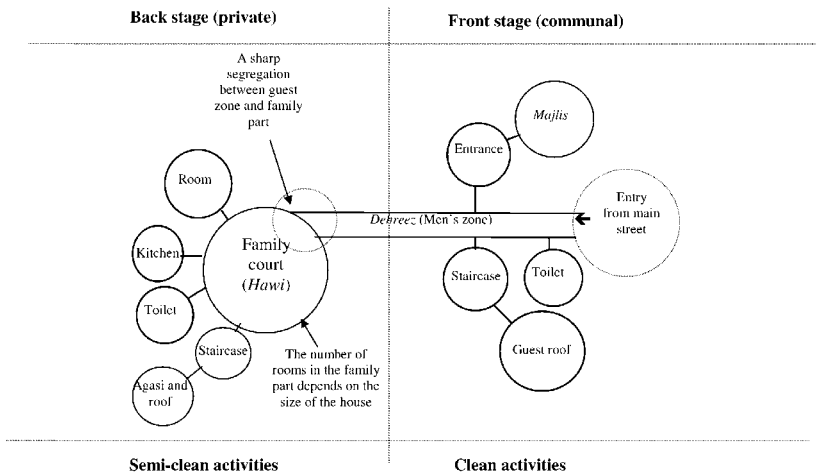


Fig. 1.19. The organisation of internal domestic space in the hybrid house of late 1950s.



Fig. 1.20. A number of hybrid houses contain traditional and new perceptual elements in the main façade. Source: Author.

One of the clear perceptual changes in the hybrid house is that the ornamentation became very minimal even in the main symbolic spaces such as the gateway, *majlis*, and courtyard. The *ruwshan* with its decorative and symbolic role completely disappeared. The *rusana* continued but in its utilitarian form. We can attribute these visual changes in the hybrid house type of the 1940s and 50s to the deterioration of traditional craftsmanship in the city of Hofuf. All traditional crafts were influenced by the new cheap imported articles. As a matter of fact, traditional crafts in Hofuf had been challenged

by the large western companies since the nineteenth century³⁸. However, people at that time were isolated and had very few commercial activities which maintained several crafts. This situation changed after the discovery of oil. In the 1950s, Abul Ela indicated that traditional crafts in Hofuf have ‘declined ... and only few people are engaged in them because of an abundance of cheap, imported articles’³⁹.

This study tries to understand the process of identification in the home environment. We have already noted in the foregoing discussion that a new identity had started to develop in the home environment of Hofuf, albeit that it is difficult to describe this new identity in detail since it was just emerging. It can be said, however, that people at the time we are considering used their past experiences to evaluate all new forms and concepts that had been introduced to their city (Fig. 1.21). The traditional associational identity continued almost as it was, though with some changes in the rituals of presenting coffee. In fact the coffee area disappeared in the houses of late 1950s, and although the ritual of serving coffee did not die out completely, this may be seen as symbolic of the new era. The traditional life style had been challenged by the changes all over Saudi Arabia, when many adults joined the government and took private jobs, which altered the daily routines and made it difficult for people to find time to gather and entertain in the *majlis*. Despite the above, however, in a general way the impact of the new images was limited to those who were directly influenced by western concepts at that time⁴⁰.

³⁸ Cheesman (1926) for example indicated that some of the traditional crafts in Hofuf had deteriorated. This was because ‘English commercial firms have gone to a country and found out what the people liked, and have produced it in exactly the form desired and at a much cheaper price than it can be made for locally’ (p. 79).

³⁹ Abul Ela, M.T. (1959) *A Geographical Study of Man and his Environment in Al Absa Province (Saudi Arabia)*, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Dublin, Trinity College, p. 228.

⁴⁰ Jarbawi (1981), argues that in the early impact of western culture on the Arab world, the ‘feeling of inferiority affected only specific sections and groups of society, and those were the

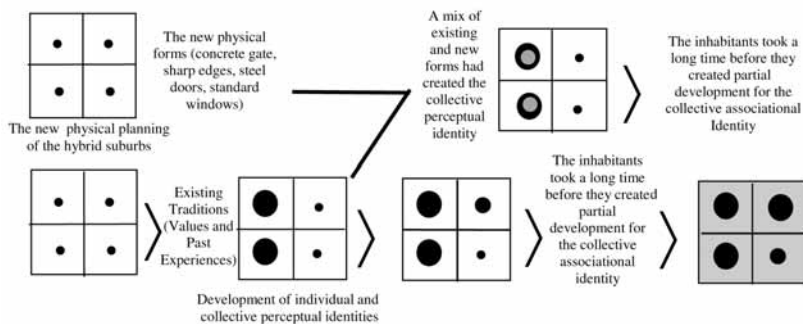


Fig 1.21: Process of identification in the hybrid neighbourhoods.

3. The transitional *fereej* system

The Saudi home environment in general has experienced radical changes since the discovery and export of oil in 1938. The socio-economic status of the Saudi citizen changed dramatically, which at the same time changed the way of living and produced a new daily routine. The *fereej* system was one among many cultural and physical targets for that change. This can be seen clearly from the foregoing discussion when the home environment in the hybrid neighbourhood took different forms in the late 1950's. What is really critical is what happened to the traditional home environment, which underwent such a severe transformation as to render it uninhabitable. It is relevant to this study to understand how the *fereej* system in the traditional home environment responded to those social and physical changes, and how it eventually re-emerged in the transitional neighbourhood.

The new roads ignored the social tissues that bound the traditional physical environment together. They divided the traditional quarters into small pieces each containing parts from

people who had exposure to the West ... The majority of Arabs, who were not sufficiently exposed to the West, remained isolated, traditional, and self-centered' (p. 185).

different *fereej*s. They broke the hidden social and physical boundaries, because the new physical boundaries divided the unitary mass of the traditional quarters. This situation created a chaotic physical and social environment which made the traditional home environment uninhabitable and thus people started moving from it to other places (Fig. 1.22).

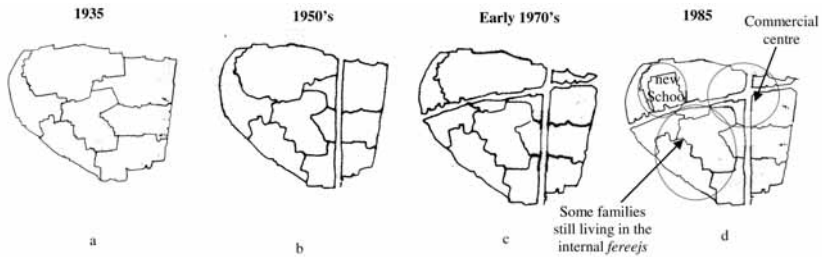


Fig. 1.22. Transformation of *Anna'athil* quarter: (a) The hidden boundaries of the *fereej*s in *Anna'athil* quarter. (b) A new road constructed in 1950's (dividing the *fereej*s and destroying the social tissues of the traditional home environment). (c) Another road was constructed in early 1970's (ignoring the physical and social system). (d) Major destruction occurred in the traditional areas in the 1980's, which left them uninhabitable. Source: Based on Al-Elawy, I. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 185; Aerial Map (1985), Municipality of Al-Hasa, and the researcher interviews and observational data.

Those families who were directly affected by the new development moved collectively into new suburbs and constructed small *fereej*s. For example, two small neighbourhoods appeared between 1960 and 1975, each neighbourhood was occupied by one *hamola*⁴¹. These two neighbourhoods were located on what had either been empty land between farms or actual farmland itself (see Fig. 1.24)⁴². It was during

⁴¹ The first suburb called *Albugsha* was developed in early 1960s. The second suburb called *Samba*, was also developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Both of them were very small (originally private palm gardens) which made it possible for them to be occupied entirely by one *hamola*.

⁴² For example *Samba*, one of the transitional neighbourhoods was originally a farm. In 1955, Vidal indicated that *samba* was still a garden. He said 'West, north, and south of the town

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 Hofuf in 1960 (Fig. 1.23)⁴³. 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.

Because the people of Hofuf preferred to live close to the old city, the farms around and inside the old city were burned or destroyed to use the lands for residential or commercial purposes⁴⁴. Al-Shuaiby noticed two forms working in the urban expansion of Hofuf at that time. The first, was 'outward extension', where new suburbs appeared here and there around the old city. The second was 'internal re-organisation', where the government started to implement comprehensive planning for the existing residential settlements⁴⁵.

are a few palm gardens owned by wealthy people, more for relaxation than for economic reasons. Such are, for instance, al-Kubainiyah, al-Bahairah, and particularly Samhah'. (p. 95).

⁴³ Al-Shuaiby, A. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 229. This plan concentrated on improving the transportation system of the city and controlling its urban growth. The plan divided the city into two residential zones. In the first zone, the traditional areas, there were no building regulations developed and it was left for the people to practice the traditional system they knew. The second zone, where the new suburbs were located, was controlled by the municipality by introducing a new system for land subdivision. The block sizes were 50-80m long by 40m wide, and the plot size about 10-25m by 7-10m wide.

⁴⁴ The semi-planned hybrid settlements continued to grow at that time. Because old Hofuf was surrounded by agricultural lands, the newly developed residential settlements appeared very isolated from each other. The owners of these farms burned and cut the palm trees and divided the land to sell them for residential purposes. For example Al-Shuaiby (1976) indicates that *Almazrou'iyyah* and *Almansour'iyya* 'occupy previously farms or wasteland'. (p. 225). Vidal (1955) indicates that the farms changed to residential areas. He states: 'Here and there throughout the al-Ruqayyiqah area are a few palm gardens and some vegetable plots. Between them clusters of houses have arisen, which show a tendency to grow towards one another, so that if this trend continues and the total population of al-Ruqayyiqah continues to grow as it has, particularly over the past four or five years, it can be predicted that in the near future the whole suburb will form a continuum and will probably grow to the southwestern edge of the Hofuf limit'. (p. 94).

⁴⁵ Al-Shuaiby, A. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 229.

People who lived in traditional dwellings which were far from the new streets remained in their houses until 1975 when the government started to subsidise private housing by establishing the Real Estate Development Fund in 1975 to provide people with interest-free loans to build new private houses. Because the *fereej* system in the traditional home environment had deteriorated, people were ready to move; therefore, they used this opportunity to reproduce their new *fereej*s. Thus there was 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 1960's and early 70's still was higher than hybrid and transitional neighbourhoods⁴⁶. This can be attributed to the fact that the quality of life was acceptable in the traditional *fereej*s. This was not the case after 1975 when the opportunity to move became possible after the introduction of governmental subsidies for private houses.

Every *hamola* moved and concentrated in one suburb. This is not to say that the whole suburb was occupied by one *hamola*, but that every *hamola* tried to reorganise itself and defined its territory within new suburbs. The direction of migration was, in most of the cases, according to the location of the *hamola* in the traditional quarters. For example, those who lived in the southeast (southern *Arrif'a*) moved to the south-eastern neighbourhoods. The same was true for the clans who had lived in the northeast (northern *Arrif'a*) and southwest (*Anna'athil*). Those who had lived in the northwest (*Alkut*) moved to the south and southwest because the northwestern boundary was a cemetery (Fig. 1.24)⁴⁷.

⁴⁶ Al-Elawy, I. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 359.

⁴⁷ It is a phenomenon in the contemporary home environment in Hofuf that people who come from the same traditional quarter prefer to live together. This phenomenon was noticed by the researcher in several occasions. This may be attributed to the fact that many *hamolas* in every traditional quarter had an inter-marriage relationship which encouraged them later to



a

b

Fig. 1.23. Impact of government developments on the hybrid neighbourhoods. a) Hofuf 1960 (before governmental involvement). b) Hofuf 1967 (After governmental involvement). Source: Aramco.

move to the same neighbourhood. This reason is also supported by another social convention in Hofuf. That is that women are fully dependent on men to drive them to visit their relatives; therefore, by living in the same neighbourhood, men will not have to do this.

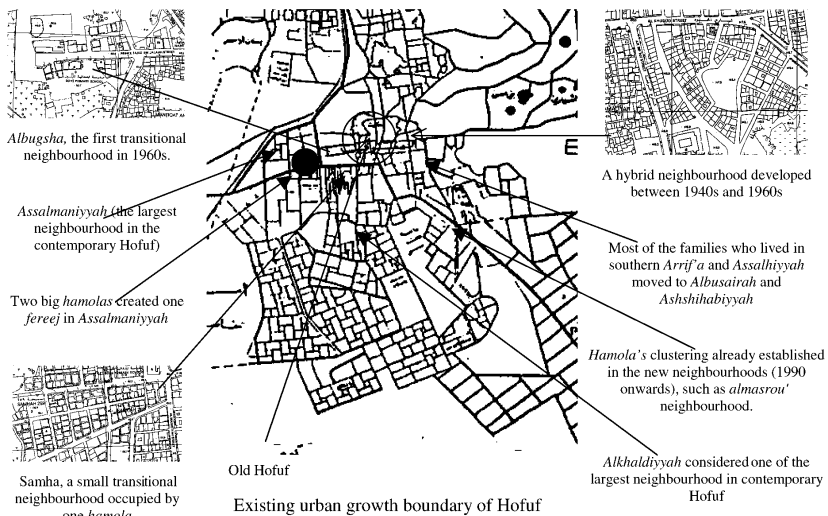


Fig. 1.24. The redistribution of the traditional *hamolas* in Hofuf's contemporary home environment. Source: Author (the maps from the municipality of Al-Hasa)

3.1 The Dwelling in the Transitional Fereej

The acceleration of change continued to drive people from their old traditions and experiences. The growth of the new identity which appeared in the 1950's houses continued in the 1960's and early 1970's houses. This can be seen from the increasing number of villas. Table 1.4 shows that 10.6% of the houses in Al-Hasa in 1975 were detached houses. The villa type at that time was perceived by local people in Hofuf as a symbol of wealth and modernity especially because the construction material was concrete.

**Table 1.4: House types in Al-Hasa Region (1975)
(around 16000 houses)**

House Type	Detached (villa)	Non detached	Others
Number of houses	1698	13254	1052
%	10.6	82.8	6.6

Source: Developed from Candilis (1976) *Master Plan of Al-Hasa*, p. 37

However, the name ‘villa’ was not used in Hofuf in the early 1970s and instead people used the name ‘*bayt musallah*’ which means the house constructed entirely of concrete⁴⁸. As we have mentioned earlier, a 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 1960’s and 70’s when the use of mud in construction stopped completely (Table 1.5)⁴⁹. This indicates how visual taste of the local people was influenced by the new materials, which were associated from the beginning with wealth and education⁵⁰.

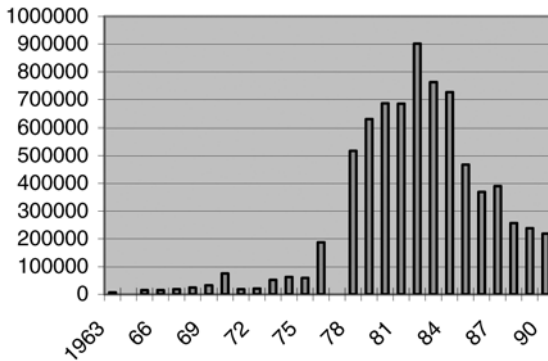
⁴⁸ Al-Shuaiby (1976) mentions that in Hofuf ‘the villas ... are situated almost entirely in the areas of new development and [only] few houses of this type, designed in modern styles’ (p. 237).

⁴⁹ Tyeb (1983) 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).

⁵⁰ Al-Elawy (1976), indicates that in Hofuf’s houses of 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).

Table 1.5 Building Materials used in Hofuf (1972)

Total Number of Imported Air-conditioners to Saudi Arabia



Source: Ministry of Finance, Central Department of Statistics
(Al-Shuaibi, A. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 237).

Similar to the *nuss-musallab* type, the *musallab* 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 (Fig. 1.25)⁵¹. This major change is noticed by Al-Elawy (1976) when he said that in the recent houses of Hofuf:

‘The traditional courtyard has now become a central sealed hall, separated from outside. Rooms are arranged in an orderly manner around this central hall, while windows open to the outside world for

⁵¹ As a matter of fact, many traditional names disappeared in the transitional house. The only names remaining were *majlis*, *debreez*, and *muraba'a*. Changing the names can be considered as one of the main indicators that indicate the emergence and growth of the new identity in Hofuf's home environment in the 1950's, 60's, and 70's.

fresh air and light, but keep out intruding eyes by being above the height of the average tall man... Some houses even have wooden shutters in front of their windows through which air and light can come: a family can thus enjoy the pleasant scene outside without being seen ...⁵²

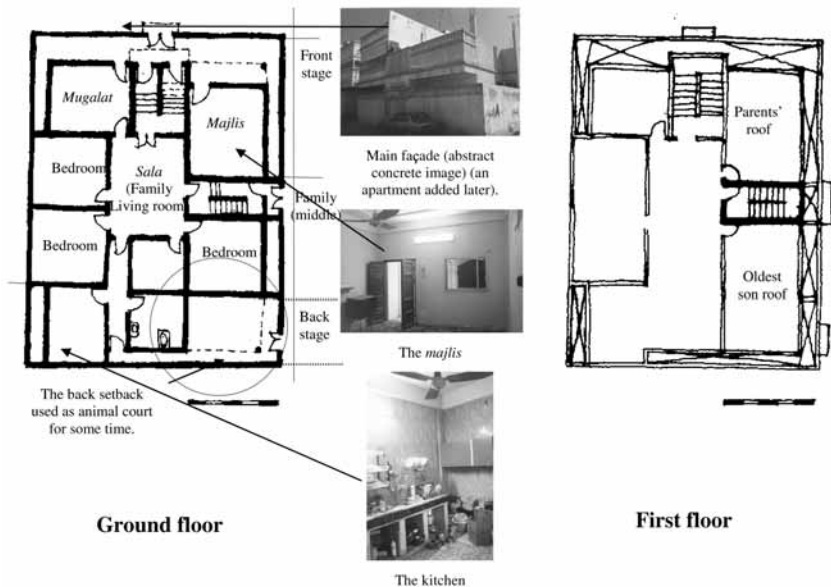


Fig. 1.25. A transitional house constructed in 1960's in *Albugsha* neighbourhood.
Source: Author.

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 and made it possible for people to

⁵² Al-Elawy, I. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 364.

change their courtyard into a sealed hall (Fig. 1.26)⁵³. Al-Elawy notices how the air conditioner influenced the spatial organisation of the private houses in Hofuf at that time. He states:

‘The house plan need no longer be directed by environmental factors. Air conditioning equipment can cool a house in summer and keep it warm in winter, hence there is no need to keep the courtyard... Modern equipment has superseded it’⁵⁴.

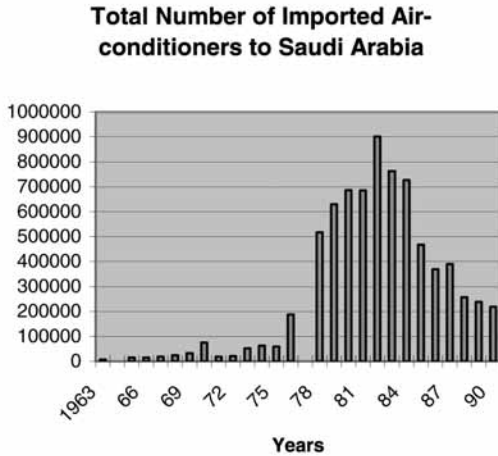


Fig. 1.26. The number of imported air-conditioners to Saudi Arabia.
Source: Developed from the Annual Statistical Reports,
Department of Statistics, Ministry of Commerce⁵⁵.

The impact of modern technology was not limited to spatial change only. Although the kitchen and toilet remained in the back

⁵³ 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. Al-Naim, M. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁵⁴ Al-Elawy, I. (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 364.

⁵⁵ Fig. 1.26, 1.27, and 1.28 were prepared by Samer Akbar.

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 (Fig. 1.27). The wooden *namlīyyah* was replaced in some houses by a set of cabinets and counters fixed on one or two walls of the kitchen. The toilet was displaced from a place adjacent to the animal court in the traditional and early hybrid houses to the front setback to serve the guests, and to a place near the kitchen to serve the family. Modern sanitary equipment made it possible for people to make this change (Fig. 1.28)⁵⁶.

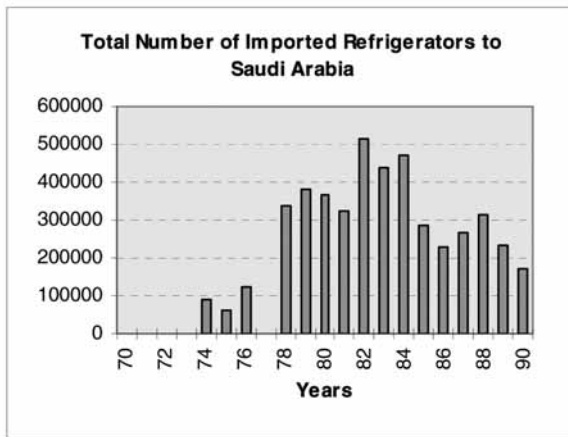


Fig. 1.27. The number of imported refrigerators to Saudi Arabia. Source: Developed from the Annual Statistical Reports, Ministry of Commerce, Department of Statistics.

⁵⁶ These changes influenced the traditional and early hybrid houses. For example, the animal space in the traditional house was partially transformed by taking parts of it to build a modern kitchen and toilets. See Al-Naim, M. (1993), *op. cit.*, p. 113.

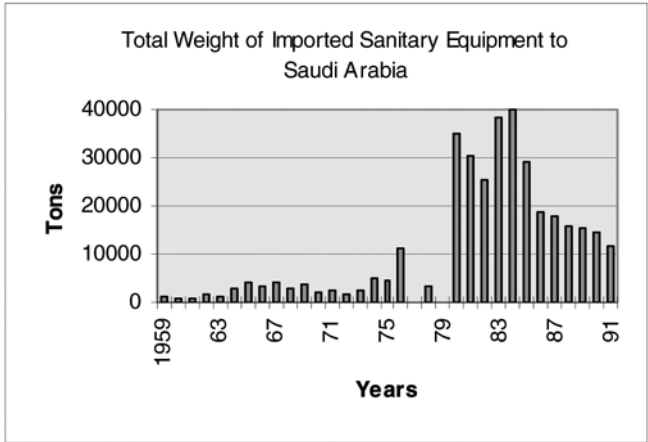


Fig. 1.28. The weight of imported items of sanitary equipment to Saudi Arabia.
 Source: Developed from the Annual Statistical Reports,
 Ministry of Commerce, Department of Statistics.

Although major changes occurred in the visual and spatial aspects of private homes in Hofuf, people resisted the change and produced a house type consisting of a mix of old and new elements. The covered family hall was similar in its function to the traditional courtyard. It is possible to say that there was a clear continuity in the use of internal spaces which indicates that a minimum change had occurred in people's lifestyle. The major social change took place in the rituals and ceremonies of the male reception spaces. The desire to get a regular government job led to the abandonment of the traditional coffee rituals. This became very clear when the coffee place completely disappeared from the 1970's houses. As a result, the traditional three zones of the *majlis* hall became less important from the visual point of view but the associational meaning was still in people's mind.

The *musallah* house witnessed also the use of modern sofas and chairs in the *majlis* hall. The inhabitants of Hofuf had used chairs in their traditional and hybrid *majlises* (see Fig. 1.20), but this was

limited to well-to-do people. What happened in the transitional house was totally different. The use of modern sofas and chairs became associated with family status. One of the interesting observations about the imported chairs is that they were compatible with the traditional way of furnishing the *majlis* hall⁵⁷. Long seats with a corner table were a common furniture arrangement at that time. The seats were arranged in a U shape while two corner tables to emphasise the front zone of the *majlis* hall (Fig. 1.29). This is not to say that every transitional *majlis* was furnished with seats. But the aim here is to indicate the main changes in people's image and how they resisted or absorbed new forms. As a matter of fact, many transitional *majlises* were furnished with mattresses and cushions.

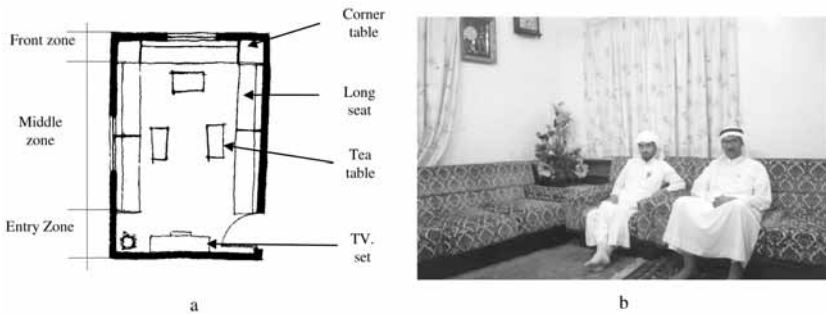


Fig. 1.29. a) A typical transitional *majlis* (the front zone minimised to the front seats only). b) *Majlis* of a *Musallah* House in *Alkut* (one of the early households who imported modern sofas and chairs in Hofuf (imported from Kuwait). Source: Author.

Another space had been developed in the transitional house. That is the *mugalat* (or *mugallat*), 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

⁵⁷ This is because most of the furniture was imported from Kuwait and Iran. Many informants indicated that in 1960s and 70s they travelled to Kuwait and visited the furniture factories and the furniture dealers and selected their furniture.

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 in Hofuf. This space was not completely new because in the traditional house, and especially in the *majlis* type of the two storeys' height, more than one space was connected with the *majlis* hall, one of them called *mugallat*. 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.

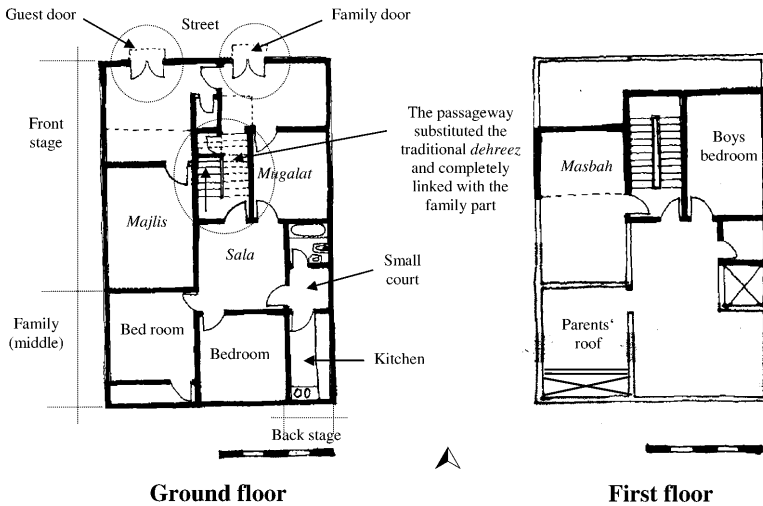


Fig. 1.30. A transitional house built in early 1970's in *Adduraibiyah* neighbourhood. Source: Author.

It is possible to say that the people of Hofuf insisted on the traditional associational meanings that oriented them in the transitional house. The spatial organisation 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 organisation of the transitional house seems more traditional than the *nuss-musallah* type in the 1950's. 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 neighbourhood 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 (Fig. 1.30).

The introduction of the setback regulations changed the front part of the transitional house in both spatial and visual aspects. Different from all house types in Hofuf, the *musallah* house developed without the traditional *debreez*. In fact, people started to relinquish the traditional entrance hall in the 1950s when the *nuss-musallah* type included one entrance hall used as guest zone. The *musallah* house design completely ignored the traditional way of approaching the house and instead the front setback was used to emphasise the *majlis* 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 *debreez*. This linked the *majlis* hall with external spaces, at the same time preserving the family part from intruders' eyes (Fig. 1.31). The interesting thing here is that people were still not sure which elements of the traditional house they needed to keep, which was clearly seen when the traditional entrance hall for guests was kept in the 1950s houses, while the family one was reproduced in 1960s and 70s houses. This phenomenon has continued even in the contemporary house, as we will see in the next chapter.

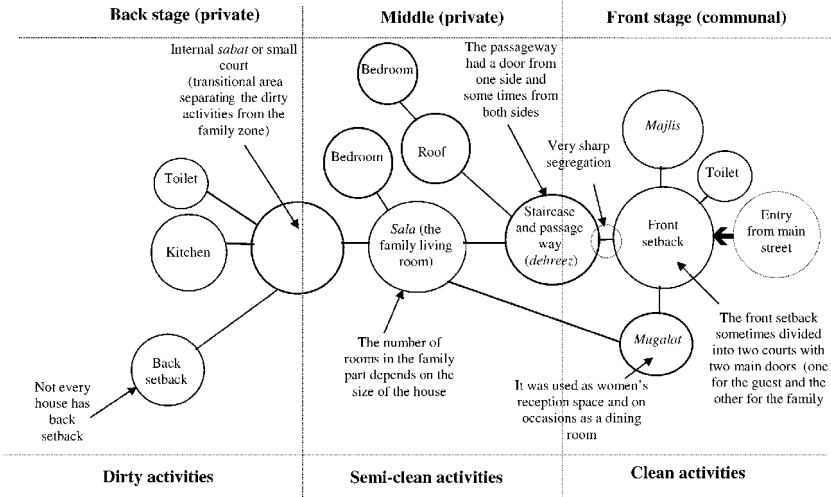


Fig. 1.31. The organisation of the internal domestic space of the transitional house.

From the visual and spatial perspective, the above mentioned solution was completely different from the traditional one, especially in that the *majlis* hall was physically separated from the external space by the existence of the front setback in between. Still, the way that people treated the front organisation showed the influence of past experiences, which led them to link the guest rooms with the external environment and at the same time maintain the family privacy. One of the informants, for example, said ‘I asked the municipality engineer to design my house [this was in the late 1960’s] but I wasn’t convinced by what he did for me. Later I made a sketch for the house and I said to him, “I want this”’. The role of the architect at that time was very minor because they cared only about the technical aspects of the concrete while the real design was made by people. This is why there was a common abstract façade for the transitional house. The emphasis was on spatial organisation rather

than the visual quality of the house because the concrete image was enough for perceptual identity at that time (Fig. 1.32).



Fig. 1.32. The front façade of the transitional house indicates how concrete became a symbol of social status in the 1960's. An abstract concrete façade was the common perceptual image in the transitional house. Source: Author.

The gateway continued to play its symbolic role. The new material, concrete, made it easy for people to produce a simple gate, but with a full integration with the house fence (Fig. 1.33). One of the new images that are associated with the transitional gate was the appearance of wooden or metal signs fixed either in the top or on the side of the gate carrying the name of the owner. In some houses two signs were used, one for the guest door and the other for the family door. Both signs indicated the name of the owner and informed the visitor about which door he should use to approach the *majlis*.



Fig. 1.33. A number of transitional house gateways. Source: Author.

Because the male reception spaces worked for a long time as mediator between the family and the community, there was a need to increase the link between the *majlis* hall and the external environment, which had been severely reduced by the existence of the front setback. In this sense, we can argue that people introduced the second door, which later became a common phenomenon, to retrieve the external status of the *majlis*. The guest door is usually open if there is a guest in the house. Any new guest will be oriented

by the sign in the gate to the guest space, and can enter the house by shouting the name of the owner as in the traditional home environment.

In the transitional house there was a need to substitute the visual symbolic meanings that existed in the traditional house, especially those whose function linked inside with outside. Those strong associational meanings constituted the evaluation criteria that guided Hofuf's people in the 1960s and 70s to develop new solutions to substitute those important symbols. People tried to localise the new forms and spatial concepts by embodying their traditional associational meanings in them.



Fig. 1.34. Attempts by inhabitants of the transitional house in the 1970's to decorate their house façades (their attempts appeared when concrete became the only material for construction). Source: Author.

Visually, the façade of the transitional house passed through two stages. The first stage, as we have discussed, could be seen when the house façade was only an abstract cement plaster or concrete block surface. This plain façade indicates the period when people of Hofuf were attracted to concrete as a material reflecting wealth and modernity. The second stage was seen in the late seventies when concrete lost its social meaning. This was because it became a common construction material. People at that time started to plaster

and paint the façades of their houses. The façades of the transitional houses of the 1970s contain many carved decorations. The cement façade became a medium for people to express their individual (family) perceptual identity (Fig. 1.34, and 1.35).



Fig. 1.35. The cement plastered used as a decoration medium to personalise the house. Source: Author.

What happened in the transitional neighbourhoods 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 regulations⁵⁸, people selected what was suitable for their lifestyle. This flexibility was coupled with the collective move of members of some *hamolas* to establish a kind of homogeneous *fereej* in the transitional neighbourhood. This is not to say that people reproduced an identical traditional *fereej*, but the desire for clustering coupled with desire to be modern created new home environments consisting of old and new.

It is clear that a new perceptual identity developed in the transitional home environment. However, we notice the attempts of

⁵⁸ The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs was established in 1975. For more detail see the second Chapter in volume I.

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 and the availability of food in the nearby grocery shops which changed the whole family lifestyle away from dependence on producing one’s own food. All these social and physical changes paved the way for the new identity, which appeared in the 1940’s and 50’s to grow and dominate the later home environments in Hofuf (Fig. 1.36).

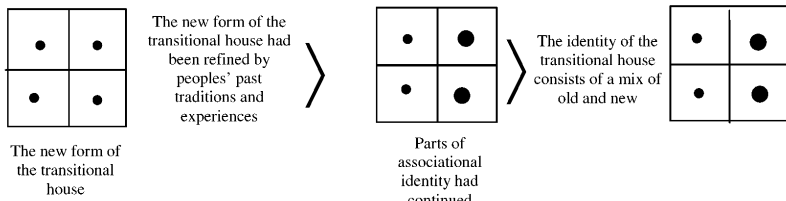


Fig. 1.36. The growth of the new identity in Hofuf’s home environment.

4. Contemporary forms of the *fereej* system

The economic growth in Saudi Arabia encouraged the government to start implementing five-year development plans, from 1970, in order to benefit from the oil revenues. 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 the transformation of the physical characteristics of all Saudi cities. The national income increased from 8.7 billion dollars in 1973 to 39.2 billion dollars in 1974⁵⁹.

Several master plans were initiated for all Saudi cities between 1967 and 1976. Those plans institutionalised the gridiron land subdivision and setbacks as the only way to deal with the home

⁵⁹ Tayeb, F. (1983), *op. cit.*, p. 59.

environment at its macro and micro levels. The villa became the only house type built in Saudi Arabia since 1975. The process of 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 let the family, at the micro level, adapt to changing life circumstances.

This section tries to introduce the contemporary home environment in Hofuf, while the next chapter will analyse how the contemporary private home in Hofuf took its recent form. The emphasis is on the contemporary form of the *fereej* system especially after the collective move from the traditional areas after 1975. The assumption here is that, because in Hofuf there was an extensive move from the traditional areas to a new suburb after 1975, people had carried their past experiences and tried to mobilise them in their contemporary houses. Alkhars, for example, found that almost 55% of the residents of *Alkhaldiyyah* neighbourhood (one of the main contemporary neighbourhoods in Hofuf) originally came from old Hofuf⁶⁰. This suggests that the concept of the traditional *fereej* played a role in people's aggregation or segregation in the contemporary neighbourhood.

It is one of the main goals of this study to understand the characteristics of the contemporary neighbourhoods in Hofuf. At the family level, the economic independence encouraged young men to separate from their family houses and create nuclear families. For example, income per capita increased in the last two decades from SR

⁶⁰ Alkhars, S. (1990) *Community Structure and Residential Satisfaction in a Transitional Urban Environment: With the Emphasis on Residential Relocation. The Case Study of Al-Hasa*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Dhahran, King Fahad University of Petroleum and Minerals, p. 76.

600 to SR 6000 per month⁶¹. This increased the individual expenditure and brought a new lifestyle for the family. This can be seen from the increase in the living expenses of a family consisting of six persons which was in 1975 SR 26,400, and increased to SR 83,400 in 1985⁶². This can be linked to the regular income of families. Alkhars found that more than 63% of the families in *Alkhalidiyyah* had monthly income of SR 6,000-15,000 (Table 1.6). This changed several aspects of people's lifestyle. Owning a car, for example, became part of people's identity. Some households in *Alkhalidiyyah* neighbourhood own five or more cars, while at least two cars are owned by every household (Table 1.7).

Table 1.6. Income group in *Alkhalidiyyah* neighbourhood (per month)

Income (SR)	3000	3000-6000	6000-9000	9000-15000
%	9.09	27.27	27.27	36.36

Source: Developed from Alkhars, S. (1990), *op. cit.*, p. 83.

Table 1.7. Number of automobiles per household in *Alkhalidiyyah* neighbourhood

Number of Automobiles	1	2	3	4	5+
%	0.00	45.45	18.18	27.27	9.09

Source: Developed from *Ibid.*, p. 84.

In order to describe the identity of the contemporary home in Hofuf, it is essential to consider the economic changes at the family

⁶¹ Hamdan, S. (1990), *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15.

⁶² Shata, A. (1985) *Studies in Saudi Society*, (publisher not mentioned) (Arabic).

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 in Hofuf many extended families still live in the same house.

Table 1.8: Household size in Al-Hasa region (1975)

Number of People	Number of households	%
1	681	4.2
2	905	5.6
3	1127	7.0
4	1364	8.5
5	1553	9.7
6	1659	10.3
7	1859	11.6
8	1969	12.3
9	1385	8.6
10	1590	9.9
11	725	4.5
more	1244	6.8
Total (rounded)	16000	100

Source: Candilis (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 37

In the last two decades, the family size in Hofuf has continued much the same. The family size was 6.9 persons in 1975⁶³ (see Table 1.8) while in 1996 the family size became 7.1 persons (Table 1.9). This can be linked to what AlKhars (1990) found in *Alkhalidiyyah* neighbourhood that, 45.45% of the residents have at least one married son, and 60% of these live with the family in the same house⁶⁴. It is clear that this attitude has increased the size of the contemporary house in Hofuf, especially now that every person in the family likes to have her/his own private room. Table 1.10, shows that more than 50% of the contemporary houses in Hofuf contain more than 5 rooms.

Table 1.9: Size of the household in Hofuf in 1996 (1612 families)

Size of the Household	1	2-4	5-6	7-9	10-12	+12
Number of the household	29	373	346	481	265	118
%	1.8	23.1	21.5	29.8	16.4	7.4

Source: Developed from Al-Khrajji, S. (1996) *Master Plan of Al-Hasa* (Report of the Basic Data, Vol.2), p. 219 (Arabic).

Table 1.10: House size in Hofuf in 1996 (1612 families)

Number of Rooms	1-2	3-4	5-6	+7
Number of Houses	170	610	417	415
%	10.6	37.8	25.9	25.7

Source: Developed from Ibid., (Report of the Basic Data, Vol.3), p. 587 (Arabic).

⁶³ Candilis (1976), *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 91.

In fact there is some continuity of the old social structure, but not as strong as in traditional society. Nowadays, newly married couples prefer to have a separate house. To allow for this, people developed physical solutions on their houses by creating one or two apartments in the first floor of their villas. An apartment is usually used as an additional income source by renting it out until the oldest son gets married, when he would use it 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 (Fig. 1.37). This solution has been developed recently by people to help their young sons economically by providing them free houses and to guarantee that at least one of their sons will stay with them.

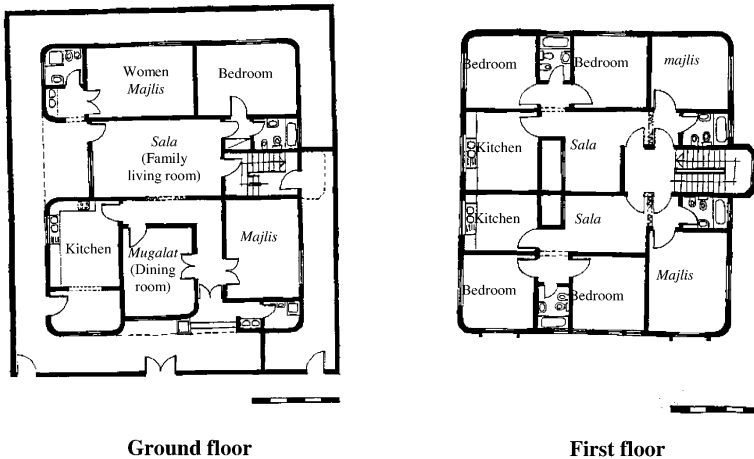


Fig. 1.37. One of the contemporary houses which consists of a villa style on the ground floor and two apartments in the first floor. Source: Author.

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 children⁶⁵. The *fereej* system in 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 socialise 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 *fereej* boundary and practised 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 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 in Hofuf 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 *fereej* system. Although the flexibility that existed in the traditional home environment has decreased due to regulations which forced people to build individual dwellings as well as stopped them from making changes to their houses, people persisted in their way of socialising and resisted the changes by reorganising themselves in the new suburbs.

Living as groups is considered by the people of Hofuf to be very important. For example, in one neighbourhood (*Assalmaniyyah*) two *hamolas* who used to live as one group in the past moved from the old city into this suburb and formed one big

⁶⁵ 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.

fereej in the 1980s⁶⁶. The land value of this cluster is almost double that of the other plots in the same suburb. People in the area called this cluster (*bulik Annar*) ‘the fire block’, due to the high value of the lands. What made people of these two clans persist in living together, even if it cost them double the cost of living separately elsewhere is the social quality of the area. In this contemporary *fereej* people know each other; women visit each other safely; children play outside. The sense of home is very high and a definition of place and people has been established or reproduced.

Even in *Alkhaldiyyah* neighbourhood, the clustering existed but not as strongly as *Assalmaniyyah*. This is because those *hamolas* who moved to *Alkhaldiyyah* were very small which make their *fereej* limited to one or two blocks (see Fig. 1.40). Alkhars found that more than 36% of the *Alkhaldiyyah* residents know their neighbours very well (Table 1.11), while he found that more than 63% have a friendly relationship with their neighbours (Table 1.12). This indicates that the desire to be within a group has continued even between small *hamolas* who moved directly from the traditional areas.

⁶⁶ It was very important for this study to concentrate on one neighbourhood and study people’s environmental behaviour in the external domestic space. This is because it is impossible to study every neighbourhood. Also, the study aims to understand how people preserve or change their attitudes towards their home environment. In this sense, *Assalmaniyyah* suburb was selected because, firstly, the construction in this neighbourhood took place from the early 1980’s until today. There are a number of houses under construction at the time of fieldwork. The second reason is that it has the potential to enable the researcher to trace the continuity and change of people’s behaviour in the external spaces because most of the inhabitants of the *fereej*s under study in the traditional and subsequent home environment had moved to *Assalmaniyyah* and formed their new clusters. This neighbourhood can be divided into three main clusters. The first cluster is occupied by those families who moved from *Arrigayga*, and specifically from the Bedouin settlements. The second cluster is a general one used by those families who moved from different areas and from different families. The last cluster is occupied by two large *hamolas*. The last part is called by the inhabitants ‘*Bulik Annar*’.

Table 1.11. Knowing about neighbours in *Alkbaldiyyab* neighbourhood

Knowing about Neighbours	Much	Little	Very little	Nothing
%	36.36	45.45	9.09	9.09

Source: Developed from Alkhars(1990), *op. cit.*, p. 92.

Table 1.12. Relationship with people in *Alkbaldiyyab* neighbourhood

Relationship	Friendly	Average	Unfriendly
%	63.64	27.27	9.09

Source: Developed from Ibid., p. 97.

This is not the only way that people have tried to maintain the form of the traditional extended family; some people tried to reproduce the traditional *fereej* in their new neighbourhoods. This has been done in one case by building a group of villas owned by a man and his sons. The main house is considered by all as the family house, while every son has his own house. All these houses are connected by one internal passageway to allow the women to visit each other without actually leaving home (Fig. 1.38).

All the family members gather in the family house every night and have their dinner together. Also, the father sits in his *majlis* (men's reception space) and a number of his sons, grandsons, clan members, and males from related clans visit him between *Asr* and *Maghrab* prayers (4-6 pm) (Fig. 7.39). The internal passageway can be seen as a substitution for the roof routes which existed in the traditional *fereej*s. This passageway is used by the children as a safe playing area. Every family knows the boundaries that their children are playing within.

The father and sons interact cohesively, as one family, with the community. Although every house has a *majlis* hall, the main *majlis* was the only place that was used symbolically to link every one in the family with the external environment. In fact they used their individual *majlises* when a visitor calls on at any time when the main *majlis* is not open. The interesting point here is that, although sons rarely use their own *majlises*, they have insisted on having individual *majlis* because they cannot imagine their houses without a *majlis* hall.

In the above example, all the family members are connected physically and socially. This is a clear attempt to overcome the physical and legal constraints of the contemporary home environment in Hofuf and reproduce a modern form of *fereej* system.

However, it requires a huge budget and not every family can afford it. It is common now to find different clustering forms for extended families in contemporary neighbourhoods. They share one goal, that is living as a group and providing maximum freedom for women and children. Even if the family members are physically living apart from each other, at least one day per week they gather in

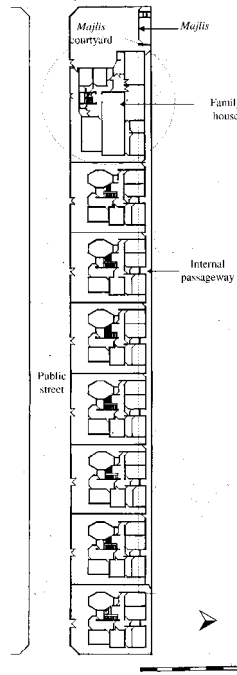


Fig. 1.38. Reproducing a traditional *fereej* in the contemporary home environment in Hofuf (a group of villas in *Almasrou'* neighbourhood). Source: Author.

the family house and have lunch or dinner together. The family house in this situation becomes a symbol for the extended family⁶⁷.

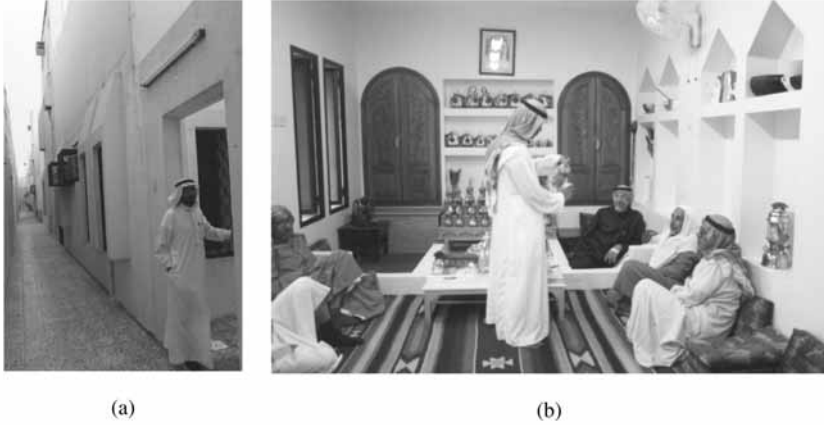


Fig. 1.39. (a) The internal passageway connecting all the houses physically and socially and providing women and children with maximum freedom. (b) All the eight houses are connected by one *majlis* (male reception space), which makes them interact with the community as one group.

Clustering in contemporary Hofuf is not limited to certain *hamola* or restricted to one area; it exists in every new neighbourhood. We can say that the traditional community system has continued despite all the constraints of regulations and physical planning during the last four decades. The traditional clans are now redistributed in the new neighbourhoods, but with clear physical boundaries and less physical connectedness (Fig. 1.40).

⁶⁷ 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.

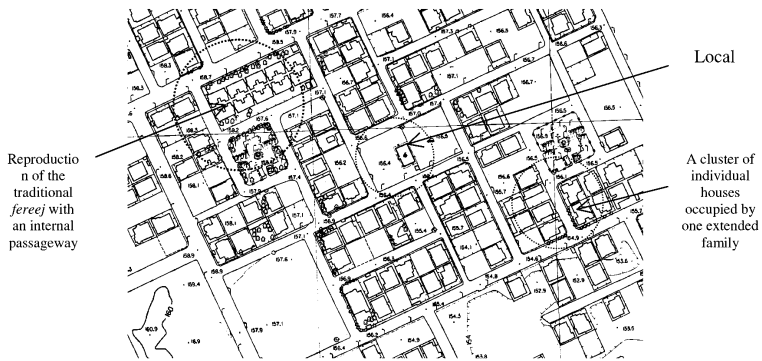


Fig. 1.40. Clustering in *Alkhaldiyyah* neighbourhood.

Source: Based on aerial map (1985), Municipality of Al-Hasa and the pilot study.

5. Summary

The concept of change and resistance has been discussed in the first two chapters of volume I. We suggested that it was natural for people to resist innovations because they desire what they know. This is not the only determining factor in people's reaction to innovations, for in fact they are often accepted, but accepted and adapted in existing such a way as to fall in line with people's existing concepts and ideas. In some cases old meanings are attached to new forms in order to maintain certain some important rituals in the home environment.

For instance when we discussed the process of identification in *Assalbiyyah* in the early 20th century, we found that people absorbed the gridiron pattern and re-established the collective perceptual and associational identities immediately because there was maximum flexibility in forming the internal context of the home environment. This was not the case when this flexibility was reduced in the post-oil neighbourhoods. We can, then, argue that the more the home environment is characterised by flexibility and is formed by the

inhabitants themselves, the more readily the collective perceptual and associational identities are established.

One interesting point to emerge is that people used their past experience to interact with ideas and forms in the 1960s and 1970s in a way that enabled them to maintain their rituals and their relationship with the community even when the external characteristics of the home environment, and their house itself, changed. The researcher believes that an understanding of this hidden mechanism in the home environment will help to develop more responsive policies in the future, which will consider what is going on at ground level.

At the house level, a new identity has been emerging since the 1940s. The private house form in Hofuf has responded to this identity. Its form development was a very clear illustration of the tension between the desire to be modern and the strong long standing values, images, and experiences. This can be seen from the early impact of Aramco's house image when the people of Hofuf were fascinated by the new image but they persisted in their old experiences. The house type of the 1940s, for example, was almost traditional despite the fact that people employed a new way to link the *majlis* hall with the external environment. The house of the 1950s indicated some growth of the new identity. The animal part disappeared and the *debreez* was minimised to one zone. The coffee spaces disappeared from the *majlis* hall, but still the male reception spaces continued in their symbolic roles by occupying the front stage. The new identity continued in its growth in the transitional house. This was achieved by changing the house façades and the relationship between the front stage and the external spaces. The traditional courtyard was transformed into a sealed hall with a function, other than climatic, as the traditional courtyard.

The identity of Hofuf's home environment in the 1970's mainly consisted of more new perceptual elements and more traditional associational meanings. This indicates that the people of Hofuf preferred change and modern technology, but also that they

persisted in their core values. This tension in people’s minds played a part in every decision they made in their home environment.

Because reception spaces worked for a long time as mediators between the family and community, people mobilised their traditional experiences in their new homes. These reception spaces were considered the key spaces which give the private home in Hofuf its identity. The *majlis* is still, however, seen by people as representative of the whole house (Fig. 1.41), as it was in the traditional home environment when people said ‘*Almajlis wajihat arrajal*’.



Fig. 1.41. A cartoon published in Al-Riyadh newspaper in 26-2-98 (No. 10839) shows two men one of whom points out to the other the effort that he put in designing his house. The other man’s response is ‘whether you used stone or marble, the whole story is *majlis*, *mugalat*, and toilet’. This indicates importance of the male reception spaces in contemporary houses in Saudi Arabia.

Did the male reception spaces continue with their symbolic function or did new spaces develop in the last two decades? The next chapter, on the identity of the contemporary private home in Hofuf, will address both these questions. The emphasis will be, as in the previous chapters, on those spaces that had been used by people to express their individual and collective perceptual and associational identities.

CONTINUITY OF IDENTITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY HOME ENVIRONMENT

1. Prologue

It is difficult to understand how the people of the Gulf cities re-produced their own *fereej*s in their contemporary home environment without considering their attitudes towards the changes that took place since the 1940's. As Lomax and Berkowitz mentioned: 'The ways of a people – its economic, affective, political, communicative, and expressive systems – are learned and may be changed by each succeeding generation'⁶⁸. They discussed the 'cultural hypothesis', which suggests 'that most human behaviour is determined by complex patterns of learned behaviour transmitted through the centuries in the same territory'⁶⁹. Werner supports this when she said 'time had been an important – albeit implicit – part of research on interpersonal relationships and theories of the meaning and use of homes'⁷⁰. As we noticed, in the foregoing discussion, establishing group identity was one of the fundamental issues that the people of contemporary Gulf cities strove to accomplish in every new home environment. This was true when clustering and re-producing the

⁶⁸ Lomax, A. & Berkowitz, N. (1973), *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁷⁰ Werner, C.M. (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 171.

fereej system became an organisational factor in the contemporary home environment.

In the introduction of this work (volume I) we hypothesised that home environment in the Gulf had been refined by continued traditions (socio-cultural values and past experiences). We suggested that even when external and technocratic forces were imposed on the home environment some continuity for the old traditions was noticed. We attributed this phenomenon to the fact that the people in the Gulf had resisted and refined the new forms in order to localise them.

In this chapter, we will continue in our argument. The assumption here is that people continued in using their traditions in refining their houses. It is obvious that the change after 1975 was drastic and irresistible but still, as we suggested, we believe that people had used their past traditions as criteria for evaluating new house forms. This time the sources of the house image was produced by architects who always think about fantasy and individual designs. This chapter, however, is not about criticising the role of the architects in the contemporary home environment in Hofuf; rather it is about the unique relationship that the people of Hofuf had developed with their contemporary private homes. It is about the resistance that people had imposed to control the unlimited imagination of designers in the last two decades.

2. Design profession and the contemporary private home in the Gulf

It is difficult to understand how the private home in the Gulf took its recent form without considering the impact of the design profession on the contemporary home environment. We have mentioned that the design profession before 1975 was not yet developed in region. In Hofuf, for example, local people either asked technical help from the municipality engineers or prepared their home designs in one of the design offices in the nearest cities, Dammam and Khobar. This led, as we have said, to the fact that the spatial organisation of the private home remained with a minimum

change. However, a new era came in after 1975. This was clearly seen from the increase of governmental involvement in the physical environment. Now no one can build his house without having full architectural and technical documents from a licensed design office.

In the late 1970s few local design offices were established in the region⁷¹. Most of them tried to provide the documents that the municipality required without real architectural involvement. This situation did not last long because the design profession became prestigious, especially as several design offices were established by Saudi architects in the early 1980s. Those design offices employed several architects from Egypt and Syria who introduced several spatial concepts to local home environments. This section tries to understand the process of change and resistance that took place in the private home in the last two decades. The purpose here is to understand how the local people absorbed the new concepts introduced by those architects and how the design profession contributed to the growth of the new identity, which had appeared in the 1940s.

According to Abdulrahman Al-Naim (Saudi architect and owner of a design office since 1982), the relationship between the client and the architects in the late 1970s was not equal. Designers tried to impose new concepts upon people who were, at that time, in a hurry to have the documents because they needed to take their turn in the governmental subsidy. What was important for them was the number of rooms and the separation of the *majlis* from the family part. As long as the house was *musallah*, this was enough for them at that time. This was not the case in the late 1980s and early 1990s. People became more aware about their home design, and were especially aware that they passed through a number of experiences, whether personal or through their relatives.

⁷¹ These offices were established by non-Saudi engineers such as Al-Sayed Allam office (Egyptian). Most of them were civil engineers because the need was for the technical help rather than for architectural design.

Abdullah Al-Shayeb, owner of a design office since 1985, supports this view when he says that people now force the architect to become an adviser rather than a designer. The role of architect in the home environment is an organiser of what people need. Now he cannot impose his values and images upon people because they know what they really need. Ashraf Mahmood⁷² also gives us statistical indications about his clients. He said that 40% of his clients prepare the original sketch of their house design and ask him only for technical support with minimum organisation. Also, they let him design the façades, which later, during construction, may change. Another 40% of his clients accept him as adviser and let him prepare alternatives for the spatial organisation. While only 20% let him prepare the original designs and ask him for new ideas. It is clear that people have developed a strong resistance towards the design profession and have forced the architects to apply what they need, especially since they are the ones who will pay the bill.

One of the initial changes is in the role of women in house design. Up to the 1970s, women had a very minor role in the internal spaces. This was because the house itself was small and followed the same spatial organisation. This situation has changed in the contemporary private homes. This important change has been noticed by Al-Shayeb when he states:

‘Recently, we can say that the most important factor that influenced the private home design in Hofuf is the role of women. In the past the rank of the relationship between the family members was organized in such a way that young men had a strong relationship with their fathers. Their wives came in the fourth level after their relationship with their fathers, brothers, and mother. This situation has completely changed in the last two decades when young women became educated and economically independent. The relationship between young men and their wives changed to the first level. This

⁷² An Egyptian architect working in Hofuf since 1983 as chief architect in Al-Barrak Office.

led to an increase of women's role in house design. Now it is difficult to find a man designing his house without asking his wife⁷³.

What is really interesting about this change is that the family part in the house became more important. Ashraf Mahmood supports this finding when says 'Clients always take the sketch design to their home and in the second day they come up with new changes mostly in the family part, and specifically in the living room, women's *majlis*, and kitchen. What I noticed in the last fifteen years is that the opinion of the client's wife has become more important than the architect himself⁷⁴.

The above mentioned phenomenon indicates that the designing of the private home in Hofuf can be seen as a process of decisions taken by the family members, especially the parents. Every member concentrates on the spaces that belong to her/his domain. It is possible to say that individual identity inside the house has become more important. Women as well as men try to express themselves in their house. This is not to say that collective identity has totally disappeared but what has happened as Ashraf Mahmood said 'Clients always show the sketch of their home design to their friends. Their opinion is very important. When they say it is good it means that this house is socially acceptable⁷⁵. This can be linked to what one of the informants said: 'Our houses should respect our traditions. Because we like others to visit us, we should design our houses to fit their beliefs. It is important, for example, to separate the guest spaces from the family part⁷⁶.

The new identity that developed since the 1940s grew towards individual identity more than a collective one. In contemporary Gulf home environments we can say that people's resistance is very high because the opinion of the community is still important for

⁷³ Personal interview.

⁷⁴ Personal interview.

⁷⁵ Personal interview.

⁷⁶ Personal interview.

individuals. It is important, however, to say that there has always been pressure from the architects to introduce new ideas, which has led in many cases to the infiltration of the new concepts and to their localisation, to fit with people's lifestyle. The following discussion concentrates on the development of the contemporary home in the Gulf.

3. Cultural resistance and development of the house design

In the last chapter we illustrated how the private home developed between 1940 and 1975. We argued that a new identity consisted of continued, modified, and new traditions, experiences, and images working together to produce this new identity. As we have mentioned, the home environment in Saudi Arabia after 1975 had been strongly controlled by government institutions, which forced people to follow the setback regulations and imposed the villa type upon them. Different from the transitional house, private home owners in the late 1970s, 80s, and 90s have had no other alternative than applying the setback and accepting the villa as the only house type. What is really important for this study is to understand the position of local people in regard to these severe limitations that have been imposed upon their private homes. To what extent did they mobilise their long standing traditions and experiences in their private homes?

Recently the private home has taken a definite form. People have reproduced similar spatial organisations with minimum differences. This phenomenon was noticed by the author when he was involved in designing several houses in Saudi Arabia between 1990 and 2004⁷⁷. Clients always spent a long time in refining their house plans, asking their wives and friends and photographing other people's houses, while paying little attention to the façades. Maybe one of the reasons

⁷⁷ Al-Naim, M (2004) "Is there any Possibility to Develop a Suitable House for Middle Income Saudi Family", *The proceeding of Symposium of Housing (2) (Affordable Dwelling)*, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (28-31 March 2004), pp. 619-638.

for this attitude is that the need for visual communication with the community became less important after the separation of the male reception spaces from the external spaces by the front setback.

Still, from the pilot study we found that people tried to reproduce some of the traditional images in their house façades. Because the municipalities usually care about applying the regulations rather than the image of the house,⁷⁸ this has enabled people to make several alterations during the construction of their houses. One of the interesting things is that people have tried to reproduce some of the images from their previous (traditional) homes. This was clearly seen when the composition of the gateway and loggia were reproduced in the façade even if the original functions had completely disappeared (Fig. 2.1). For example, some people introduced balconies in the first floor of their houses to indicate the image of the loggia over the main gate. People never use those balconies and instead they leave them to indicate the visual image they wanted in their house façades⁷⁹.

This part of the book tries to describe the development of the private home in the Gulf in the last two decades. We have already traced three stages that the contemporary private home has passed through. The first stage was in the late 1970s when the villa was imposed by the government institutions and plans as the only house type. By that time a spatial and visual tension between the transitional house and the villa type was noticed in several houses. The second stage took place in the 1980s when the architects and design offices became the only reference points for house design. People in this stage could not build any house unless they had architectural and technical drawings from a licensed design office. We argue that the

⁷⁸ All the three architects that were interviewed mentioned that most of the house façades that were constructed in the 1980s were not as they designed originally. People made large alterations during construction. They indicated that even in the 1990s people concentrated more on the internal spaces than external design.

⁷⁹ Some people later closed those balconies and included them in the internal rooms, but they left the decorated arches as windows, as well as to indicate the image of the traditional loggia.

contemporary private home took its main identity at that time. The last period is the 1990s onward. This period is characterised by the increase of people's involvement in their home's design.



Fig. 2.1. A number of villas constructed in 1980's and 90's influenced by the image of traditional loggia in the main façade. Source: Author.

3.1 From Transitional House to Villa Style

In investigating how the private home moved from the transitional type to the villa style, it is necessary to indicate the impact of the new forces in the home environment after 1975. We already discussed the impact of the design profession on the contemporary home environment. In addition to implementing the setback regulations, the municipality architects imposed themselves on the design process by asking people to satisfy four conditions in their home design in order to have a licence for construction. These conditions included, firstly, the

requirement that living rooms should be located in the side of the house and have an opening on the setback. This condition aimed to change the prevailing transitional house where the traditional courtyard was replaced by a sealed hall located in the middle and all rooms opened to it. The second condition insisted on connecting the *majlis* hall with the *mugallat* or at least in gathering them in one defined sector in the house. Because the transitional house contained balconies and terraces on the ground floor,⁸⁰ the third condition aimed to minimise this phenomenon. The fourth condition aimed to improve the location of the kitchen in the house by asking people to locate the kitchen in a ventilated space and not facing in the northerly direction (because of the prevailing wind)⁸¹.

These local regulations influenced the form of the private house in the late 1970s. This is clearly seen from, firstly, the fact that the house displayed a spatial organisation different from the transitional one, especially in the middle part where the family spaces were located, and secondly, that the male guest spaces became a complex of spaces related to each other and occupying the front of the house. These changes may be considered the beginning of the spread of the villa type in the region⁸². Even the name of 'villa' appeared at that time and became the image of the wealth and modernity.

Fig. 2.2, shows one villa constructed after 1975 in the city of Hofuf⁸³. The setback did not completely surround the house; it was

⁸⁰ People at that time thought having a balcony on the first floor and terrace (veranda) in front of the *majlis* as indications of modernity.

⁸¹ Interview with Abdulrahman Al-Naim (one of early Saudi Architects who was a head of the building licensing department in the municipality of Al-Hasa in the late 1970s).

⁸² The villa was spread already in the main cities specially in Kuwait where some of hybrid styles villas were constructed.

⁸³ An office called 'Modern Engineering Office' designed this house. It was owned by a non-Saudi engineer (Salah Al-Deen Anwar Khalid). This office does not now exist.

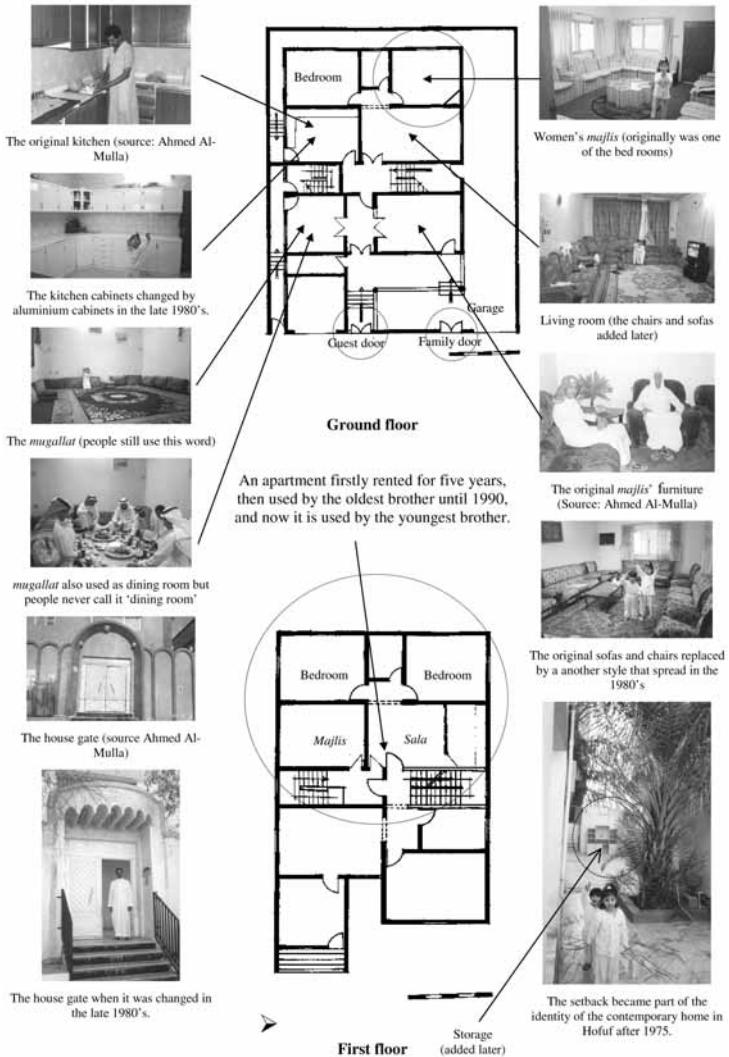


Fig. 2.2. A villa constructed after 1975 in Hofuf, Saudi Arabia. Source: Author.

cut in the front by a shop, which was later used as a driver's room. An apartment was included in the first floor which was rented for five years, then the oldest son used it when he got married, and now it is used by the youngest son. As with the transitional house, two doors are located in the front fence, one for the guests and the other for the family. In the early villa a garage was introduced, which required another large door. What is interesting about the front façade of the early villa is that it contained three to four doors in an elevation only 15m wide.

Another important change in the early villa was that the house became two storeyed. The ground floor was used as a reception area and family common space while the first floor was completely used for bedrooms. This split of activities was not clearly seen until mid 1980s when local people completely stopped having bedrooms on the ground floor, except in a few cases, and instead introduced another room on the ground floor which was used as a multi-purpose room. This attitude influenced the contemporary private home and tempted people in later years to increase the space sizes of the ground floor areas and introduce more new spaces and relationships. One point that can be added here is that by splitting the utilitarian spaces from the symbolic spaces, certain spaces in the house, such as the kitchen, became the only utilitarian space on the ground floor.

In the aforementioned case, the male reception space had two doors, one of them to enable the guests to approach the *majlis* from the front garden, the other to link the *majlis* with the *mugallat*, mainly used as a women's reception space and dining room⁸⁴. Sofas and chairs were used extensively in the early villa in the *majlis* hall. This type of furniture was associated with the villa type. The interesting thing here is that people realised later that the size of the

⁸⁴ In the 1980s women *majlis* was either the living room or in one of the ground floor bedrooms. This encouraged people to open one of bedrooms to the side setback in the late 1980s to define the women *majlis* and to provide accessibility for women without exposing the family spaces to them.

majlis, which was 6 x 4m, was not suitable to take this type of furniture. There was always a problem of width in the *majlis* at that time, which led to an increase in its size to at least 6 x 5m in the later houses⁸⁵.

One clear indication of the impact of the local municipality regulations was the location of the living room in the side of the house. Although the living room connects the bedrooms on the ground floor, it is now more isolated and used as common space for the family as well as reception space to entertain close relatives. The relationship between the bedrooms and the living room encouraged the family to transform one of the bedrooms in the middle of the 1980s, to a women's *majlis* by opening a door to the side setback. The *majlis* and *mugallat* also clustered in one zone and were connected to each other by an entrance hall. The latter change became part of the male reception organisation in the later houses.

The development of the early villa is illustrated in Fig. 2.3. As we have said, the spatial organisation of the late 1970s houses was in a fluid condition but there was a common agreement on certain images among local people. The desire to separate the guest part from the family part remained as a major factor that influenced the organisation of the ground floor. In a villa designed in 1977 (Fig. 2.3 a) parts of the transitional house elements continued, especially the passageway, with the staircase, that links the family part with the front garden. *Mugallat* and *majlis* remained as they were in the transitional house. The living room took a side location but it functioned, as in the transitional house, as a circulation space. The only difference here is that in this case the living room can be approached from the side setback, where people placed a *veranda* in front of the living room entrance.

⁸⁵ Interview with Abdulrahman Al-Naim.

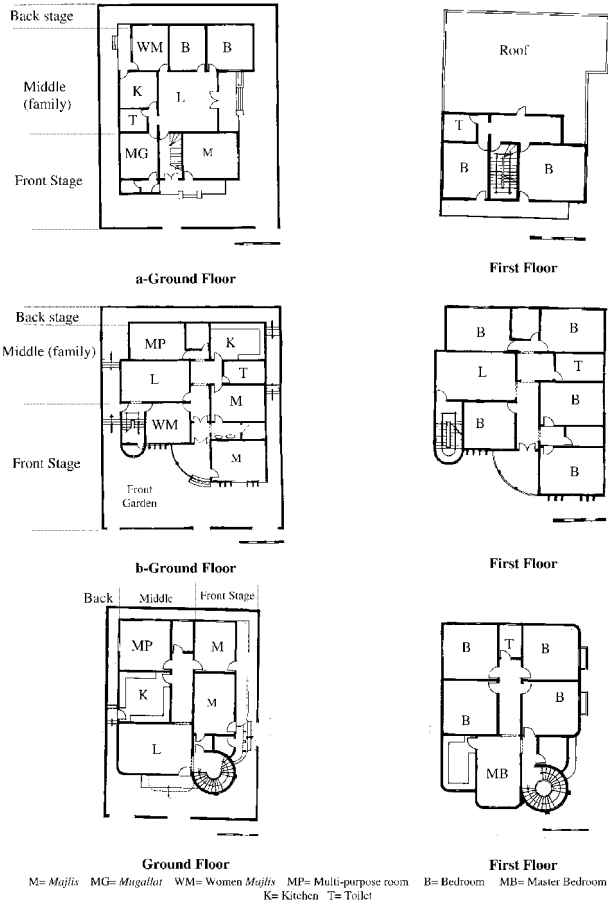


Fig. 2.3. A number of villas constructed in the late 1970's and early 1980's in Saudi Arabia. a) A villa (designed in 1977) shows the development of the living room. b) A villa (designed in late 1970's) shows how the house became two storeys (bedrooms transferred to first floor). c) A villa (designed in early 1980's) shows how the staircase became closer to the living room. Source: Author.

In a villa designed in the late 1970s, the ground floor changed slightly when the *mugallat* came closer to the kitchen because of the need to serve food on occasions (Fig. 2.3 b). Also the living room became more isolated and was used as a reception space in the house. The staircase took an isolated space close to the family entrance in the side setback. The staircase later integrated more with the living room (see Fig. 2.3 c). It is clear that the spatial organisation of the contemporary house of the late 1970s was undergoing reform. The new ideas brought by architects at that time, especially the living room with the staircase, were resisted by people but in the end they absorbed them and accepted the staircase inside the living room in the later houses⁸⁶.

In general we can say that both the guest and family parts became more complicated in the early villa. The male reception spaces remained as the front stage of the house although the women's room and living room became more important as reception spaces. The back of the house was occupied by the back setback which was seen by people as semi-private space because of the windows of the neighbours which overlooked all outdoor spaces in the house. Many people added storage to the back setback because they never used it for sitting or as a garden (Fig. 2.3).

The first floor, which is located in the middle stage, contains the bedrooms and, in some cases, the family living room. In this case, the family part has become very large. Different from the previous house types, the contemporary home is characterised by the large number of individual spaces in the family part. This can be attributed to the fact that individuals in every family became more educated and preferred to have their own private room. It was not acceptable for many people that time to sleep in one room with all their sisters or brothers.

⁸⁶ People were strongly influenced by the colonial villas in the Arabic cities, especially in Cairo. The main image of those villas was a staircase in the middle of the living room.

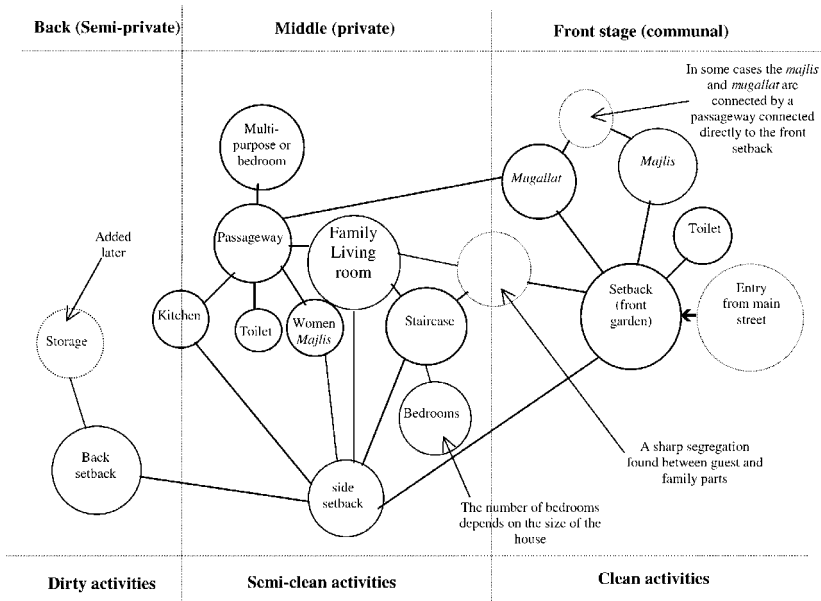


Fig. 2.4. The organisation of internal domestic space of the contemporary house of the late 1970's⁸⁷.

The front garden became an important symbolic element. This tempted people to treat the front setback in a different way in the later houses. Having a large outdoor space in front of the house became an image of the new modern villa. It was used to express the individual (family) perceptual identity⁸⁸. This led in many cases to houses being situated on one corner to create large front spaces,

⁸⁷ The women's *majlis* was one of the room in the ground floor. There was no specific room for it.

⁸⁸ Abu-Ghazzeah found that the front garden was used as vehicle to personalise the contemporary houses in Jordan. Abu-Ghazzeah, T. (1997) 'The Dialectic Dimensions of Homes as an Expression of Identity and Communitality in Amman, Jordan', *Housing Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 247-63.

especially with the back and front setbacks being completely unused except for circulation.

Although the pedestrian pavements in front of the house belong to the street, people used this pavement to grow trees and they paved them with different tiles to indicate their individual territories. The external visual characteristics of the early villa type were different from the transitional type in the sense that the abstract concrete façade had completely disappeared. The relationship between the *majlis* and the external spaces remained as they were in the transitional house. The new visual elements that were introduced with the early villa were the large front garden and new finishing materials, which were used in the late 1970s.

It is quite important to mention how the building industry influenced house façades. The economical upsurge after 1973 enabled many people to import construction materials. An almost completely new market developed to supply people with the needed materials, especially after the government subsidised for private housing. The house façades of the early villa were influenced by this market. For example, yellow and red stones were used in the house façade. Also a granite texture with a range of colours was used in the house façades. Now if anybody walks in the early contemporary neighbourhoods he or she will find all houses in a complete neighbourhood or street finished with one or both of the above materials (Fig. 2.5). This situation disappeared in the early 1980s when the municipality forced people to plaster their house façades with white plastic colours, thus imposing a collective perceptual identity on people.

One of the main interesting phenomena is that, despite the fact that different materials were used in the external façades, people tried to express their individual and collective visual images. People used the stone façades to write several words such as 'Allah' and other words from Quran and Prophet's traditions. People used the façade



Fig. 2.5. A number of stone façades (also notice the pavement in front of the house façade which is used to emphasise the visual characteristics of the contemporary private home). Source: Author.

granite as a medium to express their personal image. Several mural paintings were developed, most of them illustrating well known elements such as the palm tree (Fig. 2.6). It was very clear that people tried to personalise their houses because the standardisation that the regulations and material market imposed upon people's image left them with minimum contact with their physical environment. In the traditional homes, we noticed how people personalised their houses by the arrangement of the coffee space, which was different in every house. In the early villa the personalisation took the form of external rather than internal differences.

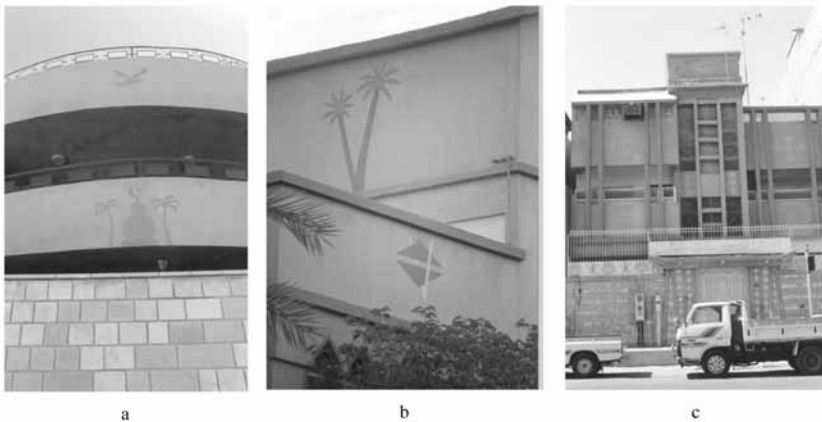


Fig. 2.6. Granite façades with some visual symbols (mainly palm trees and Quranic calligraphy). Source: Author.

This phenomenon can also be seen in the main gateway when, in the early villa, it displayed fantastic designs. Compared to the transitional house, where the gate was very simple and only a shed of concrete with minimum decoration, the early villa gate became different in every house. Although the traditional gate had worked as a medium for people to personalise the house through changing the ornamentation pattern in the top of the wooden door, a consistent form was used to express the collective perceptual identity (Fig. 2.7). What happened in the early villa was an indication of the growth of the new identity towards individuality. The collective perceptual identity became less important through the introduction of the design profession and endless construction materials.

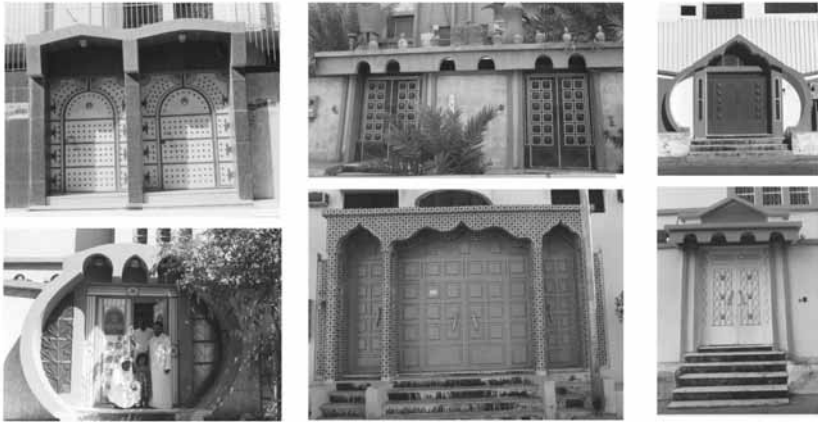


Fig. 2.7. A number of gateways constructed in the late 1970s reflect the growth of the individual perceptual identity. Source: Author.

We are not trying to say here that there was always a smooth transition from one type of housing to another but rather there was a point where a radical paradigm change took place. We noted how the hybrid house, which was almost traditional, was replaced by a transitional house, which was the first step towards the villa type. In

the following discussion we see how the private home developed another path by changing the status of several internal spaces.

3.2 Refining the villa type (1980s)

It is important to mention that the recent identity of the contemporary home developed during the 1980s when the main spatial elements took their position and relationships. This was the decade when the contemporary private home took a unique form, particularly in the late 1980s. In this period the local people of the region localised the new spaces that had been introduced with the early villa type, and from the 1980s on the private home has shown consistent and repetitive spatial characteristics that continue with minimum change until present time.

One of the major changes in the spatial organisation of the private home in the 1980s was that the staircase moved to the middle of the living room. We can understand how this change influenced the image of local people from a comment from one of the architects:

‘The positioning of the staircase in the middle of the living room in private homes in Hofuf was a historical event because it made people change their attitude towards the living room. In the previous houses they thought that the living room was merely similar to the traditional courtyard, a central space connecting several rooms around it. Now the living room holds a symbolic role in addition to its utilitarian one’.

This is not the only change in the private home at that time. In general, we can discuss two stages for the development of the house form in the 1980s. Our criteria are based on the development of the living room, which was, in the first place, a transitional space containing the staircase in the middle, while it moved towards the front stage and became more symbolic in the late 1980s.

Fig. 2.8 considers an example of the private home constructed in the middle of 1980s. It shows the changes that took place in the

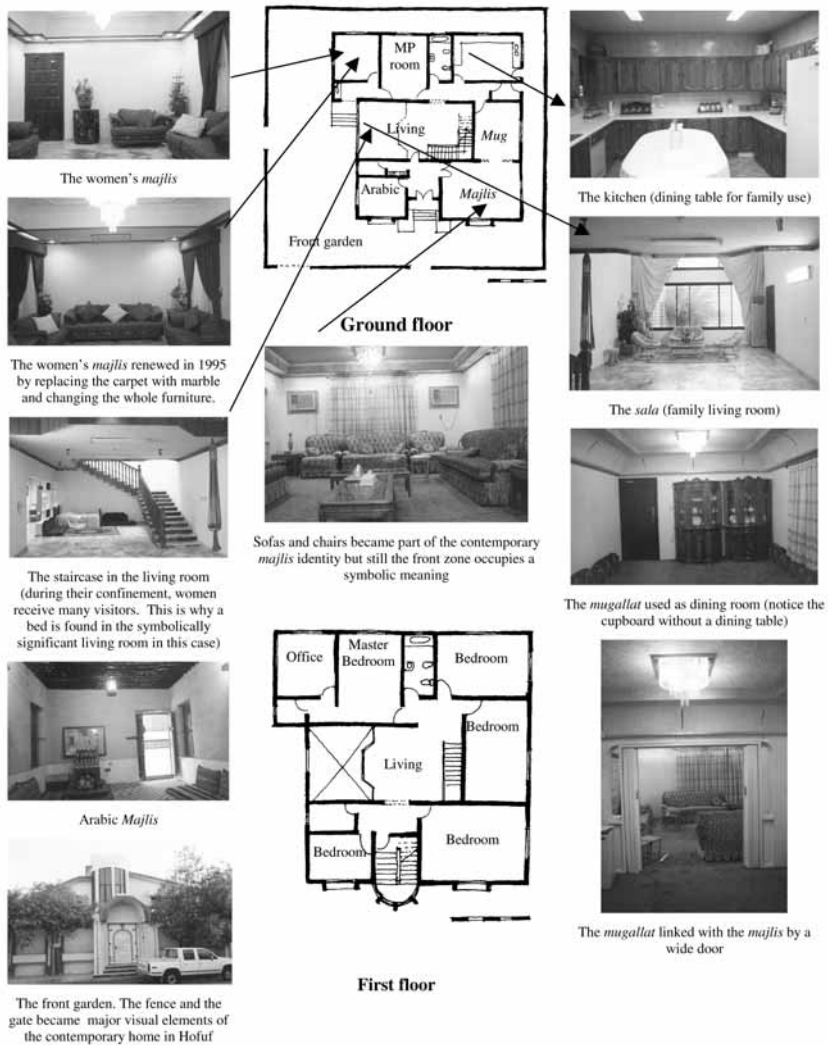


Fig. 2.8. A villa constructed in the middle of the 1980s in Hofuf. Source: Author.

former five years in spatial organisation, especially on the ground floor. The living room became more important and took a central position. The staircase was positioned in the middle of the living room; it works as transitional space to link the ground floor with the first floor through the living room. This led to an increase in the importance of the staircase in the later houses. People encouraged the designers to develop several fantastic designs for the staircase as an element to express the prestige of the living room.

Another important development can be seen in this case, that is the women's *majlis*, which became more isolated and had its own entrance hall. We should mention that the development of the women reception space was still in its beginning and not every house had a separate entrance for the women's *majlis* (See Fig. 2.9). But we can say that there was tension at that time, headed by women, to express themselves in their houses. In the beginning they strove to locate a space in the house to use as a women's *majlis*; then they used pressure to separate this space from the family's part, which in fact they achieved later.

The municipal regulations of the late 1970s encouraged the clustering of the main reception spaces in the villas of the early 1980s, so that the *majlis* and the *mugallat* became associated as one space separated only by a folding door. This is because the *mugallat* was designed as a dining room which required positioning it in a location close to the kitchen as well as to the *majlis* hall. People accepted this new idea, but for different reasons. They used the *majlis* hall and *mugallat* as one space on those occasions, especially marriages, where many men need to be seated⁸⁹.

In the aforementioned particular case, the owner asked the designer to add one more space. This space is used as the Arabic *majlis*. By that time this concept was not common and only a few

⁸⁹ When we asked the interviewed architects about the spatial organisation of the contemporary private home in Hofuf they indicated that some people had insisted on linking the *majlis* hall with the *mugallat* because they thought that they needed to have at least one large space for special occasions.

people wanted to have this space in the male reception spaces. This was because the *mugallat* was very deep and had no access except through the *majlis* hall⁹⁰. What happened later is that the *mugallat* regained its function as an informal sitting place while the Arabic *majlis* was used as a small museum. This is because the owner reproduced the traditional *majlis* with its coffee place (this happened in 1994) and kept it for special occasions⁹¹. One thing needs to be mentioned about this case, and that is that there was a dining table in the *mugallat* but after few months the owner took it out and left the cupboard in its place⁹². This was because it is rare in most of home environments in the region that people take their food on tables.

One of the interesting things is the use of the term ‘Arabic *majlis*’. When the owner in the above mentioned case asked the designer to add this space he did not think of it as an ‘Arabic *majlis*’. What was in his mind was that the *majlis* hall should be kept for formal sitting. This cannot be done unless there is a space for the daily gathering, or what people in Saudi Arabia call ‘*dariyyah*’, which is similar to what happening in the *diwaniyya* in Kuwait. The phrase ‘Arabic *majlis*’ was used in the late 1980s and became common in the 1990s, which indicates that people, after a short experience of the new lifestyle, had evaluated this experience and refined it to make it compatible with their own ways of living. The *majlis* hall, as it was in the traditional house, was used to express the contemporary family status, while the *mugallat* and Arabic *majlis* were used to entertain their closest friends.

⁹⁰ There was need for a space to serve the food for male guests at the same time there was a need for a space for informal sitting. This led to increase the number of the male reception spaces in some cases, especially those which situate the *mugallat* in deep locations.

⁹¹ It is a phenomenon now in Hofuf that people have reproduced the traditional *majlis* with its coffee place. This can be seen as a nostalgic attitude, especially when people experienced the modern house and felt that they would not be able again to live in their traditional houses.

⁹² The owner himself imported all the furniture from America.

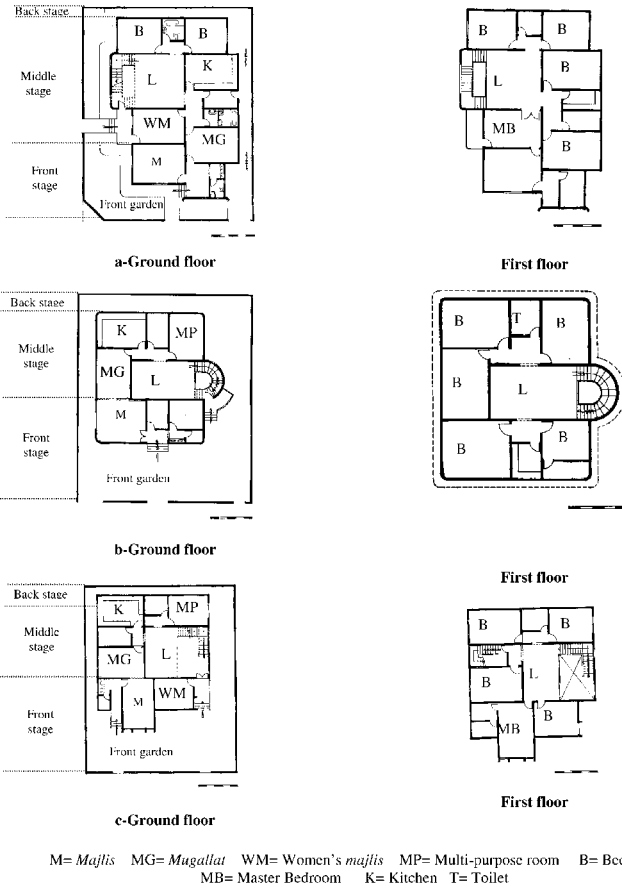


Fig. 2.9. Development of private home in the early 1980s. a) The staircase moved to the living room and the women's majlis became well identified. b) The majlis hall associated with the mugallat (was to be used on occasions as one space). c) The living room is half covered and half open to the first floor rooms.
 Source: Author.

The private home in the early 1980s still consisted of three zones, front middle and back. The front was occupied by the most symbolic space in the house, the *majlis* hall. The middle part was occupied by a number of family and women reception spaces. While the back setback represented the back stage of the house, which in many cases was used as storage area when people built a storage room in it. At that time, there were some changes in the middle stage. The women's *majlis* and the living room moved slightly towards the front stage and showed some independence from the other family spaces on the ground floor (Fig. 2.10). This is because women

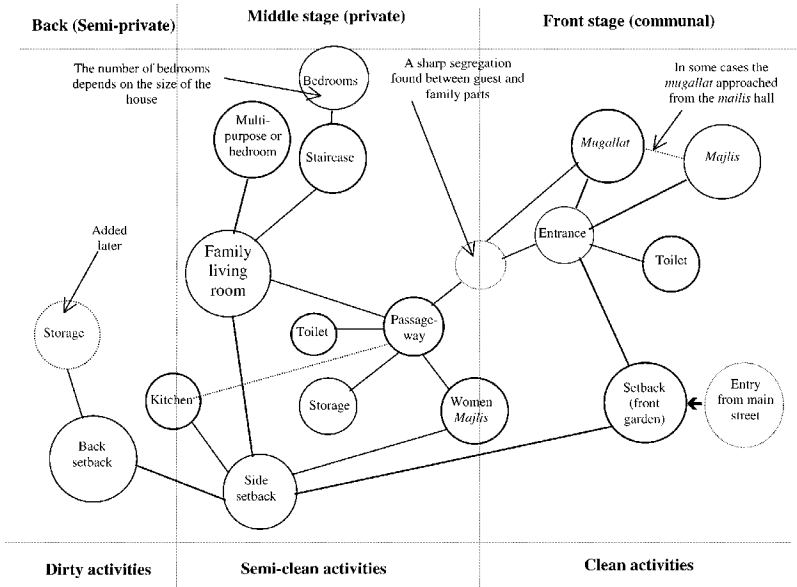


Fig. 2.10. The organisation of internal domestic space of the contemporary house of the early 1980s.

started to express their status and communicated with their domain very strongly at that time, something which appeared very clearly in the later houses when the women's *majlis* and living room moved further to the front stage.

In the second half of the 1980s, as we have already noted, the form of the private house in Hofuf was refined and developed towards a constant and repetitive organisation. This was because people had involved themselves in their own house design. They had already witnessed the advantages and disadvantages of the new forms and spaces introduced in the early 1980s house. They realised, for example, the symbolic role of the living room; therefore, they opened it out and made it two storeys in height (Fig. 2.11. a). This change was very critical because it introduced another possibility for people to personalise their houses through using different design alternatives for the living room. In fact, both types of living room, the single-storey and double storey-rooms are still found in private homes in Hofuf.

If we considered the positioning of the staircase in the living room as a new paradigm in the development of the private home in Hofuf, using fantastic designs in the front stages in the second half of the 1980s can be seen as another paradigm shift (Fig. 2.11.b). This is because this attitude changed the external and internal quality of the front spaces such as the *majlis* hall and the living room. Visual complications of the front façade became a very important factor for expressing the uniqueness of home in Hofuf at that time. We have already indicated the increasing of personal identity in the early villa. This phenomenon took one decade to become very clear in every single space in the house, and in the composition of the house as a whole. Now, there are male spaces which are shaped and refined by the household requirements and there are female spaces which are also shaped and refined by the women in the house. Everyone in the house has become aware of his territorial space and personal identity.

Although some houses in the early and middle of the 1980s had developed similar spatial organisation (Fig. 2.11.c), the late 1980s houses developed repetitive spatial organisations with some fantastic forms, especially in the front stage. The house simply took an L shape. In one leg were the male reception spaces and the other part was occupied by the women's *majlis*. The rear corner is always occupied by the kitchen while the living room was located between the male reception space and the women's *majlis*, and separated from them by two entrance halls, one belonging to the male part, the other one belonging to the female part. This spatial organisation continued with slight refinements in later years, as we will see in the forthcoming discussion.

One of the interesting things is the way that people described their houses in the early 1980s. They criticised them by describing them as '*sindook*'⁹³. This means that the house is a mere rectangular box. People tried to put pressure on the designers by using this word, and designers were compelled to react by attempting to develop dynamic forms in order to satisfy their customers. This dynamism was achieved by playing with front spaces, the *majlis* hall and living room, which led in the end to adopting the fantastic design of the front stage. This indicates, firstly, that people actually have the power to impose their identity through their collective criticism, and secondly that people of Hofuf became more conscious about the external image of their private homes.

⁹³ The word '*sindook*' here is different from the traditional meaning of the same word. In the traditional home environment the word *sindook* has a positive meaning. This was because it was used to describe the most secure houses. It had never been used to describe the house form. While in the contemporary home environment this word is used to describe the form of the house. It connotes a negative meaning because if any one said this house is '*sindook*' he meant that the house is only a rectangular box with no visual or spatial quality.

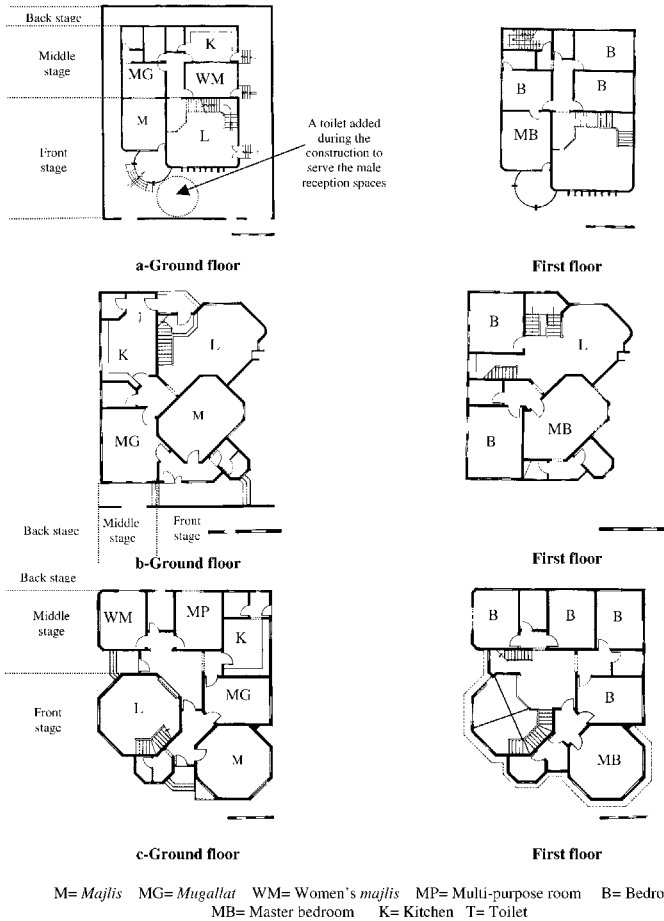


Fig. 2.11: Development of the private home in the late 1980s. a) The living room became two storeys in height and moved towards the front stage. b) the house form started taking fantastic forms. c) The living room confirmed its position between the middle and the front stages. The house firmly developed its spatial organisation by developing the two entrance halls.

Fig. 2.12 shows a typical private home of the late 1980s. The living room and women's *majlis* in this house took a position between the front stage and middle stage, an attitude which remains common to this day. The *majlis* hall remained in its position in the front stage. As we have said, this typical floor plan of the ground floor found great acceptance by people because it satisfied both the male and female partners in the house. It is obvious that the male reception spaces occupied a more important location in the house, and this potential problem was solved when the living room became part of the female reception spaces. This was clear when the owner of the house mentioned that:

'We rarely use the living room for the family activities. We have a multi-purpose room, which is used for family dining and TV watching. I see the living room when I go upstairs to my bedroom. In the night we use the upstairs living room which is real the family living room. We use the main living room for entertaining our closest relatives or on the occasions when my wife has a party to present the food in it'

One of the interesting things here is that people started to refine bedrooms on the first floor. The bedrooms are divide into three clusters, the master bedroom, which is usually located at the top of the main *majlis* because of its location and size, the boys' cluster, which is usually two bedrooms and a toilet in between, and finally there is the girls' section, which is similar to the boys' one. This clustering depends on the numbers in the family and whether the boys are more or less in number than the girls, but it is noted that the house of the late 1980s developed this clustering as a common phenomenon.

In general the private home of the late 1980s developed a kind of cluster either on the ground floor or on the first floor. What is noteworthy about this type is that there are similar spaces on both floors grouped and connected by a transitional space. This attitude is very important in offering and understanding of how the private

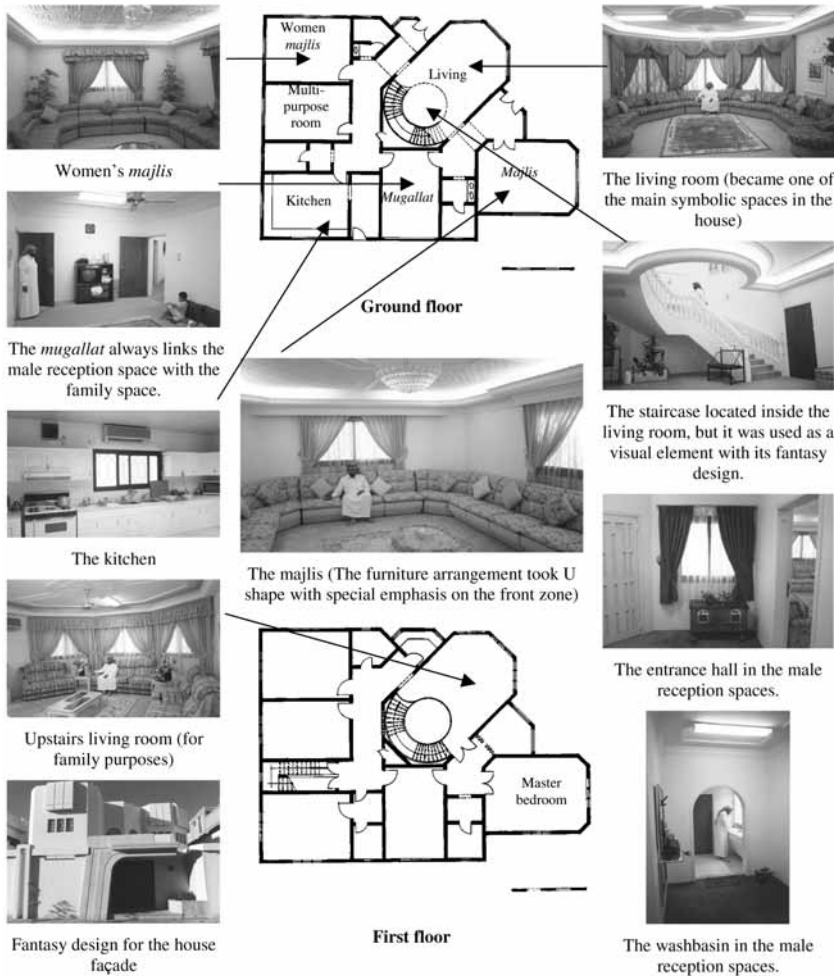


Fig. 2.12. A private home constructed in the late 1980s. Source: Author.

home in the 1990s took its form. On the ground floor the male and female spaces developed as kinds of clusters, while the supportive spaces, such as the kitchen, remained in the rear corner (Fig. 2.13).

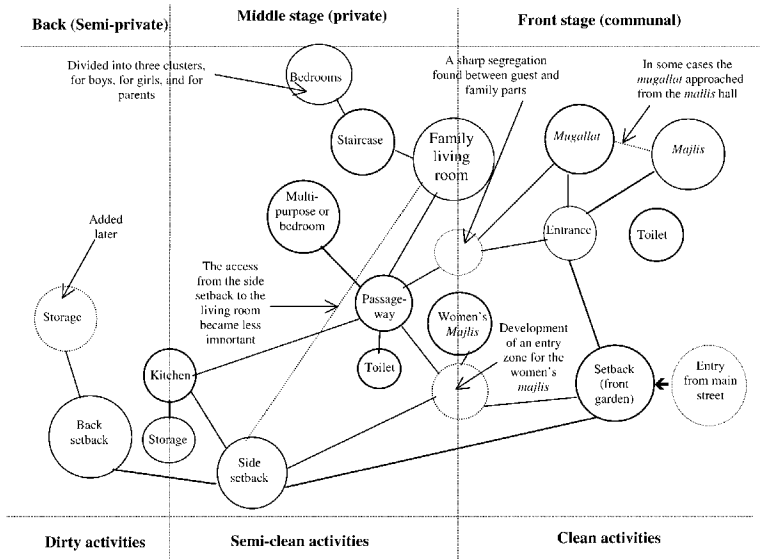


Fig. 2.13. The organisation of internal domestic space of the contemporary house of the late 1980s. The living room and women's *majlis* became more symbolic and displaced towards the front stage.

One final point needs to be mentioned with regard to the 1980s house, and that is that the gate and the front features of the house were used, as with the early villas, to personalise the house. Indeed, the house gate became bigger and in some cases contains some figures to indicate whether it is for the use of family or guests (Fig. 2.14). It is obvious after all these social changes that individual perceptual identity had taken on great importance; in fact it had become the defining new identity of the Gulf home environment.

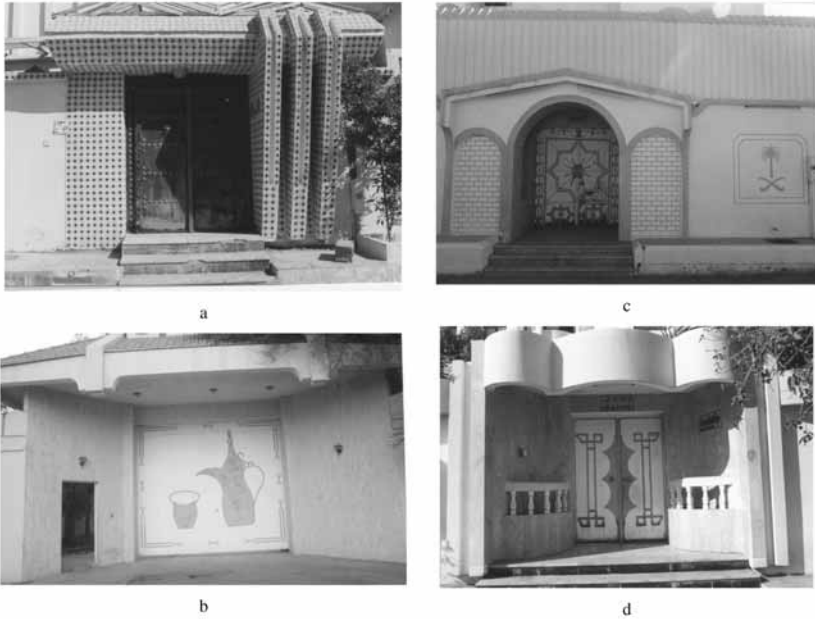


Fig. 2.14. A number of gates constructed in the first half of the 1980s. a) A gate decorated with ceramic tiles. b) The traditional coffee pot image drawn on the main door to indicate the guest door. c) A gate and a fence show the Saudi symbol. d) Notice the sign in the side of the gate, which indicates the guest door. Also, the sign in the top which carries the expression of ‘In the Name of Allah the Compassionate, the Merciful’. Source: Author.

3.3 Localising the Villa Type

There has not been much change in spatial organisation except that people realised that having a staircase in the middle of the living room made it difficult for them to use it freely. This is why they developed a space, beside the living room, in which the staircase might be positioned. This change started as a complete splitting of the staircase from the living room (Fig. 2.15a), which, however, meant the loss of the symbolic effect of the staircase. An awareness of this loss has led

been taken to embody local meanings in it. The increasing of people's involvement in their house design was one of the very important means of localizing the villa style. It is obvious that the knowledge that people gained from their own and from their relatives' and friends' experiences with the villa type in the 1970s and 80s helped them to refine their houses in the 1990s because it became part of their past experience. Our argument here is that the past experience of the local people is now composed both of the strong traditional images and the modified and new images that people acquired from their experiences with the new house types since the 1940s.

Fig. 2.16 is a typical example of the early 1990s houses. In this example the staircase has split from the living room and has been situated in a transitional space. This important change was the beginning of further significant development in the private home. The spatial organisation of the house was still in the L shape of the late 1980s, with some changes and internal space re-organisation. By adding the transitional space of the staircase the ground floor became clearly divided into a group of clusters, each one of them consisting of spaces with a similar function.

Although the owner of this house experienced the early villa in the late 1970s, which he left in the early 1990s, he insisted on having a coffee place beside the Arabic *majlis* to prepare the coffee for his guests just as he did in his traditional house in *Alkut*. One of the interesting things is that he prefers to stay in the Arabic *majlis* all day. He knows that people are now busy with their jobs and schools but he always expects some guests, even in the morning. This is because some old people still maintain the traditional habit of visiting each other after the *Fajr* prayer⁹⁴. The coffee place in this house was reproduced not because of its visual quality, which was the main motivation with many people in their homes, but because the head of the family, 75 years old, preferred to maintain his traditional life routine.

⁹⁴ See the sixth Chapter of volume I.

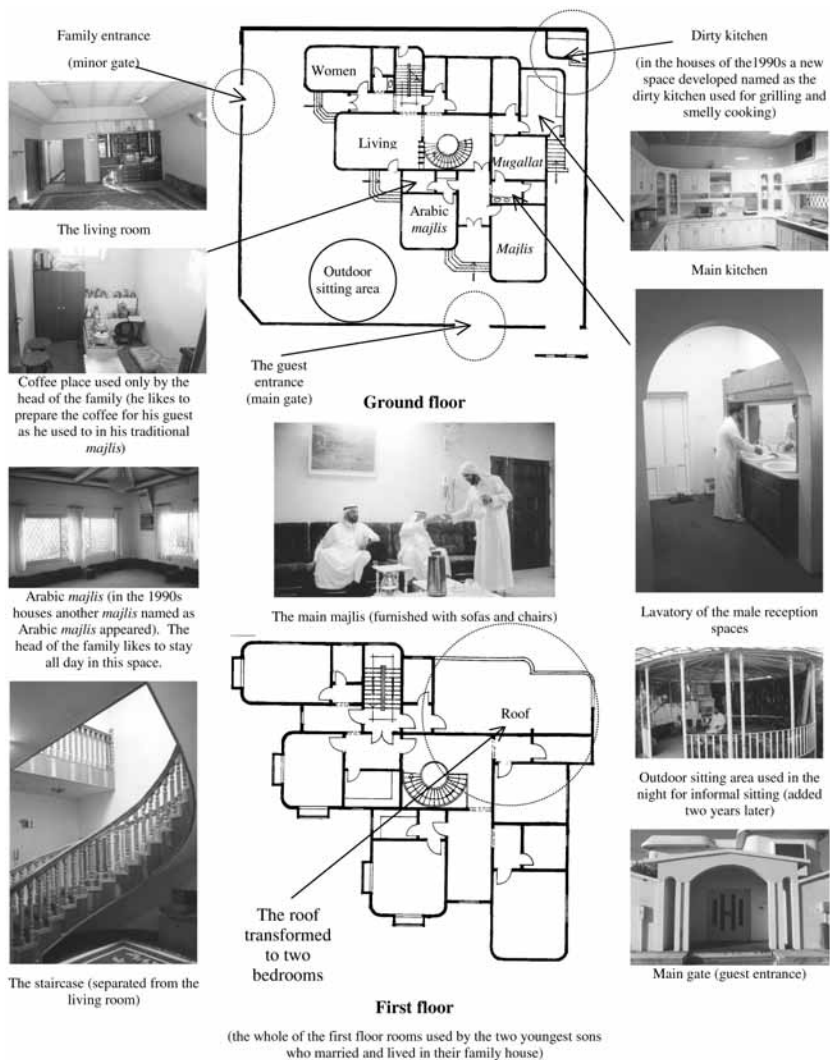


Fig. 2.16. A villa constructed in the early 1990s. Source: Author.

This led to other refinements for internal spaces. The transitional space, which included the staircase, opened on to the living room and created a small living space used by the family, while the main living room retained its position between the front and the middle stages. This latter change duplicated the size of the living spaces in the house and led to an increase of unused or occasionally used spaces in the living room (Fig. 2.17). We need to indicate here that because all the bedrooms are located on the first floor, people are tempted to increase the size of the ground floor spaces, especially since an average of five bedrooms in every house, with their supportive facilities, made the first floor very large, which means that the ground floor also became very large.

One of the consequences of opening up the living spaces on the ground floor was the changing status of the kitchen. Now it moved forward from its location in the rear corner, which was connected with the back stage, to the middle stage. This tempted people in the later houses to associate it with the living spaces, especially because the dirty kitchen was already developed and its existence was known by people. This is the first time since the late 1970s that the kitchen has moved from its rear corner.

Another part which has seen some development in the recent private house is the female part which mainly consists of the women's *majlis*, multi-purpose room, washing basin and toilets. These spaces concentrate around an entrance hall called *madkhal al'a'la* (family entrance). As we have said, this development originally started to become clear in the early 1980s houses. What is really interesting in this context is that this entrance became more important after 1995 when people separated the women's *majlis* from the family spaces, and its increased importance is one instance of the women's parts of the house developing their own identity (Fig. 2.18).

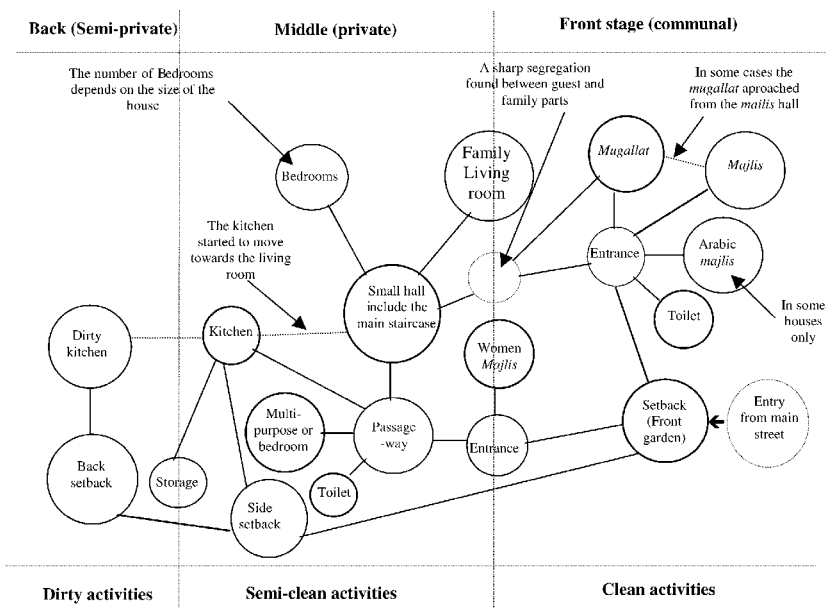
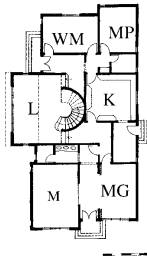
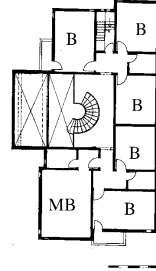


Fig. 2.18. The organisation of internal domestic space of the contemporary house of the early 1990s. The living room and women *majlis* became more symbolic and displaced towards the front stage.

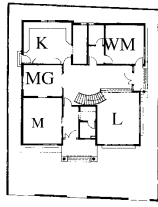
We can say that this last development introduced yet another cluster into the private home in the Gulf region. In addition to the male and female cluster, the central living spaces and the kitchen became one cluster. Because this cluster consisted of, on the one hand, symbolic elements such as the living room and the staircase, and on the other hand a utilitarian element such as the kitchen, people attempted to integrate these two types of spaces. However, this did not occur in the long run because people still hesitated about the way they could make such integration. In general, the houses of the early 1990s witnessed changes in the living spaces and the status of the kitchen. Also, they showed more tendency toward clustering the internal spaces in both ground floor and first floor levels (Fig. 2.19).



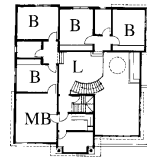
a-Ground floor



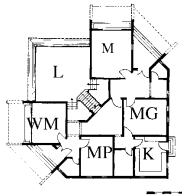
First floor



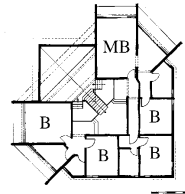
b-Ground floor



First floor



c-Ground floor



First floor

M= *Majlis* MG= *Mugallat* WM= Women's *majlis* MP= Multi-purpose room B= Bedroom
 MB= Master bedroom K= Kitchen T= Toilet

Fig 2.19: A number of villas constructed in the early 1990s showing the treatment of the central areas which are always occupied by the living spaces. Also, they show how the kitchen became very close to the living spaces. Source: Author.

The need to integrate the kitchen with the living room has been fulfilled when, in the most recent houses, the kitchen has become more associated with the living spaces, and has taken on more of a symbolic than a utilitarian role. Opening the kitchen on to the living space was encouraged partly by the existence of the dirty kitchen, which had already taken over the traditional cooking role of the kitchen, and partly by the developing role and status of women within the household. Women now prefer to observe all living spaces and watch their children playing. By making this later change, especially when the people of Hofuf saw these new developments in their friends' and relatives' houses in the nearby cities of Dammam, Khobar and Dhahran, the private home in Hofuf made a further step in the changing of the symbolic meaning of its internal spaces (Fig. 2.20).

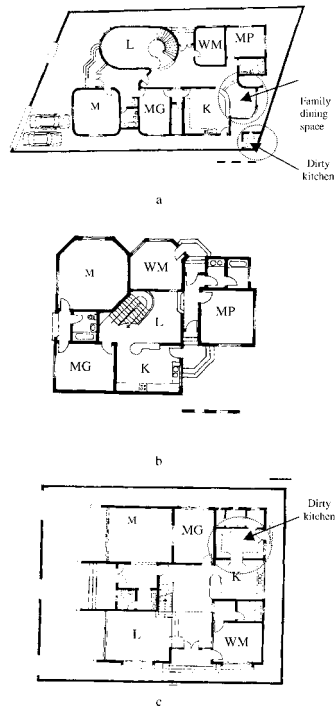


Fig. 2.20. The recent development of the private home in Hofuf. a) The kitchen associated with a food corner and opened to the family living spaces. b) The kitchen associated with the living room. c) The kitchen associated with the living spaces. Source: Author.

The spatial organisation of the present house in the region as it was developed in the late 1980s remained with its three stages on the ground floor, which are the front occupied by the main reception areas, the middle, occupied by the supportive spaces while the living

room and the women's *majlis* remained in between the front and middle stages. The back stage continued to consist of the back setback and the dirty kitchen. It is important to note the areas occupied by the women's *majlis* and the living room in the most recent houses. The fact that they now occupy an area between the front and the middle stages is an indication that, despite the increasing status of women, many societies in the region are still basically male-dominated. It is male spaces which still occupy those areas of the house which interrelate the family and the community (Fig. 2.21).

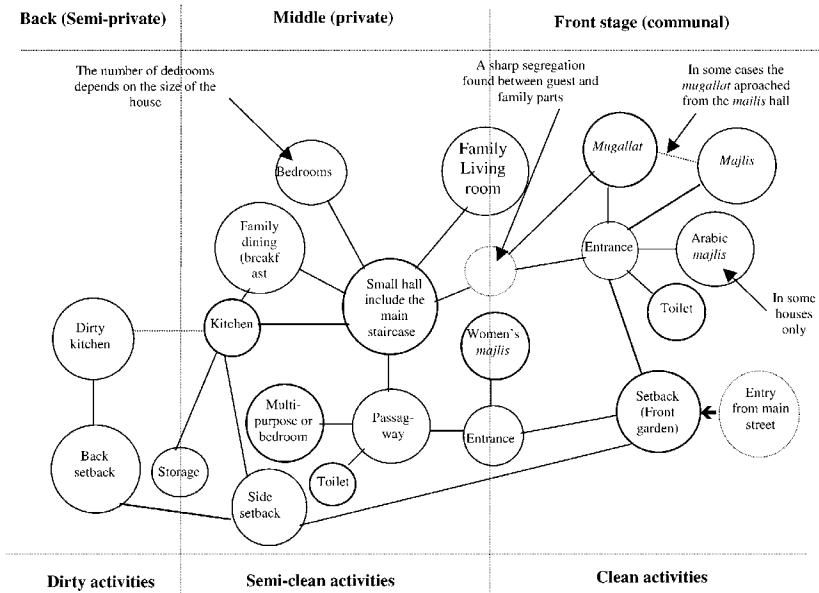


Fig. 2.21. The organisation of internal domestic space of the recent contemporary house (after 1995). The living room and women *majlis* became more symbolic and displaced towards the front stage.

The gate, which we have already noted had been used to personalise the house, saw even further development in post-1995 houses. This development took the form of a great increase in size,

some gates becoming quite massive, with the addition of decoration and adornment of various kinds, so that the gate also became a fashion statement (see Fig. 2.22 and 2.23). We cannot separate what is happening to the gate from the entire front context of the private home in Hofuf. The dynamic form which was developed in the late 1980s continued in the 1990s, the front garden with the front pavement being used in a way similar to previous houses to personalise the house by expressing individual perceptual identity.



Fig. 2.22: A number of gates constructed in the early 1990s. The gate was used to personalise the house. Source: Author.

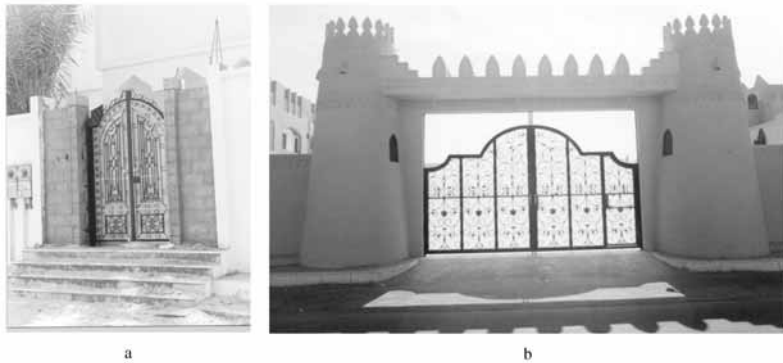


Fig. 2.23. The recent gate fashion in Hofuf. a) The old gate of a house constructed in the early 1980s was replaced by a new one during the time of the author. b) A gate of cluster of houses occupied by one extended family. Source: Author.

The development of the private home has shown some consistency. Individual identity, which became important since the early villa, worked within the frame of the collective identity. This led to developing a prototype for the present home in many cities in the area. Individual perceptual identity was satisfied by the uniqueness of the physical image of every house. Everybody wanted to be different but within the communal frame. The spatial organisation and the use of space express this commonness. There is always dialectic between the family and the community in the private home.

4. Rituals and ceremonies of the contemporary private home

In the previous section we discussed the development of the contemporary private home in the last two decades. We find that the house becomes clearly divided into several clusters. Each one consists of rooms with similar functions. New spaces, such as the living room and the women's *majlis*, developed and moved from the middle part of the house to the front stage. The new meanings attached to them resulted from the social changes that took place in the last two decades. The separation of the male reception spaces from the family part continued to distinguish the private home in the region.

In this part we need to understand the use and meaning of the internal domestic spaces in the contemporary homes. Our argument here is that, although new spaces and forms had been introduced in the contemporary private home, the use and meaning of space is much the same as it was in the traditional home environment, especially the male reception spaces. This suggests that even if the perceptual identity changed, the associational identity, in many cases, will resist the change and continue in one way or another. The new form, as we have said, could carry an old meaning. The following discussion is about the use of internal domestic space in the contemporary home.

4.1 *Rituals and Ceremonies in the Male Reception Spaces*

Although the private home in contemporary home environments in the Gulf cities has passed through many changes since the 1940s, the male reception spaces have remained major elements in the house over time. Their location has consistently occupied the front stage in the house, their relationship with the family part of the house is continuously distinguished by their sharp segregation through the existence of transitional space ended by a door either from one side or both sides. Like the traditional *majlis* hall, the contemporary *majlis* is used for hosting the guests. The three zones of the *majlis* continued much the same as in the traditional home but with minimum spaces for the front zone and less visual quality. Also, the coffee place completely disappeared and alternative ways developed to maintain this important ritual.

People continued to use the front zone in the *majlis* hall for the old and important guests. The way that people furnished their *majlis* indicates the desire to emphasise the front zone. When we asked some architects about the most important space that people decorate all of them mentioned that the *majlis* hall comes first, then the living room. They said that people never move to their new houses unless the *majlis* hall is well furnished. Al-Shayeb, for example, said that ‘it is possible that people move to their new houses even if it is not yet furnished but with one condition: that is the *majlis* hall should be completely furnished and ready to receive guests before they move’⁹⁵.

4.1.1 *The Majlis Hall*

One of the interesting changes in the contemporary *majlis* is change in the location of the front zone now found in the longer side. Normally the front zone was located in the narrower side of the *majlis* hall, usually facing the entry door. In the recent houses (after 1995) a new concept appeared: that is the *majlis* hall completely

⁹⁵ Personal interview.

opened to the *majlis* entrance. The wall and the door, which separate the two zones, disappeared from many houses. This led to the transfer of the front zone to the wider side. The new location provides the front zone with more visual depth to let the important people, who usually sit in this zone, enjoy the variety of space⁹⁶. The *majlis* entrance in this case became the entry zone, which provides the *majlis* with the ability to accommodate a large number of guests by including the entry zone in the previous *majlises* in the middle zone (Fig. 2.24).

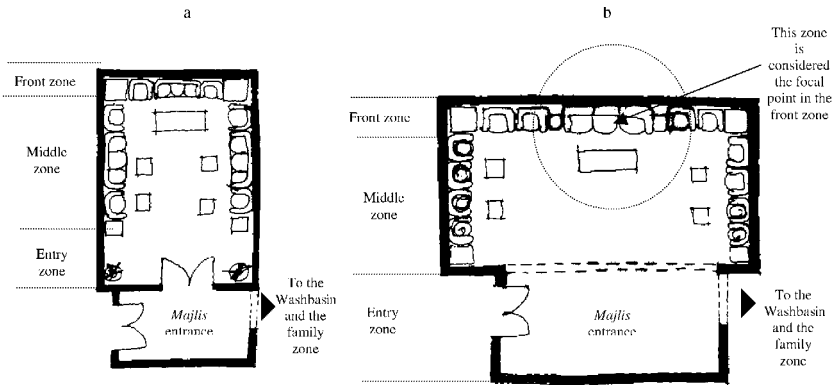


Fig. 2.24. Furniture arrangement of the contemporary *majlis*. a) A typical *majlis* hall approached from a transitional entrance zone. b) A *majlis* hall opened to the entrance zone (after 1995). Source: Developed from the author.

This is not the only reason that changed the location of the front zone in the contemporary *majlis*. From our survey, we found that

⁹⁶ The researcher designed a few houses in Hofuf in the last four years, while he was doing his study in UK, for his friends and brothers. They asked him to make the guest entrance one and half storeys in height. They indicated that the entrance hall had now become an important element from inside and outside.

some people had very large *majlises*. This made it difficult for them to situate the front zone in the narrower and deeper side of the *majlis* hall because this would lead to decreasing the importance of this zone, especially with the lack of visual quality, which existed in the traditional *majlis* through the existence of the coffee area. People in this case displaced the location of the front zone to the wider side in the *majlis* hall and emphasised it with furniture and windows. In some cases only the emphasised zone was considered the front zone while the other seats in the wider side were considered to belong to the middle zone (Fig. 2.25). This illustrates that the front zone has more to do with meaning than the location itself.



Fig. 2.25: The front zone moved from the narrower side in this large *majlis* hall to the wider side. Only the emphasised zone is considered the front zone while the rest of the row is considered to belong to the middle zone. Source: Author.

The *majlis* has thus changed in form from what it was in the traditional houses, through various intermediate stages in the hybrid and transitional houses, to the form that it now has. These changes in form have been accompanied by an element of change in perceptual meaning. What has been retained, however, despite the external form changes that the *majlis* has undergone, has been its associational meaning, and it seems likely that, whatever changes of form the *majlis* may take in the future, this associational meaning will prove resilient enough to remain (see Fig. 2.26).

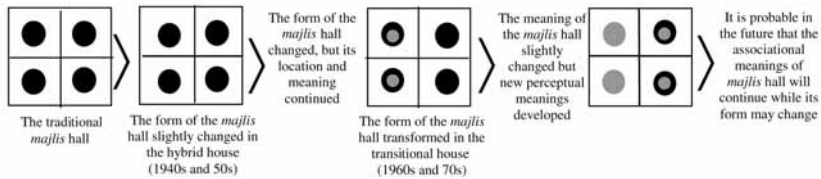


Fig. 2.26. The Spatio-temporal path of the spatial development of the *majlis* hall in the private home.

4.1.2 Mugallat and Arabic Majlis

One of the main characteristics of the recent homes in the Gulf cities is the organisation of the male reception spaces. Now the male reception spaces should contain a space for formal meetings, which is the main *majlis*, and another for informal gathering. The interesting thing here is that people in the region prefer to sit on the ground⁹⁷. The use of chairs and sofas or what local people call '*kanabat*' is employed symbolically to reflect wealth and modernity. Most of the gathering activities occur informally in the *mugallat* or in the Arabic *majlis*. This classification of the male reception spaces aims to preserve the symbolic role of the *majlis* hall as well as to provide people with the ability to practise their social activities in a less formal way. We can say that a new tradition has been developed recently in Hofuf, namely that the male reception spaces have developed to include two types of sitting, one more symbolic and the other more utilitarian; one to express the status of the family, the *majlis* hall with its sofas and chairs, and the other to practise the daily social activities, the *mugallat* and/or the Arabic *majlis* with their mattresses and cushions (Fig. 2.27)⁹⁸.

⁹⁷ Al-Naim, M. (1995) 'The Furniture: Authenticity Vs Modernity', *Al-Qafila*, Vol.44, No. 7, pp. 24-28 (Arabic).

⁹⁸ New local manufactured seats have been developed recently in Saudi Arabia including Hofuf. These seats are similar to the early long seats that were imported from Kuwait in the transitional house in the 1960s and 70s but they have less height (see Fig. 2.33). This type of



Fig. 2.27. Informal gathering always held sitting on the ground, mainly in the *mugallat* and recently in the Arabic *majlis*. Source: Author.

The *mugallat* is not only used for informal gathering. It is usually designed to be a dining room but few people use a dining table and instead they furnish it with mattresses and cushions. This is because local people still prefer to host their guests sitting on the ground. Food is usually presented in rectangular or square (and sometimes circular) plastic mats while guests move to the *mugallat* when the host calls them for food. The important and older guests will go first then the youngest guests (Fig. 2.28). Even if there is a dining table, the same rituals apply (Fig. 2.29).



Fig. 2.28: People still prefer to host their guests on the ground. The *mugallat* is the room which is used by people as a dining room as well as an informal gathering place. Source: Author.

furniture is an attempt to replace the mattresses in the informal rooms, as well as an attempt to localise the sofas and chairs by making them more compatible to people's lifestyle. People do not yet use this furniture in the *majlis* hall.



Fig. 2.29. Few people use the dining table in the contemporary home.
Source: Author.

It is possible to say that the *mugallat* is used in the recent houses as a multi-purpose room to serve the male reception space. In some houses it is used also as family dining room. What is interesting about this space is that it links the family, and especially the kitchen, with the male reception space. Almost all the cases that we presented in the previous section showed a very strong relationship between the *mugallat* (or as it is called by the designer 'the dining room') and the kitchen. This led, as we noticed, to introducing a passageway inside the family part to provide privacy for the family when guests used the *mugallat* for informal sitting or for eating.

4.1.3 *The Entrance Hall*

Another interesting development in the male reception spaces is the use of the entrance hall. In the foregoing discussion we have mentioned that the entrance hall is used as transitional space to link the male reception spaces with the family part. Also, we illustrated how it included the *majlis* hall when, in the recent houses, it opened entirely on to the *majlis* hall. Still, we need to mention that it is used in some cases as sitting space. Traditionally, the *debreez* (the entrance hall) was used as sitting area in some traditional houses. This traditional experience was perhaps the motive that encouraged some people to use the entrance hall in the male reception space as a sitting space for short chats or as an informal sitting place linked with the main *majlis* (Fig. 2.30).



Fig. 2.30. a) The entrance hall used as sitting place for short chats. b) The entrance hall used here as place for informal sitting, opening entirely on to the main *majlis* hall.

Source: Author.

Because the entrance hall is the only access to the guest washbasin and toilet, people treated the washbasin as a visual element, with a potential to reflect the family status. This happened when people started to use very expensive marble tiles to decorate this space (Fig. 2.31). Although this space is used only if there is an occasion, still people never hesitate to spend a lot of money to treat this space as a visual symbol. This is because, in many recent houses, it occupies a location with a very strong visual contact. It is usually located in the opposite side of the entrance door, which means that it is within the visual contact of the visitors when they enter the *majlis* hall even if they do not use it.



Fig. 2.31. The washbasin usually opening to the entrance hall in the male reception spaces. It is used by people to reflect the family status by tiling it with expensive marble tiles. Source: Author.

4.1.4 *The Coffee Ritual*

Although the traditional coffee place had disappeared from private homes since the 1960s, people have tried to introduce other options to maintain this important convention. It is important to realise that things may continue but not in identical ways, or as Werner calls it 'spiralling' which is 'used to suggest that ... nothing can occur in an identical way, but always changes a little'⁹⁹. The Coffee ritual can be considered among those conventions that continued in the contemporary private home but with some changes in the way of its preparation as well as in its visual, but not symbolic, status.

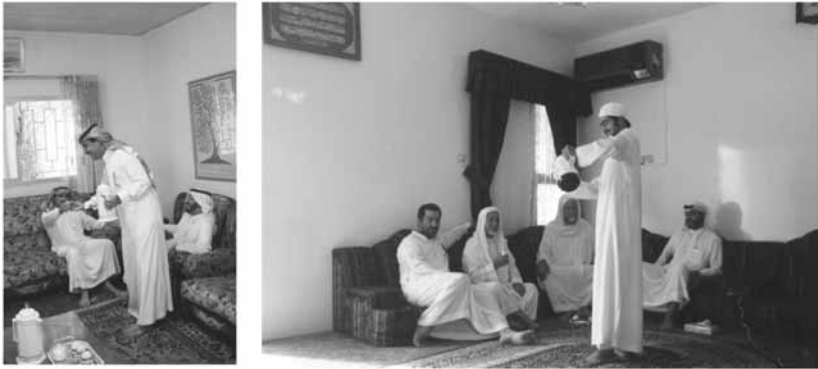


Fig. 2.32. Serving the coffee is still very important in contemporary Gulf societies. The traditional way of holding the pot with the left hand and holding a number of small cups with the right hand is still considered very important for the people.

Source: Author.

To begin with, the way that people present coffee in the contemporary home is almost identical to the traditional one. People still hold the coffeepot by the left hand and a number of small cups (*fanajeel*) in a stack in the right hand. The person who serves the coffee should remain standing up to refill the cups. He also must

⁹⁹ Werner, C.M. (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 172.

start from the right side or from the older or important guests (Fig. 2.32). The only change is that the rituals of preparing the coffee in the presence of the guests and the visual composition of the *wijaq* and the coffeepots have completely disappeared.

The composition of the traditional coffee place, which was different in every house, was used by people to personalise the house. This place disappeared from the private homes due to the new technology which enabled people to prepare the coffee and keep it hot for a long time. A new pot appeared in the market in the 1940s, imported when Aramco started its work in Saudi Arabia, to keep the liquid hot or cold for a long time. This pot is called by local people *termis* which is obviously derived from the Greek word 'thermos' which was a trade mark for this type of pot. People in Hofuf at that time never used the word '*dalla*' to designate the new pot (Fig. 2.33).

The early form of the new pot was very abstract with no variety. It was a very utilitarian device. This changed when people started using it. Another pot with similar form but with different ornamentation appeared in the market in the 1960s. The need for variety was realised by those who imported this device to satisfy the symbolic need that was associated with the coffeepot. Until that time, people never used this pot to serve coffee and instead it was used for serving tea. However, because of the technological changes and the visual variety in the new device that started to appear on the market people started using it to serve coffee in the 1960s. To persuade people to use this pot instead of the traditional one, a new pot with photographs showing the traditional coffeepot appeared in the 1970s. By that time, people were ready to adopt the new pot fully and give it the name '*dalla*'.

It is very important to understand why there was a need for variety in the form of the coffeepot. As we have said, the coffee ritual is one of the most important collective rituals in the Gulf societies. It was employed to show the family status and indicate the generosity of the host. When the new coffeepot was introduced to the local market people resisted it and refused to use it to serve coffee until the 1960s, when the ability to express the individual identity became possible through the design variety of the pot at that time. The merchants realised this phenomenon and tried to persuade people to use the new pot by using the image of the traditional coffeepot either as mere photograph or as a form. Now a woman prefers to own a coffeepot with a unique design or at least different from her friends and relatives. This encourages the market to produce hundreds of models with different forms and colours to satisfy the individual perceptual identity (Fig 2.34)



The early *termis* in the 1950s



Individual designs appeared on the market in the 1960s



Photographing the traditional coffeepot on the new *termis* in the 1970s and early 80s



Reproduction of the traditional form of the coffeepot



Fig. 2.33. Process of localising the modern coffeepot. Source: Author (private collections).



Fig 2.34: Variety in form and design for the modern coffeepot. Now, almost every year, several models of the coffeepot reach the local market to satisfy individual needs. Source: Author

4.2 *Rituals and Ceremonies of the Women's Majlis*

Different from the traditional home environment, the contemporary home environment has reduced the level of social interaction for women¹⁰⁰. This has shifted the women's activities

¹⁰⁰ This phenomenon is not only limited to Hofuf. It is found in several regions in Saudi Arabia. For example Al-Nowaiser quoted a middle aged woman who had experienced the traditional environment in the central region. She said 'we used to see our neighbors about twice a day ... in old AlKhabra [the town where she lives]. Also, spatial organization of the neighbourhood provided privacy protection for the women – to enable her to move from her dwelling to the neighbours' places ... Under this protection, I used to move around and sit in these areas without having to cover my head and face and all my body. Sometimes I would be in my nightgown or a house-dress. Now in the modern settlement, we have to use a lot of

from outdoors on the roofs to indoors. Because open spaces in the contemporary house are overlooked by the surrounding houses, it is difficult for women to practise any activity in the external spaces¹⁰¹. In the traditional houses space to amuse women visitors existed, but it was one of the multi-purpose rooms, which was used as a main bedroom for the head of the family in the night. The recent women's *majlis* is completely different in the sense that it developed its own identity inside the contemporary private home¹⁰².

One of the interesting things is that people used marble to tile the floor in the recent house in the region (after 1995), especially the main *majlis*, women's *majlis*, and the living room. One of the informant's comments on this phenomenon is that 'I think by using marble as a floor finish in the women's *majlis* another problem has appeared. Women now use their shoes while they are sitting. This will encourage women to use very expensive shoes for effect'. This can be seen as an indication of the changing status of women and how women have now redeveloped their own domain and socialise regularly with their friends.

The women's *majlis*, then, has become very important in recent houses because it is the only place that links women with their friends in a society dominated by men. It became symbolic because it ties the women with the women's community. The important point here is that the ground floor of the private house is divided into two

cover in order to go outside'. This opinion is supported by Al-Olet when he said 'Socialisation among women has shifted from outdoor to indoor'. Al-Hussayen also indicated that '... space for women outside the home domain, in many cases, does not exist as it used to in the traditional built environment ...' Al-Nowaiser, M.A. (1987), *op. cit.*, p. 307. Al-Olet, A.A. (1991), *op. cit.*, p. 230. Al-Hussayen, A.S. (1996), *op. cit.*, p. 143.

¹⁰¹ This led as we discussed in the second Chapter of volume I to raising the house fences with metal sheets to maintain the house privacy.

¹⁰² As we have discussed, the women *majlis* was developed in the last two decades from a space within the family part to a completely separate space similar to the main *majlis* hall, within the entrance hall. This can be attributed to the fact that the role of women in contemporary society in Hofuf had changed. Women became more educated and economically independent.

main sectors. One is for male reception spaces, while the other is for female reception spaces. Even the living room can be reckoned to be the female part because it is used by women on occasions. Using the living room as a dining room on occasions satisfied the need for supportive facilities for a women's *majlis*. It is rare that women use the *mugallat* to host guests. This is because women now prefer to have their food on table and serve it as an open buffet rather than present it on the ground as men do. We can attribute this difference to the fact that women's rituals had developed as new traditions in the contemporary society while men's rituals were very old, which made it difficult to change (Fig. 2.35).

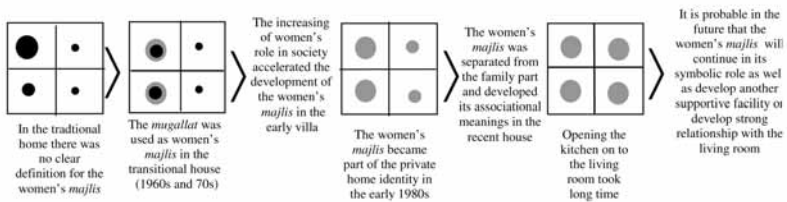


Fig. 2.35. The Spatio-temporal path for the spatial development of the women's *majlis* in the private home of Hofuf.

4.3 Rituals and Ceremonies of Family Spaces

The family parts in the contemporary private home in Hofuf are divided into two parts, one more utilitarian and located on the first floor while the other is symbolic and located on the ground floor. In this study we are concerned with the symbolic spaces because we are interested in those spaces that were used by people to express their individual and collective identities. It is obvious that the desire to have a separate bedroom is an indication of the increasing of the individual identity but, as we said, we are interested more, as in the previous chapters, in those spaces which created the dialectic between the family and the community. Before we do that it is useful to mention that a tendency of clustering the bedrooms into

two zones was noticed by many designers and informants in Hofuf. Now people prefer to have two bedrooms with a toilet in between for boys, and the same arrangement for girls. Also, the master bedroom has developed to include a toilet and closet, and sometimes also an office.

4.3.1 *The Living Room*

One of the most interesting developments in the private home is the living room. It is possible to build a spatio-temporal path for the development of this space since it was a central courtyard in the traditional house. The link between the traditional courtyard, which was the central space of the family activities, and the contemporary living room passed through a stage as the transitional living room, which was a mere central space connecting the bedrooms in the ground floor. The function of the living room was seen by people much the same as the traditional courtyard. This attitude was changed slightly when the living room became more isolated in the 1980s. Now the living room is still a central space even if it is moved to the front stage. Its symbolic role became more important than its function. (Fig. 2.36) Although the living room is considered the largest space in the house, people only use a small corner of it for family gatherings while the main activities of the family are carried out in the multi-purpose room. The rest of it is to express the family status, especially when women use it on occasions (Fig. 2.37).

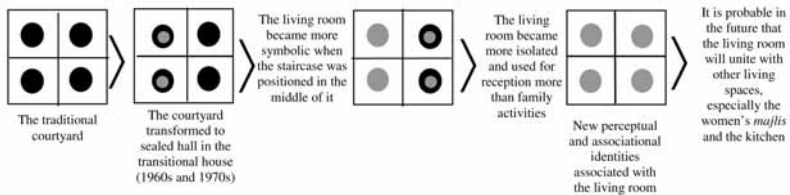


Fig. 2.36. The Spatio-temporal path of the spatial development of the living room in the private home.

The furniture of the living room in the early 1980s was nothing except a few mattresses and cushions. It was used only as a large transitional space connecting the different areas on the ground floor as well as connecting the ground floor with the first floor. The staircase was in the middle of the living room, which made it difficult for people to use it for other than circulation and as a connecting space. This situation changed in the early 1990s when people developed another space to move the staircase to, and kept the living space more isolated and not any more as transitional space. Since then, people started to furnish the living room with sofas and chairs and they also used it for reception more than for family activities.

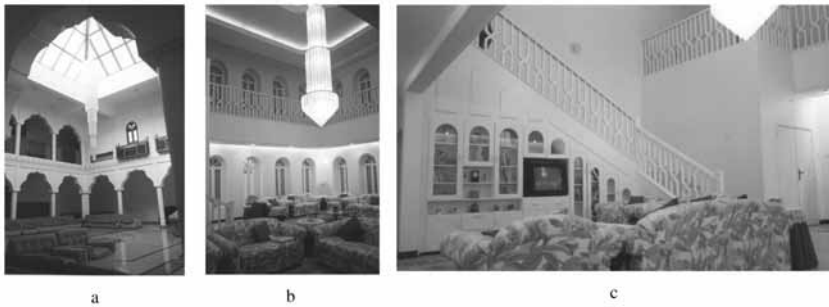


Fig. 2.37. The living room in the contemporary house is more symbolic and only small part of it used for the family. a) A living room designed to reflect the image of the traditional courtyard. b) An *Agasi* (traditional gallery around the courtyard) reproduced in one of the contemporary living rooms). c) The space under the staircase in many living rooms used for cupboard and TV set. Source: Author.

4.3.2 *The Kitchen*

In the traditional house there was no need for the kitchen to be close to the male reception spaces because men prepared the coffee inside the *majlis*. But now the coffee is prepared in the kitchen¹⁰³. It

¹⁰³ Food occasions are important also but not so important as the coffee because the host may need to present coffee to his guests several times every day while food would be presented only on special occasions.

is clear that this change in the coffee rituals has influenced the spatial organisation of the contemporary home especially the location of the kitchen, which has been transferred from a place in the back stage to a place associated with the most symbolic space in the family section, the living room. However, we cannot attribute this change to the coffee rituals alone because, without the technological development which has transformed the kitchen's utilitarian functional potential, people would not have found it practical to make these changes.

It is true that imported technology changed the people's attitudes towards the kitchen and encouraged them to move towards the living spaces but the location of the kitchen inside the house was mainly influenced by the changes in the people's lifestyle. The kitchen took a position adjacent to the *mugallat* and was linked with it by a passageway since the early villa in the late 1970s. This is because the host needs to go frequently to the kitchen to bring the coffee and serve his guests.

The meaning of the kitchen has changed from a dirty space in the traditional home to a symbolic space in the recent home when people began to connect it with the living space and exposed it to the visitors. We noticed that the kitchen remained in the back of the house for long time and it is only few years ago that it took on the embodiment of symbolic meanings. People, in fact, were hesitant to change the status of the kitchen. This is because the kitchen, until the recent past, was a source of bad smells in the house but when the separate out-of-the-way dirty kitchen was developed it became possible for people to use the main kitchen for visual purposes (Fig. 2.38).



Fig. 2.38. a) A kitchen opening to family living spaces. b) A kitchen in one of the early villas opening to the living space. Source: Author.

We can attribute this change also to personal action when some people imported this concept from the near cities, especially Dammam, Khobar, and Dhahran, where many foreigners and Saudi citizens who have had long exposure to western material culture live. It became possible for people to expose the kitchen to the living room when they saw others, relatives and friends, do just that. This is not to say that it is now an accepted practice in the area, that every one will open the kitchen on to the living room when he builds a house, but it could be a commonly accepted thing in the near future (Fig. 2.39).

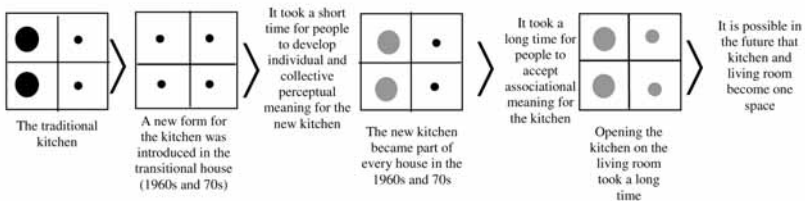


Fig. 2.39. The Spatio-temporal path for the spatial development of the kitchen in the private home.

5. Summary

In the discussion of the development of the contemporary private home, we conclude that people in the recent home (after 1995) developed spatial relationships that remind us of the traditional home, which was composed of three parts each one of them concentrated around one transitional space mainly used for circulation and to connect other parts. In the recent home, we found that the house was first divided into two floors, each one of them holding certain functions. The ground floor holds the symbolic spaces, the reception spaces, and the kitchen. The first floor holds only bedrooms and in a few cases a family living room.

The staircase was the transitional space, which connected the ground floor with the first floor. This element, as we have noticed, played a very major role in the spatial organisation of the private home in Hofuf in the last two decades. It was developed from a minor element mainly located in the side of the house to a central element connecting all the house parts. As Al-Shayeb mentioned

‘The staircase was the main element that defined the type of the house. The contemporary house in Hofuf passed through several stages, every stage characterized by the location of the staircase. The interesting thing is that there were some people who transformed their living room several times because of the change that occurred in the location of the staircase’¹⁰⁴.

The staircase as a transitional element was very important for people. This is because people realised that, by locating the staircase in the living room it made it a transitional space as well. Also, it created a privacy problem because males cannot pass to their bedrooms if the living room was being used by women visitors, which led in the early 1980s to using the living room for family purposes only. However, women needed support space, which was mainly the living room. This privacy conflict had changed the location of the staircase, which was changed in the later houses but it

¹⁰⁴ Personal interview.

kept its symbolic and utilitarian roles by developing another transitional space to link other parts in the ground floor and connect them with the first floor rooms.

The second division which was continuous in the private home was the separation of the family parts from the guest part. This was one of the major criteria for the suitability of the house for life patterns in the region. One of the interesting things here is the way that people refined the male reception spaces. In the transitional house as well as the early villa type, the *majlis* hall was opened directly on to the front setback. This was mainly because the house was very small and no spaces were available to create deeper places for guests. Also, there was a need to maintain the relationship with the community, a relationship which was weakened by imposing the setback regulations. This case completely changed in the later houses because the size of the plot became larger (400-600 m²)¹⁰⁵. The need to link the guest spaces with the community was maintained by emphasising the door of the guests, which is mainly the main gate. Also, the front garden and the front pavements became very important visual elements.

The entrance hall of the guest spaces appeared in the early 1980s. People accepted this concept because, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, many people had moved directly from the traditional home environment to the contemporary neighbourhoods. In the traditional house, the male reception spaces had an entrance separated from the *majlis* hall and from the *debreez almajlis* (guest zone in the entrance hall). Even in the early hybrid house this spatial organisation continued, which indicates its importance for the people. In the contemporary house people reproduced this concept and clustered the male spaces around this entrance hall. It became a symbolic space when people opened the *majlis* hall to it in recent times. Many *majlis*

¹⁰⁵ There are some bigger houses but mainly the preferred plot size in recent Hofuf is 600m². The small sizes are found in a few neighbourhoods. The bigger sizes are mainly found when people joined two lands and used them for one house.

halls now are without doors, and the wall which separates the *majlis* from the entrance hall has been removed completely. Visually, it was used to give prestigious feeling for the *majlis* hall by expanding it. In general, the guest entrance hall after 1995 became an important element to express the status of the family. Still, the guest entrance hall functioned as a transitional space to link the guest spaces, *majlis* hall, *mugallat*, Arabic *majlis*, and the washbasin and toilet, with both front garden and family spaces. In one way or another it worked as it had in the traditional house. The only difference is that, in the traditional house, the *majlis* entrance was used to increase the link between the *majlis* hall and the external spaces as well as to provide the family part with full privacy, while the recent *majlis* entrance works as a central space to link several spaces together. Its traditional function has been weakened but has not disappeared.

Development of the women's *majlis* and the multi-purpose room as a cluster in the recent house reflects the new changes in social roles of male and female in the contemporary society of Hofuf. The reception space of women developed from undefined space in the traditional house to well defined space in the contemporary house. Because women have only indoor activities, their reception space has developed to satisfy this need. We have attributed the development of the women's *majlis* to the fact that women in the contemporary home environment lack the external activities which were available for them in the traditional home environment because of the existence of the roof routes. In general, there was a need to separate the women's *majlis* from the family part. This is because women now have their formal gathering and they prefer to have their private spaces away from the sight of their visitors.

Compared to the traditional house, the recent house type in Hofuf has a similar behavioural attitude towards the spatial organisation. It is obvious that the recent house is more complicated, but people have followed the same way when they divided the house into clear clusters with clear functions. This can be used as evidence to support our assumption that the contemporary house in Hofuf is

composed of old and new traditions, experiences and images: Old in the sense that people have persisted in a similar way, almost due to the common past experience, of organising the internal spaces; new, in the sense that the recent house is more complicated and supported by modern technology, which enables people to do many things which were not possible in the traditional home environment.

CONCLUSION: IDENTITY AND CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN THE FUTURE HOME ENVIRONMENTS

1. Prologue

If there is one phenomenon that has impressed itself upon the researcher in studying the continuity and change of identity in the home environment, it is that people will use any means to personalise their homes, as well as to communicate through them with their community. The dialectic between personality and community is an important phenomenon in any home environment. People seem as individuals to need innately to express their individuality through using the surrounding physical objects, yet at the same time they cannot live simply as individuals; rather they need to live within communities, which demands at least a modicum of shared values and outlook.

In drawing together the conclusions of this research, 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’¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶ Al-Hamad, T. (1988) ‘Identity without Identity: Ourselves and Globalisation’, 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).

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 life¹⁰⁷.

When, in the introduction to this study, we criticized the current architectural trend in the region, a trend that borrows from the past as a way to revive architectural identity, we recognized from the beginning that identity cannot simply be 'revived' by doing this, but it can be 'directed' by encouraging some 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 two decades to revive architectural identity by recycling the traditional images. This nostalgic identity has never been appropriated as practical identity by people, who instead have mobilized their past experiences and refined the new forms according to what they themselves accept, not according to what the architects attempt to impose upon them. The local people of the region have enriched their past experiences by their subsequent experiences to build a collective image for the present private home in their city. There has been no real crisis of

¹⁰⁷ Dr Turkey Al-Hamad is a former Professor in the School of Political Science in King Saud University.

identity in the Gulf home environment; rather people have persisted in their most important associational and perceptual meanings and have localized several new ones. This indicates firstly that identity is a dynamic social phenomenon and cannot be simply revived by reproducing or recycling the traditional past, and secondly that there is a possibility, if the decision makers and designers have a proper appreciation of the identity of the home environment, to direct people's choices towards local culture to achieve a collective local identity. However, this possibility is not a simple matter, but rather needs real social research to understand the current social preferences as well as to provide people with alternatives to choose from to satisfy their individuality.

This final chapter draws together the findings of our study, associating them with the contemporary debate on the Gulf home environments. Some of those findings, which have been summarized at the end of previous chapters, will therefore be re-introduced in order to consider their relevance to the current issues of this contemporary debate. The future of the home environment and private home design in the Gulf cities are also discussed in this concluding chapter, and some relevant suggestions and recommendations for the future are propounded.

2. Identity in Hofuf's home environment

Expressing individual and collective identity is an important factor in the study of the development of the house form. One of the main goals of this study is to highlight the need for any future consideration of the house form to give proper weight to the question of how people express themselves as individuals and as groups in their home environment. In the introduction to this study we developed a hypothetical filtering model for the process that people follow to adapt and localize new forms. Our suggestion was that the residents' existing traditions, images, and past experiences would refine new forms that they might bring into any home environment.

Our understanding is that these refining measures are not immutable but rather grow over time in the light of the new experiences that people undergo. It is only those 'high' values – religious and some important social values – which continue with minimum change. The filtering model depends on two filters that people usually use to localize the new forms. The first and more important filter is the cultural filter, which functions to maintain collective identity by sustaining the minimum shared values and images. The personal filter, on the other hand, is linked with individual identity. It is associated with the lowest level in the value system, habit, which is more dynamic, and therefore more susceptible to change. As we have discussed in the third and fourth chapters in this study, these two filters are very important to an understanding of how identity may grow from a lower level to a higher level and how form can develop from a mere isolated and individual image to a collective image.

Some spatio-temporal paths for the development of a number of spaces and forms have been illustrated in the previous chapter. As we noted, several spaces have been refined over time with people using their past experiences, on the one hand, to refine the new forms and, on the other hand, finding that their experiences, in turn, were built up through the new images and technology. In the illustrated example we found that changing physical form is easier than changing the meaning of space. This is because the physical form belongs to the perceptual spectrum, which can be changed overnight when new forms or technology are introduced, while the meaning of space belongs to the associational spectrum, which is connected with the deepest meaning and enduring values underlying the ethos of society. In the concluding discussion which follows, we will reintroduce the two levels that every home environment in Hofuf has – the *fereej* and the house levels.

2.1 *Fereej System as an Identity Maintenance*

In contemporary Gulf's home environments the move towards the western model of the nuclear family has been accelerated, encouraged by the physical characteristics of the new home environment introduced into the Gulf which ignored the traditional social structure. Yet the *fereej* system has continued and people have found a place for their shared values by reproducing the concept in different forms and in a variety of ways. This has proved possible because the *fereej* is much more than simply a family grouping; it also serves as a vehicle for social values since it is deeply engrained in people's minds as an image of appropriate social behavior, and since it draws its resilience and vigor from its ability to resume its original shape or position over time.

This reproduction by the people of the *fereej* concept in their contemporary home environment stems from particular needs: communality as an attractive social quality connected with people's way of life, the acceptance of living as extended groups (intermediate relationships), and extended family bonds (primary relationships). These factors have proved capable of resisting or adapting to the physical changes in the organization of neighborhoods and have thus contributed to the survival and continuity of the *fereej* as a concept with which common people can identify and which they can reproduce.

So we can say that the process of modernization, which has affected the physical appearance of the home environment, has had a much smaller impact on cultural aspects. Inter-family relationships, private and communal behavior, a retained sense of identity and social status remain distinctively part of contemporary societies in the region. The primary relationships may be weakened due to the economic independence of young generations, but symbolically the family house nevertheless remains a reference point where every member in the family (even those sons and daughters who have left the family house) conceives of it as a special place which they hold in common.

2.1.1 Fereej System as a Place Making

The *fereej* system, then, has worked as a device for maintaining the identity of the home environment, since it is part of people's collective identity. It constitutes the main frame of the cultural filter in the home environment. While choosing the location of the house plays a vital part in people's happiness with their private home, and living within a group, as we have noticed, enhances the dialectic between the individual houses and the whole community, it is the *fereej* system which maintains the bond between the members in every group in society and defines their territories.

The greatest challenge to the establishment of the *fereej* system in the new home environment came, not when the residents of the traditional quarters moved to the new areas in the first decade of the twentieth century, but in the hybrid neighborhoods of 1940s and 1950s. In the early days of the first population relocation we notice how people expressed their individual and collective perceptual and associational identities very quickly. In fact they almost reproduced their traditional home environment and localized the grid pattern to the extent that even western travelers did not notice that the early neighborhood (*Assalbiyyah* in Hofuf) was different from the rest of the old town. This happened because people collectively moved to the area en masse and recreated their home environment as group.

This was not the case in the hybrid neighborhoods of 1940s and 1950s, when people had no chance to move into a neighborhood en masse since the land was sold in individual lots, and the process that produced the physical fabric of the new home environment was different from that which had applied when the suburb of *Assalbiyyah* was first settled. Personal and cultural form, in such later cases, were incompatible, whereas the inhabitants of *Assalbiyyah* had a more intimate relationship with the built form of their environment, and cultural and personal filters worked in a compatible way to replicate traditional life in the new suburb.

These differences in the circumstances of the settlement of *Assalbiyyah* and the settlement of the hybrid neighborhoods of the

1940s and 1950s help to explain why, in the former case, people were able to establish their perceptual and associational identities at both individual and group levels very quickly, while in the latter case difficulties stood in the way of people's establishment of their collective associational identities. The physical characteristics of the surroundings in both cases show great similarities, but the meaning of exterior space was seen differently by the inhabitants in each case.

Although the cultural filter encourages people to live in identified *fereej*s, several obstacles are found in the post-oil neighborhoods, especially the division of the inner blocks, which make it difficult for people to reproduce the *fereej* system easily. This indicates that the physical environment can encourage or discourage cultural and personal filters. It is therefore of great importance to comprehend those experiences that determine the cultural filters, particularly if we really want to direct the home environment, to respect people's collective identity, and propose a physical environment compatible with people's cultural frames.

One example which can be used to explain how the physical environment can encourage the cultural frame is the transitional *fereej*, when every *hamola* moved to a small neighborhood which was originally farmland owned by one of the *hamola* members or bought collectively by a number of extended families from the same *hamola*. The size of the neighborhood, in this case, was vital in encouraging people to recreate their sense of place. This is because, by developing smaller neighborhoods, people automatically realized the suitability of the size to a reproduction of the *fereej*. The entire neighborhood was occupied by a number of extended families from one *hamola*, or in some cases from related *hamolas*, which resulted in a homogeneous community with a high sense of place.

When, as in the contemporary home environment, the size of neighborhoods has become very large, people have developed several solutions to reproduce their *fereej*s and create their own places. Among these solutions is the clustering of a number of the extended families from the same *hamola* and related *hamolas* in one zone

within the neighborhood. This solution, considered a common phenomenon in contemporary home environment, is to some extent a continuation of the transitional *fereej*, in the sense that people have tried to break down the larger neighborhood by dividing it into smaller *fereej*s, or developing a well defined sub-neighborhood within the main neighborhood.

This solution, as with previous solutions, has been developed to maintain the sense of grouping and mark off the territory of the *hamola* from the rest of the neighborhood. It is, however, far beyond what people really need. This can be seen from the attempts at creating more physical connectedness through the building of groups of houses owned and occupied by members from one extended family. These houses are linked by an internal path in an attempt to recreate the traditional *fereej*. These attempts are motivated by the cultural and personal filters which work together to resist the gridiron land subdivision system that has been imposed in the contemporary home environment.

One of our most important findings is that local people have never interacted with their home environment in a passive way. They have always striven to identify themselves and create their own places in the new suburbs. Even when the governmental institutions appointed themselves as decision-makers at the macro and micro levels in the home environment, people were innovative enough to find several solutions to overcome these constraints. We believe that it has been because of the need to maintain collective identity, which appears strongly in the *fereej* system, that people have interacted positively with their home environment and tried to adapt and localize the gridiron pattern to make it suitable for their own lifestyle

This is not to say that such efforts have always met with success, but the people have tried and have shown some measure of attainment in recreating the *fereej* system, especially the large *hamolas* where the number of members help to recreate the *fereej*. It is of prime importance here to recognize that, because people still

persist in reproducing the *fereej* system, a fundamental frame for collective associational identity in the Gulf home environments; it is possible to encourage the role of the cultural frame in organizing the future neighborhoods in the Gulf cities by proposing solutions more compatible with people's collective identity.

This can be connected to our discussion in the beginning of this chapter, which stressed that identity in the home environment cannot be revived by imposing ready-made solutions or images instead of respecting people's cultural frame. One of our main findings here, therefore, is that it is possible to direct the home environment to adopt some cultural solutions, such as the *fereej* system.

2.1.2 Relevance of the Fereej System to the Current Issues in the Gulf Home Environment

From the foregoing findings one can say that it is possible to criticize the recent debate in the Gulf about using the traditional fabric as a solution for recreating the lost identity of the Saudi contemporary home environments¹⁰⁸. As we mentioned in the first two chapters of volume I, it is impossible to create identity by adopting historical forms or concepts. What is important is what people feel about these forms and concepts. As we noticed, the physical form was similar in

¹⁰⁸ One of the interesting social changes that people have expressed recently in their home environment is what happened in *Al-'Uraija* neighbourhood in Riyadh. This residential settlement is a new suburb selected by the municipality to test proposed new building regulations. The proposed regulations have been developed to succeed the setback regulations and they allow the building to be joined from back and sides. In *Al-'Uraija*, people were not satisfied with the new regulations and some of them left the area. The reason behind this dissatisfaction was the insecurity that people felt because everyone can now easily access the neighbours' houses by the roofs. See *Al Riyadh* (Arabic newspaper) No. 10755 (4-12-97). If we compare this situation with what existed in the traditional home environment we can argue that building regulations need to be developed to deal with the process of producing the built form rather than to force people to follow a preconceived physical form. People need first to build an intimate relationship with the surrounding place to be persuaded to live as they used to in the traditional home environment.

the early and the post-oil neighborhoods but people developed different social spaces¹⁰⁹.

What is really needed to enhance the future home environment in the Gulf is to study the current attitudes and patterns of behavior in the home environment in every city in the country to consider how people have interacted with the physical forms around them. Then it might be possible to propose some guidelines to aid those concerned with the planning and design of the future home environment. We have noted that the people of Hofuf resisted the new land subdivision system and tried to re-create their own places. If we encourage this attitude in the future it will enhance the quality of life in the home environment.

2.2 Searching for Identity as Form Giver

The relation between the form and the meaning of the form is debatable because, as we have already noted in several places in this study, an old meaning may be embodied in new forms and vice versa. Furthermore the new economical and technological developments have played a major role in the formation of the contemporary private home. These factors are also, we believe, amongst the factors that influence people's identity, as was clearly seen when a new identity appeared in conjunction with changes in the economic status of the family in the 1940s.

The discussion which follows aims to summarise some of the important examples which throw light on how searching for

¹⁰⁹ The issue of future home environment in Saudi Arabia had been discussed in one of the local newspapers between 9-10-97 and 15-1-98. The researcher followed this issue and contributed two articles. The main points that were raised by several officials, architects and academicians concentrated on the need to review the building regulations because they were not suitable for people's lifestyle and because they were not economical. The researcher concentrated on public participation as well as the need to consider the local characteristics for every city. This means that we need specific regulations for each city rather than one set of rules applied everywhere in Saudi Arabia. See Al-Riyadh (local newspaper) issues 10699; 1706; 10713; 10720; 10727; 10741; 10755; 10776; 10790; 10797.

identity, whether individual or collective, has worked as mechanism for producing and refining the house form over time. The impact of searching for identity on the house form is one of the main goals of this study. We are looking for those aspects which encourage people to decide to adopt certain forms and resist or transform others.

2.2.1 The Three Portions of the House

The three section division of the private home is a phenomenon that has continued over time; there has always been a front, middle, and a back to the house and the front stage has always contained the male reception areas, the main symbolic spaces. This area constitutes the house façade and links the family with the community. The middle stage has always been a private section; it is the female zone and contains the utilitarian and semi-symbolic spaces. The back stage consists of utilitarian spaces. The relationship between these three parts of the house has been maintained over time to express the family status through the positioning of the front stage in such a way that it affords the maximum visual contact with both the whole community and visitors to the house.

In the traditional house each zone is isolated from the others by a transitional space, a clear division of the house into three clusters so that people could maintain the privacy they needed. The domain that belonged exclusively to women was therefore the innermost part of the house and the roof routes, while individual family and collective identities were expressed through a maximizing of the relationship between the front stage and external domestic spaces. As far as house sections are concerned, one of the most interesting finds of our study is that the middle stage, the family part, became the most enduring and least changed part of the house, consisting as it did of mainly utilitarian spaces between the front and the back. Change in this part of the house seemed less important for traditional cities of the region, and it was thus protected from changes in one or other of the other spaces by its location between two transitional zones.

Despite the enduring three-zone division of the private home, the clarity of the spaces was reduced, especially in the early villa type of house. With a few exceptions, the hybrid and transitional houses the 1940s and 1950s saw a continuation of the traditional zoning pattern, even when the back setback in the transitional house was used; it was part of the back stage. The form and meaning of the three traditional parts were maintained because people experienced their practicality, and there was in any case little change yet in the general lifestyle to instigate any modification.

It was not until the introduction of new building regulations in the 1980s that the clustering arrangements of the internal spaces in the private homes met with some difficulties. Three house divisions were still encountered in the villa type of house, but with less clarity, especially in the middle and back sections where the transitional space, the internal *sabat*, disappeared to be replaced by an undefined boundary. It was some years before the house regained its former characteristics, which was achieved by clustering a number of spaces with similar functions and linking them by transitional zones. By the time of the post-1995 houses this clustering had become very clear and indeed the house developed more stages due to the location of the women's *majlis* and the living room between the front and the middle stages.

Expressing the status of the family and maintaining female privacy encouraged the local people of the Gulf to refine their houses and classify the spaces in them according to both their utilitarian functions and symbolic roles. So it is that we find that four clusters have developed in recent houses. Firstly there are the male reception spaces, consisting of a symbolic space, the *majlis* hall, and a less symbolic space, the *mugallat*. Secondly there are the female reception spaces, where the symbolic role is played by the women's *majlis* and the utilitarian function by the multi-purpose room. The third cluster is that of the living spaces, recently developed to include the kitchen; here the symbolic space is the living room and the

utilitarian area the kitchen and family dining room. The bedrooms, now located on the first floor, make up the fourth cluster.

Linking these clusters is a series of transitional spaces, a feature which has continued over time even when the pattern of clusters was different from that which has developed most recently. Thus even when the *majlis* hall opened directly on to the front setback in the transitional home and some of the early villa types, there was a passageway between the front setback and the family spaces. In the most recent houses the male reception spaces are connected by an entrance hall to the front garden and to the living spaces. An entrance hall to separate the women's *majlis* from the living spaces has developed, an indication of the change in the status of women. Connecting the female reception spaces with the living spaces there is a small living space or a passageway, an area which can be considered the central transitional space because it links all the ground floor spaces, because it is connected with both the male and female entrances, and because it links the ground floor with the first floor through the positioning of the staircase.

One fact to note is that, although recent houses in the Gulf have developed into more than three sections, the three stages that we have identified have been basically retained, though with some space re-location. The women's *majlis* and the living room, for instance, are still accounted part of the front stage, even although for reasons of privacy they may in fact be located deeper within the building and not physically in the front. Clearly it is according to the meaning of a space and not its physical location that it is classified. The kitchen, for example, has become of more symbolic significance in recent houses, when it moved from the back stage to the middle stage.

2.2.2 *The Family and Community Relationships*

Whatever the physical layout and relationship of rooms and spaces, it may be that the most unchanging phenomenon in the private home is the dialectic between the family and the community. The people's determination to retain the *fereej* system is an

indication of their commitment to the maintenance of a balanced relationship between family and community. This relationship was maintained in the traditional house by linking the front spaces visually and physically with the external domestic spaces. Now we find that it is affirmed by developing the front stage, always occupied by the male reception spaces, as a semi-private zone within the house, which informs others symbolically about the activities that take place in these spaces.

The enduring nature of this family-community relationship can be seen in the obvious influence that it has had over the centuries in determining the traditional house form. This relationship survived the changes introduced in male reception spaces around a century ago, when new symbolic devices evolved to sustain it. The *majlis* hall, for example, moved to the first floor but a staircase was developed in the guest entrance hall and beside the main gate of the house to maximize the link with external spaces by allowing free entrance to the house to visitors. The privacy of the family was protected by the separation of the guest entrance hall from the family entrance hall. Visually, loggia or *masbah* were positioned in front of the *majlis* and opened on to the main *sikka* to inform visitors about the activities that might be carried out in the *majlis* and to invite them to enter the house.

The hybrid house of the 1940s kept this family-community relationship going. For the first time openings to external spaces, in the form of windows in the *majlis* hall, appeared on the ground floor of private homes. Despite the major nature of this change it was carried out without hesitation, because people understood the symbolic role of the *majlis*, a semi-private space, as a mediator between the family and the community.

As far as the transitional house is concerned, when the *majlis* hall separated from the front setback, people concentrated on the visual symbols and sought solutions to re-establish the link between the male reception spaces and the external spaces. The open space at the front of the *majlis* hall became bigger...

The recent house in the region can be seen as an expression of an individual identity when we see it as individual spaces. The women's *majlis*, for example, is an expression of the new role of women in society. Women in this case have tried to express themselves by insisting on the separation of the women's *majlis* from the family part and by furnishing it with sofas and chairs, similar to the male reception space. In the relationship and use of spaces, the recent house is an expression of collective identity. The internal spaces relate to each other in a way that expresses the collective ethos of contemporary Gulf societies. Clustering of spaces, for example, is an expression of a collective inherited experience and the separation of guest spaces from the family part is collective behavior worked out to maintain the collective identity of the private home over time.

This behavioral duality is what makes the contemporary home more local and a genuine expression of contemporary Gulf societies. The new identity, which started in the 1940s, is now characterized by the rise of individual identity. Collective identity has become less important than it was in the traditional home environment.

The economic and technological changes are among the factors that influence people's identity. When the economical status of the traditional family in Hofuf changed in the 1940s a new identity appeared.

3. Future of the home environment and private home in Hofuf

Future planning for a conservative society needs to consider those major cultural issues that constitute the belief system and ethos. It is obvious that the efforts to modernize Gulf cities were concentrated mainly on physical appearances and the applications of foreign models, without considering or realizing the consequences on people's daily life. Future home environments, in this sense, should reflect a different planning attitude in order to meet people's social and cultural needs.

This can be seen from the fact that implementing insensitive development measures in the traditional home environment in

Hofuf led to a complete decline of traditional areas. Ignoring the hidden boundaries of the *fereej* system reduced the environmental quality and forced people to move to places where they could reproduce their *fereej*s.

Planners, then, may destroy existing home environments if they work without considering the prevailing social and physical determinants. Future planning for any existing residential settlement should work within the systems that exist, not only the physical configurations but more importantly the social ones, which need more research and sensitive treatment.

3.1 *Encouraging the Fereej system*

One way to think about the future home environment is to let people create their own *fereej*s. To do that planners need firstly to understand that this system is a deep expression of social behavior and also that its physical representation is not fixed, which means people may reproduce their *fereej*s in different forms. Further, it must be grasped that the physical environment should support this attitude by developing flexible mechanisms and techniques in the micro-scale; thus dwelling arrangements and design can be modified with changing life circumstances.

The current land subdivision and land allocation system in the region militates against the development of the *fereej* system. In order to encourage the establishment of *fereej*s, consideration should be given to a reduction in the size of neighborhoods. For one thing, this would facilitate a sense of local identity and awareness, since the area would not seem too large for traditional communal associations. A further result would be to encourage the relocation of large *hamolas* to neighborhoods as a single group so that the human material for the development of the *fereej* would already be on hand. *Hamolas* should also be consulted about the layout and use of areas in which they are going to live. Since the evidence of our study indicates that people will in any case seek to re-establish *fereej*s even though with some changes of superficial form, their social and

communal value has clearly been recognized by the people and deserves to be encouraged by decision makers.

3.2 *Managing Internal Space Clustering*

As a result of the unique situation regarding privacy requirements in Saudi Arabia, the space clusterings that we now find in the contemporary Hofuf house have evolved and carry particular significance. The desire for each individual to have his or her own bedroom, combined with the need to express personal identity and other symbolic factors relating to spaces and clustering, have now resulted in an increase in the size of the contemporary house such that it is becoming unviable in terms of cost.

What is therefore required is a re-consideration of space use and meaning in the traditional home, where privacy requirements and the expression of identity were accommodated without the need for such large houses, in order to see whether lessons about design and layout can be learned from them, while still preserving privacy and satisfying the other needs and aspirations of the residents. This issue, however, is not a straightforward one, since it has to be recognized that the personalizing of space that we now find in the contemporary home did not exist in the traditional house. More work, therefore, needs to be done on this.

3.3 *Respecting Associational Meanings in the Home Environment*

It has been an ongoing phenomenon of the Gulf home environments that, irrespective of the changes in form that may have taken place the associational meanings have been retained. We can see this in the case of the *fereej*, where the form of the home environment has changed, but the associational need to live within a well-identified group continued. This is applicable also at the house level, where the need for clustering internal spaces continued despite the change of the house form. At the smallest level the meaning and use of the male *majlis* hall continued with its three zones, even when the form of the *majlis* changed. These three examples show that the

associational meanings are very important and need to be considered in any future home environment.

3.4 *The Problem of House Size*

It is clear that the need for separating the house into two floors, one for sleeping and the other for reception and entertaining, has increased the size of the house. Because everyone in the family needs a separate room, four bedrooms in addition to the master bedroom have become one of the main requirements of the family in present-day Hofuf. This has led in most cases to an increase in the sizes of the spaces in the ground floor. People were tempted to take this step because there were no extra costs from the construction point of view. However, they did not appreciate the high cost of energy every month, nor, in many cases, the expenditure involved in extra furniture.

The cost of the house now is not affordable for the younger generation because of the standards that people demand for their private homes. One of the main suggestions that can solve the problem in the future is to bring back the three portions of the house by including the living room with the women's *majlis* and the multi-purpose room with the family dining room. It is difficult with the current family size to reduce the number of the bedrooms, but it is possible to reduce the size of the rooms themselves, which will help in reducing the size of the house.

3.5 *Allowing Future Transformation*

Despite the changes that have taken place in the house form over the years form remains, in comparison with image, a relatively static element. Image is more dynamic and more susceptible to change. We should therefore in the future look to develop more flexible forms in order to accommodate the changes that are taking place in people's lives due to the development of technology. For example in the last two decades the living room has become the most dynamic space in the house, developed from a central space like a courtyard to a space

holding symbolic meaning and connecting the whole house together.

Understanding this spatial dynamism and development in the private home requires from us a re-evaluation of our current construction techniques and materials in the region. Concrete as a construction material allows very little change. We therefore need to consider more adaptable and flexible materials, such as the wood used in the traditional home, which allowed people to transform their houses and to cope with the changes over time with minimum cost.

4. Areas for further research

We have used the phenomenon of the expression of individual and collective identities in the private home to understand the past development of the Gulf societies, but still there is a lot of work to be done to understand contemporary society. One of the main findings regarding this subject, for example, relates to the role of women, which has changed considerably and has become very important in the last two decades.

Further, if we really wish to improve the future home environment in the Gulf, it is necessary to concentrate on environmental-behavior studies. This present study may perhaps be considered as one contribution among several studies on the private home. One of the most important areas of study, which can be linked closely to this present contribution, would be on the influence of expressing individual and personal identities on existing houses. How has the desire to express oneself and communicate with the community worked as impulses to encourage people to transform their private homes? In this study we have touched upon some of these influences, but a more comprehensive investigation is required to understand this phenomenon more fully.

Significant investigation can be carried out on how searching for identity has increased the cost of living in the Gulf. We have noted that searching for identity has duplicated the size of the private

house, which has increased the cost of construction as well as the cost of energy and long-term maintenance, and this is an area which could be followed up. There is the related question of the viability of existing houses if the cost of energy increases in the future, an area of particular significance especially when the Saudi government is concerned about energy consumption.

What is now required is a quantitative investigation, seeking to measure and substantiate the weight of the variables that apply to the contemporary home environment, and that have been brought to light in this current qualitative study. Such variables would include living in a group, the continuing significance of the *majlis* as a mediator between the family and community, the importance of the women's *majlis* and the living room – of particular significance in the contemporary home because of the recent changes in the status of women – and the clustering of spaces within the home, all of which help to constitute the identity of the contemporary home environment. Research, using our findings, should be able to identify and quantify the role played by the different variables in the satisfaction of the people with their contemporary home environment, and should thus be able to establish guidelines for those who will plan and design the future home environment. So that they plan and design an environment appropriate to the needs and aspirations of the people.

This study has demonstrated that a consideration of people's past experiences is very important in order to understand their behaviour, because they always use these experiences to evaluate the present and decide about the future. With this in mind, we can venture a final suggestion for further research with respect to other cities in the Gulf. The results of this investigation can be used as a comparative study to test the need for different design guidelines and building regulations for every local society in the Gulf. It should be borne in mind that, as things stand at present, the building regulations in Saudi Arabia form a standard for use in all localities without consideration for the differences which may exist between different

local areas. A similar methodological approach might be used in other cities in Saudi Arabia, which will make it possible for decision makers to test the results and understand the differences between local societies, and to take them into account in any future planning.

GLOSSARY

<i>Agasi</i>	Gallery around a courtyard used as a main circulation to connect different spaces in the first floor.
<i>Bakbar</i>	Small room open to traditional <i>majlis</i> used as a storage space.
<i>Baraba</i>	Open space usually located at the intersection of the main <i>sikkas</i> in the traditional home environment.
<i>Buriga</i>	The covered part in the animal zone in the traditional house
<i>Bushtakhtab</i>	A small wooden box used as an office drawer usually found in those big houses in which their owners do some business activities in their <i>majlises</i> .
<i>Daka</i>	A mud bench used for sitting.
<i>Dalla</i>	Coffee pot.
<i>Debreez</i>	The entrance of the traditional house.
<i>Dar</i>	Small room opening on to a bigger room in the traditional house.
<i>Fereej</i>	Social and physical unit developed in the traditional home environment for both creating physical and social homogeneity. Also, it was the main device that has been used by a group of people to express their identity.
<i>Finjal</i>	Small coffee cup.
<i>Gerd</i>	It is made of palm leaves and used to cover the semi shaded space in the front of the traditional <i>majlis</i> hall. Also, it was used in some cases for furnishing <i>dakkeas</i> .
<i>Hamola</i>	A name usually used to define a clan in the society. It is similar to the English word 'House'. For example 'House of Windsor'. However, this word denotes the status of the family and its position in the society.
<i>Hawi</i>	Courtyard.
<i>Hota</i>	The name of the residential block in <i>Assalbiyah</i> neighbourhood. It means the land surrounded by a fence or street on all sides.

<i>Jussa</i>	A built-in box used to store dates for daily use.
<i>Kandooj</i>	A small room located inside or outside the house to store the dates for commercial purposes.
<i>Livan</i>	A rectangular utilitarian room in the traditional house.
<i>Madda</i>	A carpet made of bamboo.
<i>Maiz</i>	A wooden box. It consists of two or more steps (usually it does not exceed four).
<i>Majlis</i>	Men's reception space.
<i>Majlis Riwaq</i>	Loggia or a covered place with two opened arches usually located over the main entrance. Its openings are located over the main gate. It is usually associated with a <i>majlis</i> in the first floor, but some time it is used as part of the summer <i>majlis</i> in those houses which have a <i>majlis</i> in the ground floor.
<i>Masbah</i>	Covered roof usually associated with a <i>majlis</i> in the first floor. Also, it may exist in a family roof.
<i>Mugad</i>	The traditional kitchen.
<i>Mugallat</i>	A room associated with the male reception space. It was used as women reception space in the transitional house and as dining room in the contemporary house.
<i>Murab'a</i>	A square room in the traditional house, mainly considered, with courtyard, a symbolic space in the family part of the traditional house.
<i>Musallah</i>	A house made of reinforced concrete.
<i>Nuss-Musallah</i>	A house made mainly of reinforced concrete, but with its ceiling and roof made of wood.
<i>Riwaq</i>	The covered part of a courtyard. Usually it is defined from the opened part by an arcade.
<i>Ruwshan</i>	Small ventilation opening high in the wall of rooms in the traditional house.
<i>Sabat</i>	Usually this term is used to refer to a part of street in the traditional home environment. This part had its uniqueness due to the existing of a room over the street, as a bridge between two houses, connecting them together.
<i>Semada</i>	The animal court in the traditional house.
<i>Sikka</i>	Main street in the <i>fereej</i> system in the traditional home environment.
<i>Sikka Saad</i>	Cul-de-sac.

<i>Sindook</i>	It connotes positive meaning in the traditional home environment because it refers to the most secured house while in the contemporary home environment it connotes a negative meaning because it refers to the rectangular form of the house.
<i>Usaila</i>	The bathing area in the traditional house.
<i>Takkaya</i>	A wooden box covered with cloths used with mattresses in the traditional <i>majlis</i> .
<i>Tarma</i>	A small box over the main gate in the traditional home environment used as a device for observing the external domestic spaces. The word <i>tarma</i> implies that women can see without speaking.
<i>Wijaq or Wijar</i>	A coffee place inside the <i>majlis</i> or the <i>riwaaq</i> . It is a very symbolic place and associated with deep associational meanings.

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