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SOCIETAL VALUES AND THEIR EFFECT ON THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IN SAUDI ARABIA: A RECENT ACCOUNT

Tarik M. Al-Soliman

Starting in the early 1970s, Saudi Arabia has experienced one of the most striking examples of rapid social change. The change came as a result of a sudden expansion in the national economy accelerated by rising oil revenues. Such change was far reaching and has touched all facets of daily life. The built environment was no exception. It has led to the hasty alteration of existing built environments - especially homes - and the introduction of new building types and urban fabrics which are new altogether. Change can be witnessed in various aspects of the environment ranging from the application of new materials and technology to the emergence of complex freeway networks, high rise office buildings, shopping malls, university campuses, sports facilities, booming cities, etc. This is in contrast to the traditional, small, walled, simple, adobe housed, quiet town of the recent past. The social change is manifested in, among others, new thrifty patterns of life, more education, independence of the single family, the adoption of new social classes, more exposure to the outer world, and an influx of foreign manpower serving both inside and outside the family house. Those changes have led to the development of new social values and norms by one of the most conservative societies in the world. This paper will attempt to illustrate and highlight those notable social changes and their role in producing a new set of environmental norms and artifacts using a conceptual model. The model will aid in explaining the link between the societal (intangible) values and architectural (tangible) artifacts. Evaluation of this end product (architectural artifact) reveals that changes have led to some improvement in the quality of life in terms of creature comfort, and yet a great deal of inadequacies in supporting social-cultural values has resulted.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of environmental change/social change and their interaction within the Saudi society can be looked at as a very unique experience in light of two factors. The first has to do with the dominant influence of religion on all aspects of daily life. The second has to do with the pace and magnitude at which change was launched and directed. Aspects of change experienced by the Saudi society for the last fifteen years are so incredible that they are thought to have constituted what amounts to be a real cultural lag (Edari, 1976; Al-Nowaiser, 1983).

It would be safe to say that the drive for change was indigenous in nature (Strassar and Randall, 1981) since it came as a response to a planned attempt by the government to rapidly modernize Saudi Arabia. In other words, unlike other neighboring countries where change was imposed by colonial powers, change in Saudi Arabia was instigated from within. Planned and financed by the government, change was immediately embraced by the public with the clear objective of creating a modern society. This has resulted in a major shift in the perception of what a new and well built environment should be and how it should look. This perception was diametrically opposed to that produced by traditional settlements and their architecture (Hakim, 1989). The vehicle of implementation for that change was represented in a series of four Five-Years National Development Plans, the fourth of which is the ongoing plan covering the period 1985-90 (Ministry of Planning, 1985). Although the plans were very explicit in delineating goals and methods for achieving economic and other objectives, the ones related to fostering social stability gave no detail (Wells, 1976).

The development plans gave way to major undertakings in the form of roads, airports, communication networks, schools, factories, housing, hospitals, etc. The latest in modern technology was employed to establish the previous projects. On the other side stands the recipient and user of such technology represented by a very conservative and traditional society (Long, 1976) which did not have the fair chance to develop an acquaintance with, grasp of, and appreciation for such technology. To make matters worse the manpower shortage led to the importation of foreign manpower. That dual process of introducing modern technology and foreign manpower coupled with the high per capita income meant further accelerating a process of socio-cultural change (Bernard & Pelto, 1972) as well as adopting alien values and habits (Sinha, 1976).

This study will attempt to highlight the associated changes in the living environment (built & non-built) as a by-product of socio-economic change as well as on the role of both the resulting environment and the social change in affecting behavior. Broad based societal values will be explored and translated into societal norms leading to the formulation of specific architectural preferences all of which cumulatively affected built form.

PURPOSE

The pace of socio-economic, and ensuing environmental, change in Saudi Arabia is so unique that its results can be witnessed over a span of less than a generation. In practical terms, we can antedate the real starting point for change to the early 1970s when the economy started to accelerate as a result of rising oil revenues. Symptoms as well as artifacts of change can very easily be traced, observed and documented. They are particularly manifest when we realize that the process of change started to decelerate in the early 1980s. This time, as a result of declining oil revenues.

In summary, this study derives its importance from three major factors:

- 1. The dramatic pace and magnitude of change experienced by the Saudi society so far,
- 2. The Saudi model has been poorly researched and understood as a socio-economic and environmental context; and
- 3. The peculiar and continuous attachment of the bulk of the societal values' system to religious origins and strict observance of Islamic Laws in Saudi Arabia.

It is the aim of this study to seize this timely opportunity by highlighting the major changes in the living environment as a by-product of socio-economic change. Explanations usually offered for the relationship between values and architecture are broad in nature which, while interesting, have not offered specific connections and explanations between abstract views and built form (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1984). The objective here is to provide an account of those specific connections linking societal values and architectural artifacts based on the analysis of traditional and modern aspects of life in Saudi Arabia. It is expected that such an analysis will offer useful concepts for the relationship between the abstract views and built form that could be generalized to understand other situations and contexts.

The residential environment will be focused on to exemplify most of the environmental changes that can be explained using a conceptual model which establishes a link between societal values at one end of the model with architectural artifacts at the other end. The study will also attempt to anticipate the resulting behavior which is influenced by societal values as well as the physical environment. In many environments, behavior can be explained, at least in part, by cultural and economic reasons. But recent research on environment and behavior has also indicated that the physical environment can at least act as a catalyst to influence behavior, even if it may not necessarily be a determinant (Al-Nowaiser, 1987; Rapoport, 1980).

METHODOLOGY

The task of establishing a link or a casual relationship between social values and the ultimate organization or shape of the environment is by no means easy. Going along the objective of this paper, the model proposed by Mazumdar and Mazumdar (1984) will be used to examine and understand the values involved in the choice of a specific architectural artifact (Figure 1). *The model depicts various levels of interrelated preferences and choices which affect society's beliefs regarding the suitability of architectural artifacts.* Although the model is presented in a static way to facilitate the understanding of its complex relationships, societal values represent sets of preferences which are dynamic and change over time (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1984). Hence, it will be seen that with change in societal values there could be changes in societal norms and architectural values given the two examples of traditional and modern periods.

The previous model (Figure 1), although useful in translating predefined sets of social values, needs to be modified in order to accommodate the society at hand. Religious values and teachings are sometimes embodied, presented, and practiced in the form of social values and can be treated as such in the model. However, some other religious values come in the form of direct social norms or are even prescribed as architectural values. Reviewing, the Muslim Holy Book (*Quran*) and the Prophet's teachings (*Sunna*) enables one to identify numerous examples of that nature as can be seen later (Hakim, 1986).

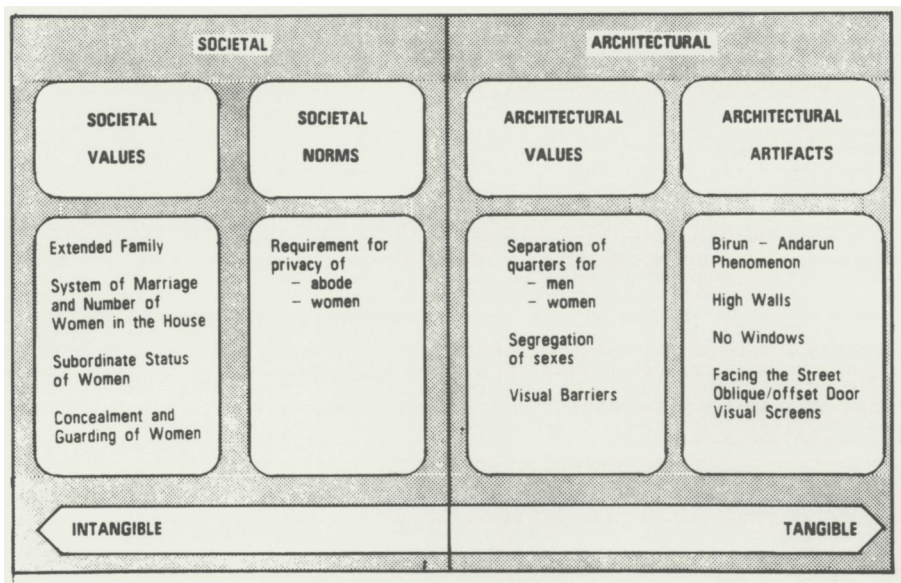


FIGURE 1. A model of the relationship between societal values and architectural artifacts.
Source: Mazumdar and Mazumdar (1984) "How Societal Values Affect Architecture: A Model Based on a Study of the Islamic House in Iran." In Duerk and Campbell (Eds.) *EDRA 15, 1984*. Washington, DC: Environmental Design Research Association.

TABLE 1. General planning and design differences between traditional and modern houses.

	Traditional House	Modern House
Pattern	Attached to other Houses	Detached & must maintain certain setbacks from surrounding streets and neighborhood's lots.
Size	Small in size and lot	Large in size and lot
Open Space	Has a private, open-air courtyard or more	Surrounded by a garden which is enclosed by an eye-level wall
Structure	Load bearing adobe walls	Reinforced concrete structure & cement-block wall
Roofing	Wood, straw and clay	Reinforced concrete
Windows	Minimum street windows providing light to non-family spaces	Large climatically unprotected windows at all sides
Equipment & Amenities	The traditional house lacks, or is poorly equipped with, all the amenities, fixtures, equipment, & installations usually available in the modern house.	
Uses of Rooms	Rooms in the traditional house had no specific names & are not designated for specific uses as in the modern house.	
Safety	Compared to the modern house, the traditional is somewhat unsafe structurally, & is poorly protected against fire, dust storms, and rain flooding.	
Users	Single or multi (extended)	Single family

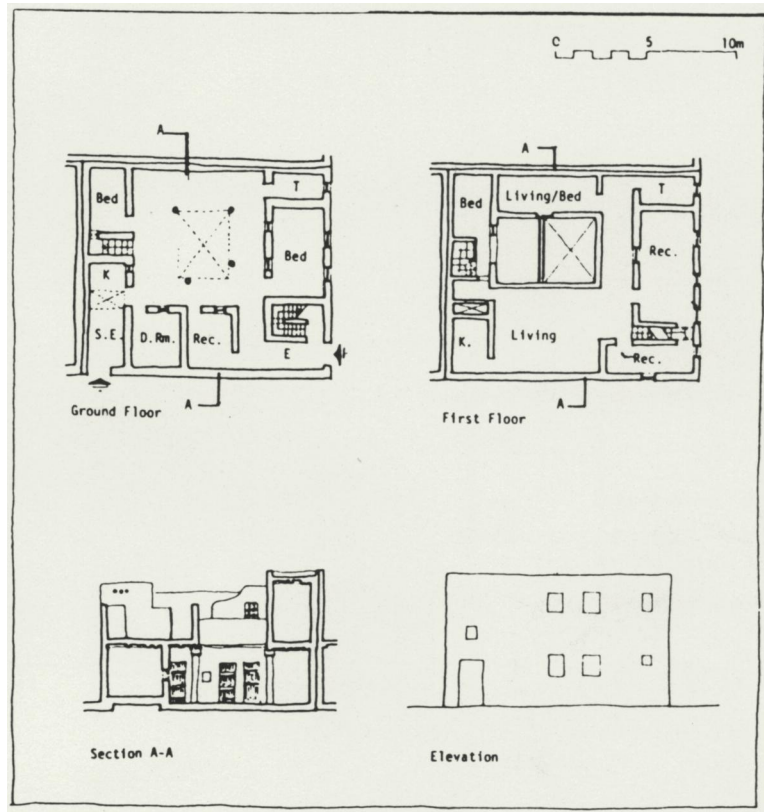


FIGURE 2. An example of the traditional house.

Source: Akbar J (1980). *Support for Courtyard Houses: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*. Unpublished thesis, Cambridge, MA: MIT. P. 22.

For the purpose of this study, a flexible type of a model will be proposed while maintaining the same basic assumptions upon which it was established. Accordingly some of the model's components may merge into one when applying it to the Saudi society. Taking the Saudi society as a case study will be accomplished by studying two distinct identifiable periods: the traditional period and the modern (contemporary) period.

The study will present four housing units representing the previous traditional and modern periods. The four units were selected by previous studies (Al-Hathloul, 1975; Akbar, 1980) to encompass most of the organizational and functional characteristics of residential units in those periods (See Figures 2, 3 & 5.) Table 1 identifies major planning and design differences between the traditional and modern houses. It should be stated here that the study is general and is broadly based, aimed at delineating the overall outline of the phenomenon of change which is still on-going. Also there is a limitation of available relevant resources and studies - both socially and architecturally oriented ones. Therefore, the study should be looked at as an interim in nature, setting the tone for further empirical studies.

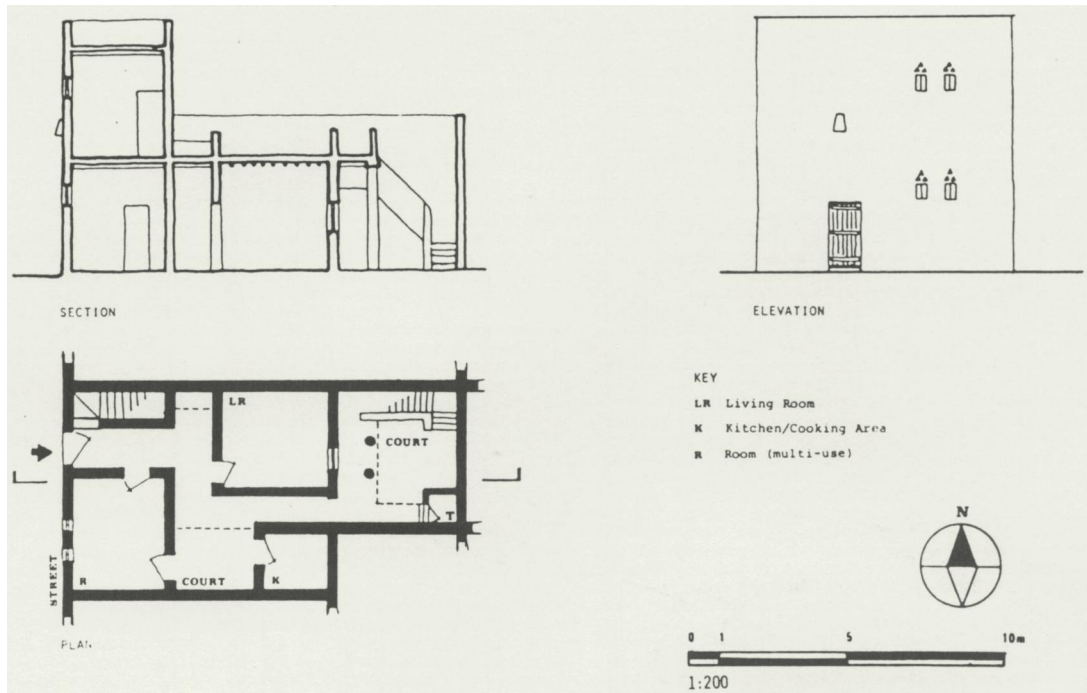


FIGURE 3. An example of the traditional house.

Source: Al-Houthloul, et. al. (1975) *Urban Land Utilization: Case Study: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*. Unpublished thesis, Cambridge, MA: MIT. P. 16.

THE TRADITIONAL PERIOD

This period is characterized by the dominance of indigenous change manifested by religious, social, economic, education and technological values and norms. Although the real momentum for change started to pickup in the early 1970s, it would not be realistic to say the traditional period had ended by that time. Change is a continuous process and some forms of social change took place long time before.

Throughout the model (Figure 4) each value component is translated into a set of relevant values and norms leading into the choice of a certain environmental value which fulfills such norm. Later an environmental artifact attempts to delineate the closest possible physical illustration to the respective environmental value. The final part of the model indicates a set of possible behavioral patterns fostered by the produced environmental artifact in association with the predetermined values and norms.

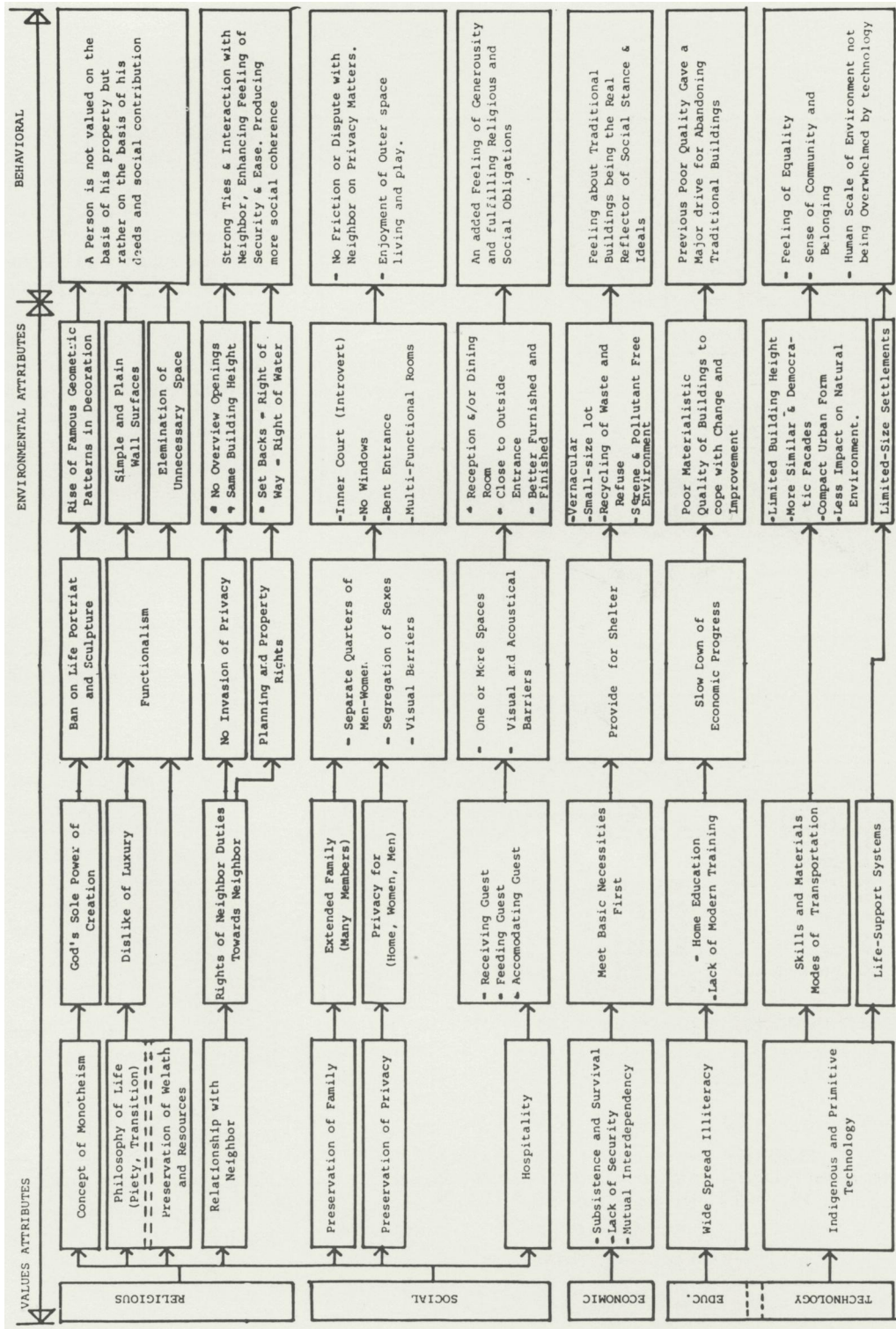


FIGURE 4. A model indicating the value/environmental attributes relationship in the traditional period.

Religious Values

For Muslims, Islam is not simply a creed but an overall and comprehensive way of life governing and regulating all details of religious and civic behaviors and manners (Long, 1976:12; Lipsky, 1959). Viewed as such, we find that there is a great deal of interchangeability between religious, on one hand, and social, economic, and educational values on the other hand. *Shariah*, or Islamic law, prevailed in the Muslim community regulating all matters of human activities. The development of guidelines for such activities became the concern of the science of *fiqh*. *Fiqh* is the Arabic term for jurisprudence, or the science of religious law in Islam. It concerns itself with two spheres of activity: *Ibadat*, dealing with matters concerning ritual observances; and *Muamalat*, the legal questions that arise in social life (e.g., family law, law of inheritance, of property, of contracts, criminal law, etc.), and problems arising from building activity and related procedures (Hakim, 1989). Accordingly, three value components will be presented as examples encompassing vital aspects covered by those spheres of activity.

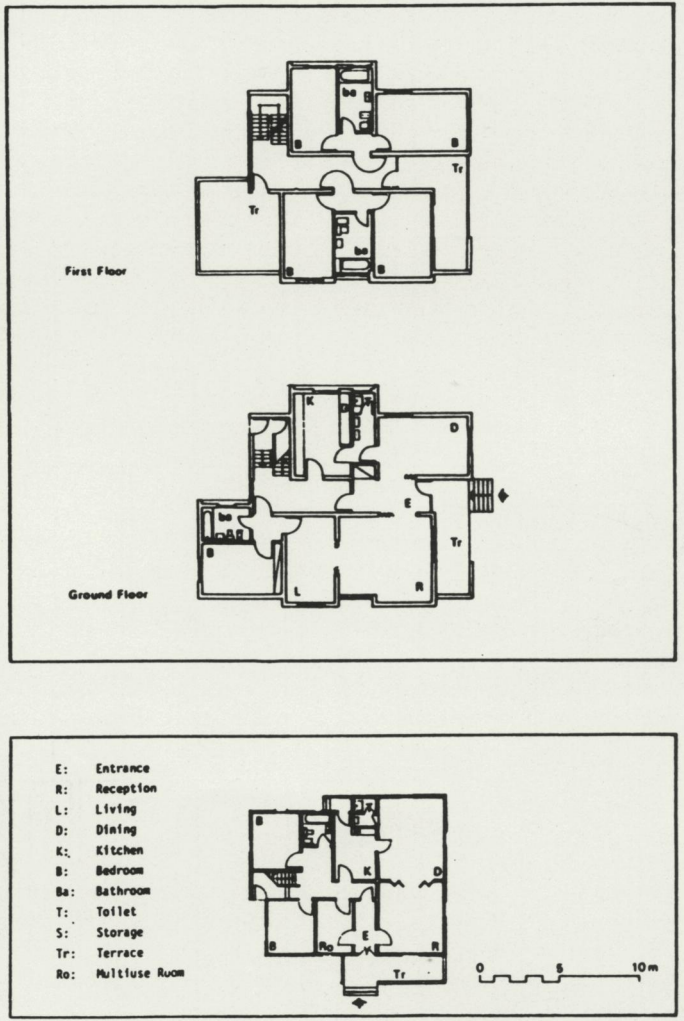


FIGURE 5. Two examples of the modern house.
Source: Akbar J (1980). *Support for Courtyard Houses: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*. Unpublished thesis, Cambridge, MA: MIT. P. 22.

The Concept of Monotheism:

This concept represents the essence of the message of Islam calling for the oneness of God the creator and all relevant Godly attributes. The verses contained in chapter CXII (*Ikhlas*) of the Holy Quran states that concept as follows: *Say, He is God, The One and Only; God, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, Nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him* (Ali, 1975) : Chapter CXII). This message was emphatically declared with the birth of Islam in Makkah; a town filled with statues, idols and portraits of Prophets and saints which, at that time, were either worshiped or associated with God as partners: *But shun The Abomination of idols, And shun the world That is false* (Ali, 1975: Chapter XXII, verse 30). Ever since, all two or three dimensional creations of life images were banned (Woods, 1978) thus giving rise to geometric patterns and calligraphy as a flourishing, lavish substitute (Bianca, 1981 :44). Despite all pressures, public buildings and urban environments in Saudi Arabia are totally free of any three dimensional creations of life images and, to a lesser degree, of any two dimensional ones (Al-Soliman, 1988).

Philosophy of Life (Piety & Frugality):

Keeping up with the Islamic view of life as a transitional period that should be filled with piety and good deeds while leading a frugal and humble way of physical life by being a giver after meeting basic biological necessities, we find a strong direction of functionalism within the traditional quarters of major Islamic cities. This also conforms with two basic Islamic teachings: the preservation of the individual's - the aggregate of which is the community - wealth and resources; and the rejection of the posture of arrogance. Those teachings served as self-regulating mechanism on the muslims' behavior. For example, they strongly influenced the manner in which exterior facades and elevations were regarded and treated. (Hakim, 1989). This becomes obvious in the simple and plain wall surfaces both inside and outside the home (King, 1981 :15).

Rejecting arrogance, which gave rise to the concept of *beauty without arrogance*, is attributed directly to the Prophet Muhammad in the form of the saying, *No person with an atom of arrogance in his heart will enter paradise* (Hakim, 1989). Also, non-utilized spaces are rare. Standing as an exception will be those huge and lavishly decorated mosques and palaces which are considered non-conforming with the real spirit of Islam by the majority of Muslim scholars (Sabeg, 1971). Compared to other Muslim countries, decorative and ornamental works in buildings and mosques in Saudi Arabia are considerably less despite recent works fueled by the capital affluence.

Relationship with Neighbors:

Muslims were instructed to strictly observe a long list of rights, duties, and obligations towards neighbors - even the far away ones. Among the environmentally distinctive rights and duties are those related to neighbor's privacy, and planning and property rights (see Al-Hathloul, 1981; Akbar, 1983). Consequently a neighbor's home cannot be overlooked by either direct openings or higher roofs or doorways directly facing each other. Also setbacks, giving right of way, right of water, permitting the neighbor to use one's walls to support his (the neighbor's) roof are rights that were either explicit or implicit within the public practice.

The following *Quranic* verses and Prophet's sayings are examples of some of the basic principles regulating neighbor's mutual relationships in the Muslim community:

Serve God, and join not Any Partners with Him; And do good To Parents, Kinsfolk, Orphans, those in need, Neighbors who are near, Neighbors who are strangers, The Companion by your side, The way-farer (ye meet) (Ali, 1975: Ch. IV, V. 36).

Isha (The Prophet's wife) reported that the Prophet said: Gabriel continued to advise me to do good to the neighbor until I thought he would make him among the heirs. (Muslim, 1981)

Religious/Social Values

1. Preservation of Family/Privacy:

It might be sufficient to say that the preservation of the family unit and the privacy of its members (women & men alike) constitute inseparable prerequisites of Islam as well as the original Arab society prior to Islam. The existence of two or three generations in one house has required the segregation between sexes as well as providing visual barriers between inside and outside the house in accordance with Islamic teachings (Fadan, 1983 :76). Such requirements have led to the appearance of the inner court(s) for light and air with minimum or no windows towards the streets (Baleela, 1975 :48). Even the main entrance was bent to prevent any over-view of the inner house by outsiders (Figures 2 & 3). Also, having many members of both sexes in addition to the simplicity of furnishing resulted in using each space multifunctionally. Rooms may be used for eating, sleeping, recreation and domestic tasks (Akbar, 1980 :31). Consequently, the traditional house is more compact and smaller in size compared to the modern one.

The *Quran* instructs muslims on the manner of approaching and entering their fellow muslims' homes by prescribing appropriate social norms, thus skipping that of a social or a religious value. *O ye who believe! Enter not houses other than Your own, until ye have Asked permission and saluted Those in them: That is Best for you, in order that ye may heed (What is seemly) (Ali, 1975: Ch. XXIV, V. 27).* It has been reported that the Prophet ordered his companions to refrain from using streets as a sitting area for conversation unless they give the street its four rights (Muslim, 1981):

- 1. to refrain from staring at passersby;
- 2. not to abuse the street's users;
- 3. to return greetings (*salam*) when greeted; and
- 4. to enjoin what is just and to forbid what is evil.

The previous saying by the Prophet goes as far as providing an environmental value concerning the use and rights of streets (especially pedestrian's) and roads.

2. Hospitality:

This is a built-in characteristic of the Arab society which may in fact be ecologically motivated when we consider the harsh environment and the need for a life support system for guests in the desert environment (Sweet, 1969). A guest has an inalienable right of being welcomed, fed, entertained and provided the best accommodation the host can afford. It has been reported

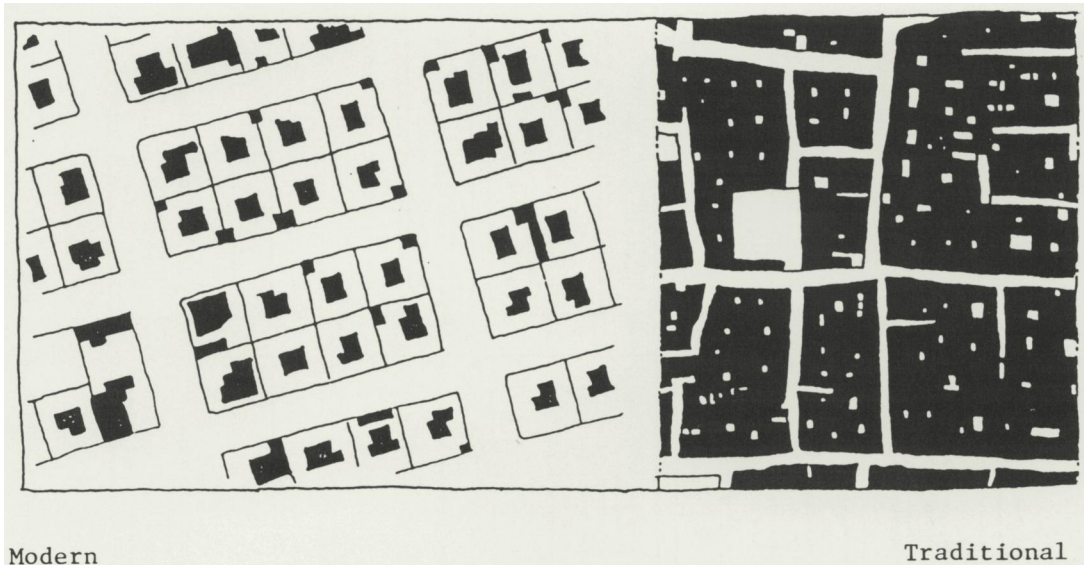


FIGURE 6. Modern municipal regulations require new houses to have set-backs from the street and surrounding buildings, thereby producing buildings with non-used external open space. Traditional houses have less, albeit used, external spaces in the form of courtyards. The latter is producing a more compact urban form.
Source: Akbar J (1980) *Support for Courtyard Houses: Riyadh, Saudi Arabia*. Unpublished thesis, Cambridge, MA: MIT. P. 48.

that the Prophet Muhammad said: *Any one of you who believes in Allah (God) and the day of judgment should be generous to his guest* (Muslim, 1981). The saying simply confirms a social norm which is based on traditional social values related to hospitality. The guest's spatial requirement is met through one or more spaces within the men quarter directly accessible from the main entrance. This section is almost self-sufficient with the exception of the cooking facility which has to be within the family section. The guest's room is more spacious and well furnished and finished compared to the rest of the house (Baleela, 1975 :48).

Economic

The *Quran* stands clear in opposing any lavish or monumental-like buildings aimed at self-amusement and show off at the expense of basic needs (Ali, 1975: Ch. XXVI, V. 128-129), thus setting an important architectural value. It can be said that prior to modern Saudi Arabia, the economic life was characterized by being subsistence-oriented with a great deal of insecurities and greater mutual family and tribal interdependencies (Othman, 1988 :351). This was reflected in the manner people treat their environment since it reflected the simple-desire of providing basic shelter. Homes were small both in built and lot sizes. Other resources had to be used economically, and waste and refuse had to be cycled. Therefore, the urban form was more simple, compact and pollutant-free. People's relative homogeneity in terms of socio-economic status was clearly reflected in homes facades, sizes and interiors; thus contributing an added sense of comfort (psycho-social well-being), territoriality, security (Al-Nowaiser, 1987 :195), and identification with the community.

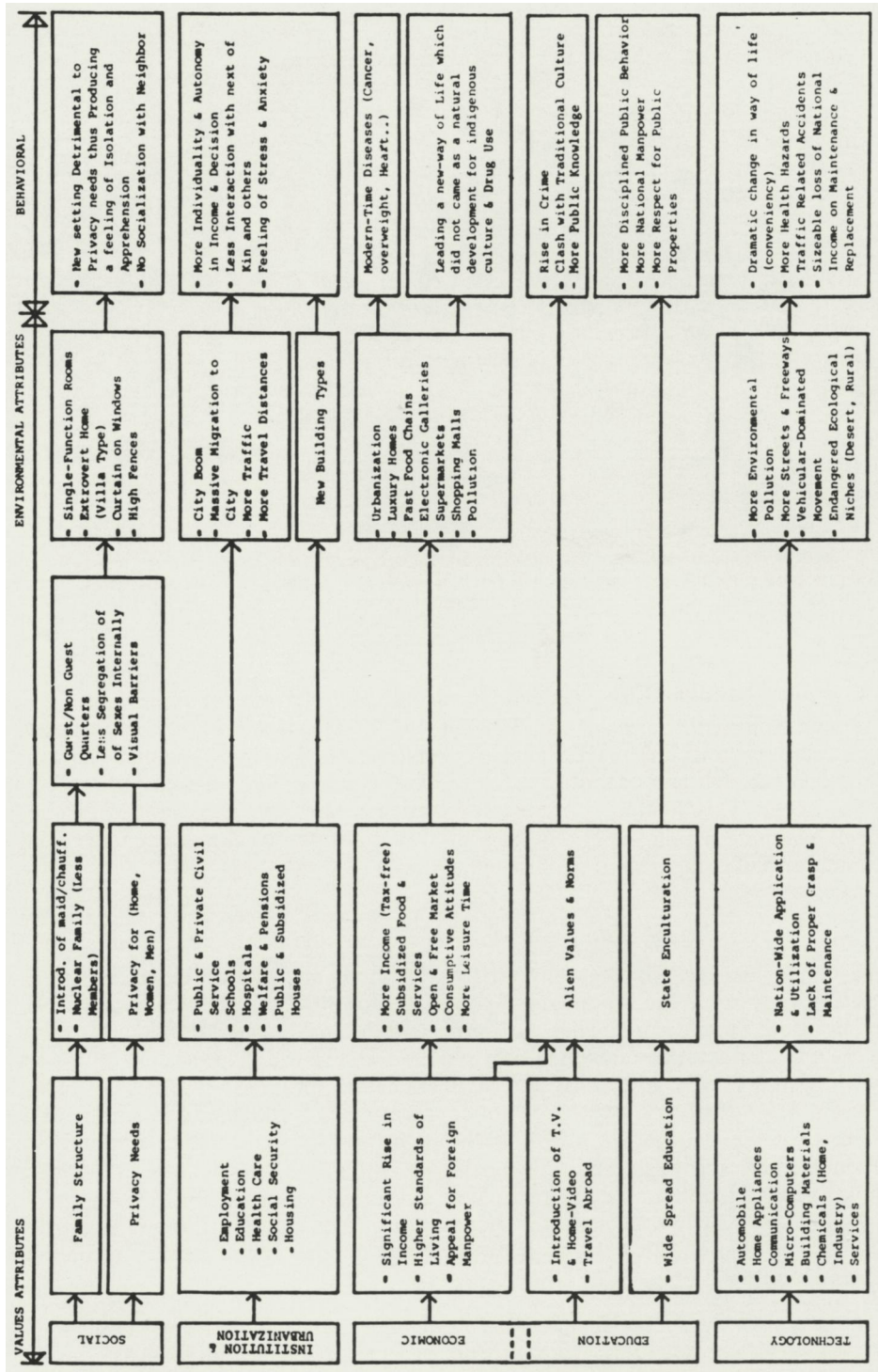


FIGURE 7. A model indicating the value/environmental attributes relationship in the modern period.

Education & Technology

The expansion of modern school education, beyond the traditional institutions such as the home and the mosque, did not take place until the early 1950s (Al-Soliman, 1981). The economic hardship, in addition to social conservatism, represented an obstacle facing any educational reform. This has resulted in the slow down of economic progress and transfer of technology. Evidently this has meant a poor materialistic quality of buildings and less impact on traditional and natural environments.

The traditional value system derived from religious instructions played a major role in supporting and facilitating the prevalent traditional technology. It has been reported that the Prophet said: *None of you should prevent his neighbor from inserting the wooden beams of his (the neighbor's) roof in his wall.* (Muslim, 1981). The saying is an example of a value system that goes all the way to prescribing a specific architectural artifact. Adopted as law by muslims, it has facilitated savings in building materials, given more area per lot, and helped produce a more compact, energy efficient, physical environment (Figure 6).

The slow pace at which technology had to be transferred from other societies, except through trade and pilgrimage, resulted in less impact on the social institution as well as the indigenous technology. This was clearly reflected in the lack of modern skills, tools and materials. Also modes of transportation and life-support systems were primitive. Therefore the size of urban centers had to be limited featuring more human scales in building heights, street widths, travel distances and the hierarchy of activity distribution (Belkacem, 1981). Building facades were more similar in heights, textures and composition reflecting a more united and democratic appearance. In general the impact of this indigenous technology on the natural environment was very minimal. On the other hand, traditional buildings provided less creature comfort, and were less safe and more difficult to maintain when compared to modern ones. Today, living in traditional homes in becoming socially unacceptable and is always associated with lower socio-economic classes (Akbar, 1980 :13).

THE MODERN PERIOD

It is ironic to say that the Saudi society today shares with the modern world most of the social and environmental ills and side effects of modernization. The only exception is that in Saudi Arabia things are more dramatized and, furthermore, some of the symptoms developed here as a consequence of the rapid change are quite new. The change was economically triggered with a higher proportion of planned change than before (Smith: 1976) or than what the society can grasp and assimilate within the period of time allowed for such a process. All forms of society; urban, rural, and nomadic, were affected. A recent study on traditional and modern settlements in Saudi Arabia (Al-Nowaiser, 1985) found that the modern settlement seems to discourage many social/cultural norms, while helping to encourage and adapt to new ones. The following represent a brief description of the significant value components undergoing change and their implications (Figures 5 & 7).

Religious/Social Values

Religious values remained intact and unchallenged but their observance was much more relaxed. New values were introduced and embraced as a result of abrupt affluence, more education, media influences, and modernization in general. The traditional and simple class

TABLE 2. Criminal Events Committed in the Kingdom by Type 1983-1987.

Year	Murder	Theft	Immorality	Fraud	Miscellaneous*	Total
1983	86	5225	1831	254	11418	18814
1984	138	5841	1928	297	10558	18762
1985	561	7000	1922	332	9141	18956
1986	604	6851	2092	697	11208	21452
1987	715	7553	2576	439	10230	21513

*Includes financial manipulations, attempted murder, & inebriety crimes.

Source: Central Department of Statistics (1987) *Statistical Yearbook, 1407 A.H.* Vol. 23, Riyadh: CDS, Ministry of Finance & National Economy.

system gave way to new values along the boundaries of wealth, education, job and social position. The extended family was broken into single and independent families, thus loosening the internal privacy needs (Fadan, 1983). New members have entered the family circle, namely, the female maid and the male chauffeur. The new, improved, economic reality, coupled with the new social image of the house being independent, palace-like, and surrounded by open space, introduced the villa type house with more windows opening outward and with no inner court (See Figure 5). Building codes contributed to the rise of such an extrovert house through the system of setbacks. In order to protect the outside open areas from street viewers, fences were raised. Nevertheless, such areas were rarely used since their privacies can always be invaded by the neighbor's upper floors. Even windows facing each other had to be protected by means of curtains (Figure 6). Today, economic independence and physical isolation in the modern urban fabric have further kept neighbors apart, thus leading to their mutual fear and apprehension (Al-Nowaiser, 1987).

Institutions & Urbanization

The rising power of the state led to the institutionalization of many aspects of life such as employment, education, health care, social security, and housing. This implied the emergence of a new urban fabric, more migration to cities, and more importantly, the new chance of independency and autonomy for the family unit thus enabling it to pursue new ways of life (Garner, 1977) and being subjected to many of the urban psychological problems (Al-Nowaiser, 1983). In 1973, the percentage of the Saudi population living in urban centers was estimated at 25 percent (Baleela, 1975: 35). In 1987, that percentage has risen to 67 percent and it is estimated to reach 71 percent in 1990 (Shawwaf, 1988: 50).

Economic/Education:

The significant rise in income has produced more consumptive attitudes, more leisure time, and more influx of foreign manpower engaged in skilled and unskilled labor. Another parameter lies in the spread of education and new sources of knowledge through television, home-video, travel, and contact with foreigners thus leading to the embrace of alien values and norms and modifying many of society's institutions, traditions, customs, or beliefs (Rosser-Owen, 1976). As an environmental by-product of economic and educational change, urban

centers faced even further massive urbanization (Shawwaf, 1988). New building types such as supermarkets, shopping malls, fast food chains, electronic galleries, airports, and sport facilities were introduced. Private homes started to take on a more luxurious look. The rising of varied consumption patterns meant considerable pollution for the environment. All in all the process of change was non-selective, unguided, and unscrutinized to the extent that change, swift change, became an integral part of everyday life (Smith, 1976). Among the disrupting side-effects, one can observe a clear clash with traditional culture in the form of a rise in crime rates and drug use (See Table 2); in addition to modern-time diseases such as cancer, high blood-pressure, heart troubles, obesity, etc. (Sabeg, 1984).

Technology

The application and utilization of modern technology, despite its positive conveniences, was by far the greatest social and environmental modifier. The advent of the tools of technology as shown in the model was coupled with a severe shortage of skilled manpower capable of operating, manipulating and maintaining such tools. This further aggravated the social problems of proper assimilation as well as the environmental problems of contamination and disruption of natural systems and ecological niches.

AN EXPANDED OUTLOOK

The previous analysis carries the potential for the rise of two distinct, and so far conflicting, schools of thought in terms of traditionalism and modernism with each having its own pros and cons. Although the two schools, or directions, have not come into formal reality yet, they can at least give some signaling symptoms. Environmental effect is but one of the factors being affected by the process of transformation from the traditional into the modern period. Other factors include social, economic and spiritual ones.

The traditional period had exhibited a nicely balanced way of life where the influencing factors worked harmoniously. In contrast, the modern period was instigated by, and has set into motion, forces that were so volatile to produce results which are not always harmonious. For example, the economic prosperity would obviously gain the overwhelming support of all classes. Rising per-capita income and the employment security offered by the giant government and corporate employers is an added asset incurred by the modern period. However, this has inevitably led to personal independency and individualism, away from the close knit ties of family farm or business. Diversity of job and occupations requires the devotion of more spans of life time for training and education. In turn, this leads to a further break by the individual from his narrow family circle and its interests and concerns. Given the fact that the boom years are over, it is interesting to see families coming back towards consolidating their business ventures into united family enterprises these days. Some families have even started their own saving and security funds run by internally elected councils.

On the social and spiritual front, one could observe many conflicting signs. For example, the issue of foreign manpower has its pros and cons most of the time. Public outcry in the media, in addition to government policies, suggest the desire to limit the potential threat to morals and social values posed by foreign manpower. The government has already issued and is implementing measures to curtail their influx. However, the business sector does not like the idea and is always reluctant to employ Saudis who are highly paid and less productive. Other examples illustrate a variety of conflicting spots between those who wish to push the line of public

activities into new unattempted frontiers and those who fear the potential threat to social norms and values. Such examples include work opportunities for women, the creation of large scale public parks and entertainment facilities, the recently raised issues of satellite television and travel abroad, and so on. What is unfortunate is that the previous issues have no chance of being discussed or debated publicly through a state controlled media. Again, this is only one reason why a clear cut of pros and cons is not readily identifiable. The mere discussion of those controversial issues should at least narrow an ever-widening gap between the two contrasting parties. This gap can only make the attainment of a state of balance a remote possibility indeed.

The physical factor, one might think of as the easiest to manage among other factors, demonstrates a state of real disarray. After all, the physical factor is only a result of a socio-economic decision. When encompassing the environment and other related forms of material life, the state of disparity between pros and cons is so wide. For example, although modern technology is not harmful in itself, the Saudi obsession with obtaining all fruits of modern technology means a thriving market for business on the one hand and far reaching effects on the natural and built environment as well as the social structure on the other hand. Searle and Gallagher explain how the Saudi health care is technology-intensive when considering manpower issues in Saudi health development by saying:

Like many developing countries bothered by a sense of lagging behind the industrialized west, Saudi Arabia may be too enraptured with high-technology, specialty-oriented medicine. It is perhaps not giving enough attention to the current needs of the population for primary health care. Also of great concern in Saudi Arabia is a growing dependency on foreign workers, including physicians - exacerbated by the use of technologies which require skills very scarce among native Saudis (Searle & Gallagher, 1983 :699).

Although not fully researched, a great part of the imported technology in the form of consumer-products or machinery get derelict very fast due to lack of operating skills. Consequently, the impact on the environment in terms of pollution is increasingly felt, especially in major urban and industrial centers. On the other hand, the years from 1974 to 1987 witnessed the addition of 440,000 new homes as a result of direct government loans by the Real Estate Development Fund (REDF) (REDF, 1988 :15-16). The stockpiling of these new homes is enormous and should have undeniable positive social impact. What is in question is the little or no care being given to the environment in the due process. Only recently, one could observe a rising awareness throughout public and private sectors as to the extent of the problem of pollution. This is being translated into various programs, laws and regulations.

As for the quality of the built environment itself, the advocates of modernity had gained the upper hand so far. Attempts by architects and traditionalists to go back to the traditional home are few and scattered. Recent attempts by the government to preserve and celebrate old folk and heritage through the National Festival for Heritage and Culture (NFHC) remain museum-oriented attempts (NFHC, 1985). Unfortunately, the traditional home and its contents was locked in the Festival as a thing of the past. Local schools of architecture are currently gearing themselves to combat that through many research and public campaign programs.

CONCLUSION

The previous discussion should not imply that change was bad in itself. In many respects it was to the contrary. It meant the birth and construction of a nation almost from scratch. However, it was that reverberant social dimension that was set aside. Initially, we have to admit that change is there to continue and cannot be reversed. We have to recognize the agents of change, their potentials and the pattern of their influence. Those agents will then have to be integrated and assimilated within the present context of socio-economic goals and objectives in light of their deep-rooted socio-cultural and spiritual values. Careful planning in that regard should ensure a smoother transition from traditional to modern way of life with minimum conflicts or repercussions.

In attempting to address people's living environments, planners and decision-makers have hastily looked for and embraced concepts and ideas that are not simply alien, but cannot fit-practically within the served milieu and its real needs and assimilating capacity. Certainly local planners as well as people might have been impressed by such concepts upon their arrival. But as time goes on, the bitter realization regarding the inadequacies of such concepts is growing larger. Stating it in another way, one would describe the situation as Jamel Akbar put it: "an environmental crisis" (Akbar, 1988). This state of crisis applies to homes; neighborhoods, cities, places of work and schools (plants and locations), recreation, Mosques, etc.

The traditional system produced environments compatible with people's values and culture, so that the resulting built environment could be described as directly influenced and molded by Islamic culture. In contrast, contemporary events, such as those in Saudi Arabia, have created a situation that precluded a linkage between people's values and the resulting built form (Hakim, 1989). The very fact that change is sponsored by the government, through the powerful influence of its agencies, is opposed to traditional grass roots decisions and requirements drawn up with apparent consideration of the culture's Islamic values and its deep-rooted intentions. Another aspect has to do with the role of intentions. The nature of the *figh* guidelines and their application depended on intent and/or performance, and not on prescriptive standards (setbacks, building heights, lot sizes, etc.). (Hakim, 1989)

Although starting to think about corrective measures for future environments is imperative, it looks like the prospect for another cycle of *Re-Change* will encumber the next generation with a very large financial responsibility. This requires the collaboration between architects/planners and jurists who can explore the possibilities of recycling aspects of the traditional experience for improving contemporary and future architecture and urbanism. Also the decision-making apparatus needs to be gradually decentralized in order to achieve the much needed user participation. Finally, more research is needed to discover those untapped lessons and experiences embodied in the traditional culture, which might be of value for today's environments.

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