

## Space Flow: Past, Present and Future

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**Abstract.** Space Flow between periods of time is always a deep dimensional projection of human beliefs. At best it can provide an echo of a spiritual universe which integrates man in a meaningful order and provides him with essential inner fulfilment, by the very fact that his small personal world is in harmony with a much larger reality. The conflict between the traditional culture and modern systems of thought has to be seen in this wider philosophical context, for the controversial issue is the interpretation of "development" and what it should entail: should development enable the balanced realization of the totality of human faculties and capabilities, or should it reduce reality to limited aspects of material life at the expense of other qualities? Should it promote an increase in quantifiable production only, or should it support a different type of creativity, which includes more fundamental forces and experiences? As far-fetched as these questions may seem, they determine the cultural responses which eventually generate the built environment and its physical expressions.

This paper is an attempt to answer the following questions: What are the contributions to discover the potential of continuity between Past, Present and Future? By analyzing and interpreting basic urban and architectural patterns and by exemplifying, how some of them can be adopted or re-interpreted in a contemporary context?, how to deal with the problems and incompatibilities caused by the impact of time differences, both in philosophical and in practical terms? And what are the new alternative approaches which could reconcile traditional principles, contemporary needs and the living future?

**Keywords:** *Deconstruction of history, Restructure of time, Heritage, continuity, Urban Merge.*

## **1. Search for Identity**

We develop our identity by tackling what we recognize to be our real problems. Identity is not a self-conscious thing; we find our identity by understanding ourselves, and our environment. Any attempt to short circuit this process or understanding, or to concoct an identity, would be dangerous to us all. It would be manipulation, a kind of gesturing. A signal is quite distinct from a symbol, for it implies a reaction, a manipulated response. If an architect, after traveling around the world, were to return to his origin, and attempt to reproduce there a glass building he saw in Texas, he would simply be transmitting signals. But if, on the other hand, he were to take the principles of architecture, and apply them to a completely different set of materials, customs, climate and traditions, he might put up a contemporary building which isn't all glass but which is very relevant to its locale – and to identity.

Many of the largest cities and now a few smaller ones in the vast territory shaped by historic Islam are the repositories of a precious and irreplaceable heritage (not only for Islamic countries, but for the world) not only for their archaic qualities, but for their living relevance today. Both the preservation of that heritage and the harnessing of that vital relevance are compelling rationales for a concern, practical as well as scholarly, with Islamic architecture and urbanism.

Islam expanded into wide regions with disparate traditions of design, architecture and urban form. It was carried in multiple directions by various groups, each drawing upon a particular subset of those traditions combined in a unique amalgam. These regional amalgams evolved over the centuries, gaining not only by means of internal development and elaboration, but by infusions from related traditions which, thanks to the solvent of the common religion, moved across frontiers with remarkable fluidity (Abu-Lughod, Janet, 1990).

While the diversity is striking and defies simplification to a single genre of either architecture or urban form, it is equally remarkable that one always knows when one is in the presence of Islamic civilization. Whether it is toward the periphery, in Spain or the Indian subcontinent, or closer to the heartland of the Arab- Persian Middle East, one does know. Is it merely the superficial decoration, the dominant blues, greens and turquoises, the insistently repetitive arches, the geometry of tiny space aggregating to vast designs that signals the code? Is it the basic architectonic concept of square-horizontal and round-vertical space that announces the unity underlying external diversity in exact shape? Is it the overall emphasis upon enclosing, enfolding, involuting, protecting and covering that

one finds alike in single structures in quarters, indeed in entire cities? There appear to be certain basic "deep structures" to the language of Islamic expression in space (Abu-Lughod, Janet, 1990).

There are also recurring idioms which, while they may not be attributable directly to the religious or legal system, were functionally suited to the social structure commonly found within Islamic cities and to the technology dominant during their periods of maximum definition and growth. Among these idioms are, characteristically: the suq or bazaar, the residential court (contiguous but unconnected rooms each giving out to a common gallery or atrium), the blind or deceptively hidden entranceway to individual structures or quarters, the tri-fold (rather than the more Western bi-fold) division of space into private, controlled semi-private and public, and a clear segregation into male and female spheres, perhaps as an underlying cause of many of the above features. (Abu-Lughod, Janet, 1990).

Some mechanism, common throughout the lands of Islam, helped to generate both the deep structure and the more idiomatic expressions. Without a doubt this was the legal system, which constituted a common base despite the variations introduced through major sectarian cleavages and the chief schools of jurisprudence. Rather than central planning according to certain models (as was true, for example, in the overseas colonies of classical Greece and Rome), it was legal notions of proper behavior in space and legal regulations in property relations (between theoretically-legitimized ruling classes and their subjects, among fraternal members of the 'Umma, between believers and non- or semi-believers, between near and distant neighbors that created, over and over again, certain recurring solutions to the question of urban spatial organization, wherever Islam was implanted.

## **2.Incompatibilities and Time Differences Impact**

The world which is in a struggle; modernity versus traditions, character versus identity and history versus culture, and the correlations between the individual architectural intervention and the whole of the urban structure are ignored. In many cases, it is the absence of a sense of integration into a comprehensive urban fabric, and not so much the lack of quality in the architecture itself, that produces architectural failures.

Why does the Islamic fabric appear more significant than the few isolated monuments within it, important as they may be? What is it that the urban context provides that is greater than the sum of its parts? The answer is, that this fabric, and especially contains the essence, or the "spirit," of a culture; it acts as a collective memory for the society; it is an expression of shared attitudes and common patterns of life, and as such it is a source of identity and inspiration. If the fabric is disrupted or destroyed, the sense of the wholeness and consistency of

life vanishes, together with the physical coherence of the environment. This is especially true in traditional Islamic cities, where single buildings were always conceived as part of a comprehensive fabric, never as isolated structures, and where the consistent repetition and variegation of a number of basic architectural typologies produced the lively unity of built form which is so typical of them.

Today, having passed the peak of the modern and post modern movements -or, if you prefer, standing on the brink of the Deconstruction age - we find ourselves in an ambiguous situation. On the one hand, we are not in a position naively to resume the pre-industrial tradition; too many social, economic, and technical factors in the urban system have changed, some radically, some more gradually. Parts of the historic urban fabric need to be adapted and some replaced. On the other hand, wholesale demolition does not seem to be the right way to deal with the architectural heritage. Wherever this approach has been chosen, the results have been unfortunate: sudden disruption results in chaotic conditions in both the modern and the historic parts of our life; the coherence of the system is lost; and the sense of cultural identity and historic continuity vanishes.

The situation today is, in one respect, without precedent: previous generations have usually been able continuously to change and develop a city without causing irreparable breaks in the urban system because architectural patterns remained more or less compatible and because interventions were usually not massive and were spread over long periods of time. Today, in contrast, we are faced with two extremes of intervention that are in reality conditioning each other. At the one extreme are the often brutal, new large-scale developments promoted by the dynamics of today's economy and realized with the immense resources of modern technology. They introduce an alien scale and alien functional requirements into our cities. At the other extreme - and as a reaction to the first - are the attempts at conservation that are often sterile because they do not consider the requirements of a living community. Although less aggressive in physical terms, they may as easily lead to the eventual death of the urban fabric by squeezing out its life and vigor.

The conflicts and incompatibilities between old and new, The unadaptation of the typology of our identity fabric that modern developments are often conceived in isolated blocks and naïf character patterns and use the identity fabric as the quarry, so to speak, out of which historical ties which are cut. Because the typology development is not compatible with the contiguous cellular structure of the

traditional urban fabric, problems crop up at the border between old and new that remain unresolved, leaving open scars in the structure of the old which will eventually provoke further destruction. This mutual rejection by two incompatible types of tissue makes transplantation of new elements extremely difficult or impossible to accomplish.

Also the issue of incompatible time scale. In addition to disregarding typological constraints, many modern interventions often go awry owing to the sheer size of the development. Extreme time scale of short intervals obliterates the dense time scale of the old and, disrupts the continuity of traditions. Also the abrupt pace of change by implementing patterns with different dimensions all at once, no time is allowed for an evolutionary process. The old is given no chance to adapt to the intervention or to recover from the surgery; mistakes cannot be corrected; lessons cannot be learned; and a genuine local tradition has no time to develop. As a result, the correlation between the two levels that could generate both unity and variety in urban form is often missing.

### **3. Deconstruction of History**

How to work with history and how to deconstruct it to structure it again in present. For those with a more phenomenological bent, the goal is to understand experience by comprehending and describing its genesis, the process of its emergence from an origin or event. For the structuralists, this was precisely the false problem, and the "depth" of experience could in fact only be an effect of structures which are not themselves experiential. It is in this context that in 1959 Derrida asks the question: must not structure have a genesis, and must not the origin, the point of genesis, be *already* structured, in order to be the genesis *of something*? (Derrida, J, 1964, p. 167).

In other words, every structural or "synchronic" phenomenon has a history, and the structure cannot be understood without understanding its genesis (Derrida, J, 1959, p. 278)

At the same time, in order that there be movement, or potential, the origin cannot be some pure unity or simplicity, but must already be articulated—complex—such that from it a "diachronic" process can emerge. This originary complexity must not be understood as an original *positing*, but more like a default of origin, which Derrida refers to as iterability, inscription, or textuality. (Derrida, J 1981, pp.95) It is this thought of originary complexity, rather than original purity, which destabilises the thought of both genesis and structure,

that sets Derrida's work in motion, and from which derive all of its terms, including deconstruction (Rodolphe, Gasché, 1986, p. 146).

Derrida's method consisted in demonstrating all the forms and varieties of this originary complexity, and their multiple consequences in many fields. His way of achieving this was by conducting an exceedingly thorough, careful, sensitive, and yet transformational reading of philosophical and literary texts, with an ear to what in those texts runs counter to their apparent systematicity (structural unity) or intended sense (authorial genesis). By demonstrating the aporias and ellipses of thought, Derrida hoped to show the infinitely subtle ways that this originary complexity, which by definition cannot ever be completely known, works its structuring and de-structuring effects (Cf., Rodolphe Gasché, 1987, pp. 3–4).

(...) the entire history of the concept of structure, before the rupture of which we are speaking, must be thought of as a series of substitutions of centre for centre, as a linked chain of determinations of the centre. Successively, and in a regulated fashion, the centre receives different forms or names. The history of metaphysics, like the history of the West, is the history of these metaphors and metonymies. Its matrix (...) is the determination of Being as *presence* in all senses of this word. It could be shown that all the names related to fundamentals, to principles, or to the centre have always designated an invariable presence – *eidōs*, *archē*, *telos*, *energeia*, *ousia* (essence, existence, substance, subject) *altheia*, transcendentality, consciousness, God, man, and so forth.” (Structure, Sign and Play" in *Writing and Difference*, p. 353)

The concept of the metaphysics of presence is an important consideration within the area of deconstruction. The deconstructive interpretation holds that the entire history and has emphasized the desire for immediate access to meaning, and thus built a metaphysics or onto-theology around the privileging of presence over absence.

Deconstructive thinkers, like Derrida, describe their task as the questioning or *deconstruction* of this metaphysical tendency. This argument is largely based on the earlier work of Martin Heidegger, who in *Being and Time* claimed the parasitic nature of the theoretical attitude of pure presence upon a more originary involvement with the world in concepts such as the ready-to-hand and being-with. Friedrich Nietzsche is a more distant, but clear, influence as well.

One could perhaps say that Derrida continues and critically reworks Heidegger's attempt to “deconstruct” traditional metaphysics. Let us start with the problem of identity. It is perhaps a commonplace of “postmodern” thought to say that “identity is not present to itself,”

that it is in some sense secondary to the concept of difference. Derrida is frequently credited with bringing up this point, and we will see in moment how his argument proceeds. For now we can say that according to this view logic itself rests on ungrounded assumptions about absolute self-identity of objects, assumptions which cannot be formally deduced in any way and thus sit as an unseemly blemish on the face of formal methodology. This is a serious charge and it should not be taken lightly. To the best of my knowledge, it was first made in Fichte's *Basis for the Entire Theory of Science* (1794), where he wrote that "if the proposition  $A=A$  is certain then the proposition 'I am' must also be certain" (Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Sämthliche Werke*, 1845-6, p. 95)., thus implying that the principle of identity is not *logically* certain but inevitably involves a *hypothetical* judgment on the part of the subject. These ideas were further elaborated by Schelling — for instance, in his critique of Hegel — but it was probably Nietzsche who summed it up in the manner most relevant to mathematics: "logic (like geometry and arithmetic) only holds good for assumed existences which we have created." (Oscar Levy, 1909-13), p. 33).

For the concept of deconstructing history, it is in simple manner is a trial to separate the layers of precedents and decode the historical text. This case study depends on the deep look in our past archetype - patterns- and of learning from it. For architect's archetypes have other dimensions beyond the practical one of improving design by learning about specific approaches from the past developments to form the present. By thoughtful analysis, it can also assist us find various methods for making new environments less alienating and therefore more suitable to use (Lewcock, Ronald, 1988)

Thus, in order to judge whether or not a program or project has been successful, a careful evaluation of different types would be needed to assess the impact of the arguments in its different dimensions. The model is a traditional market (Tablita Market) which was established in the early part of this century near Al Azhar Mosque in the middle of the old city of Fatimid Cairo, this commercial market remains one of the principle commercial nodes of the district, with 200 vendors located in and around the market serving several thousand customers and residents, all depend on functioning competitive and sanitary market environment. Since the 1980s, however, there have been worrisome indicators of an economic and environmental downturn in the Tablita Market's condition due to the uncontrolled proliferation of vendors' stalls, poor management and rapid deterioration of the environmental condition of the market itself.

The need to reverse this trend prompted the development of an integrated improvement program to the Tablita Market. Its objectives are to better the long term management, economic prospects, public health and physical organization of the market as part of the environmental upgrading of the district.

#### **4. Merging Heritage**

The architecture of the Islamic world throughout history adapted and responded to different cultures and existing traditions of buildings without weakening the spiritual essence which was its source of inspiration. Urban centers in Islamic cities evolved over long periods of time with generations of craftsmen whose sensitivity and experience added variety and a diversity of styles to the environment. The traditional Islamic city reflected a unity which related the architecture of the mosque, the madrasa, the souq, palace and the home as a sequence of spaces. The identity of the city lay in the relationship of its elements. These relationships were generated by the harmonizing of the community with the forces acting on it, which enabled the interaction of cultures, building methods and methods to evolve an Islamic identity in the same way a language maintains its own identity even when it absorbs outside words. (Source: Martin, G: Buildings in the Middle East Today)

#### **Case Study: The deconstruction and restructure of History**

The Tablita Market is one of the major vegetable markets in Al Darb Al Ahmer located behind the famous Al-Azhar Mosque Fig 3, which was built by Fatimids in the year 972 A.D. as part of their plan for an imperial city. The neighborhood of Al-Darb El-Ahmar is the home to about 200,000 people. A walk around the area quickly illustrates its value as a living museum with architectural wonders dating from the 12th through 17th centuries. Currently a large part of the area appears to be almost uninhabited due to both, a long process of physical decay escalated by the 1992 earthquake, and to Government restrictions on building permits in this historical area. Around the mid-nineties, the area started gaining the government's attention due to its cultural value and economic potential. Increasingly, projects were initiated by different agencies to plan and implement the preservation and upgrading of this medieval treasure



***Fig 3: Tablita Market Location in the densest Historical Fabric in old Fatimid Cairo***

Another major issue that motivated vendors and residents to participate in the design is the market's role in a socio-religious celebration of "Moulid El-Hussein." For Tablita Market, El-Hussein Moulid is a major festivity, based on which all efforts, support, and contributions are directed towards celebrating the "Moulid." Fig 4,5 - The "Moulid" is a local religious and popular festivity that is carried out in honor of a famous religious figure (usually on his/her known birthday). If one walks in the streets of old Cairo during "Moulid" time, one gets fascinated with the streets that are decorated with flags, banners, flashy bright colored lights, decorated shops and cafés, and all sorts of traditional games, fireworks. One of the major Moulid festivals celebrated in Egypt is "Moulid El-Hussein," "El-Hussein" being the beloved grandson of the prophet Mohammed-. The existing flexible design of the Market structure permits people of the area to practice this annual activity inside the Market place. During the preparations for the celebration, all vendors work together in organizing and supervising the preparations; cleaning the place, removing the carts, hanging up the colored light bulbs, furnishing the place, and sometimes even repainting the place. The Moulid is considered a precious chance for everyone in the Market and the area to contribute in the area's most outstanding group effort. The relatively wealthy vendors participate in this event through monetary, or in kind contributions, such as getting the materials needed for the celebration (food and furnishing), distributing alms, or paying for the traditional performance that takes place on a wooden stage inside of the Market (CDS, 2000). For the vendors, the "Moulid is a chance for

them to socialize and establish relationships with other vendors, residents of the area, local leaders, Government figures and representatives; it is looked upon as a process of building public relations. The significance of this event is evident in the vendor's sacrifice of two or more days of income in addition to what they spend on it.



*Fig 4,5: Preparing for Saydna El Hussain Moulid*

The environmental and health conditions Fig 6,7,8 & 9 of the market have deteriorated considerably as it has no sanitary outlets whatsoever and, as a result of the accumulation of the vegetables and fruit refuse. The Cairo Governorate hence notified the merchants in 2002 that it would remove the market and sell the land on which it was built. The notification provoked the merchants and the surrounding community to take action to address the problems. Under the leadership of their sheikh, workers, too, showed their willingness to take part in developing a new vision for the continuity of the site as a market center.

Development of Tablita Market emerged as a major initiative in the context of a joint project between CDS and the Agha Khan Trust for Culture for the “Comprehensive Environmental and Urban Improvement of al-Dharb al-Ahmar Community.” The larger project involved a division of labor, with the Agha Khan’s efforts focused on preserving Islamic monuments and with the CDS contribution designed to address the compound environmental, health, social, and economic problems that have plagued the community for more than a decade.



*Fig 6: Tablita Market from above*



*Fig 7: Tablita Market Entrance*



*Fig 8: Tablita Market Interior*



*Fig 9: Tablita Market Interior*

The Market existing condition has several negative effects upon its immediate surroundings. These affects could he summarized as follows:

- **Obstruction of the public right-of-way:** The concentration of street vendors along the street outside of the market boundaries is attributed to the presence of the Market. Their existence impedes one of the main entrances to al-Darb al-Ahmar area whether for vehicles, pedestrians, or tourists coming in and out of the neighborhood.
- **Environmental and visual pollution:** The Market is a source of pollution in the neighborhood. This is mainly due to the irregularity of garbage collection. This pollution is negatively affecting the value, and image of the historical area.
- **Violating the sanctity of nearby historic monuments:** As the sentence might entail, the Market is perceived to be intruding the value and holiness of some of the old historic monuments of al Darb al-Ahmar area, particularly Tikkiyet Abou al-Dahab.
- **Wasted opportunity value:** In addition, there is a general view that the Marketplace is a wasted opportunity in economic terms

considering the monetary value of the land, being located in the heart of the historic city of Cairo.

That is why the Tablita Market project was initiated in order to investigate possible channels and opportunities that would help preserve its existence, sustaining the services and benefits that it provides to the neighborhood, as well as preventing any harm that might put the vendors' livelihood and subsistence at stake.

The study assessed the views of key authorities figures, vendors inside the market, vendors outside the market (street vendors and surrounding shops), and residents of the area who are also market customers. In the first study the public was given no role in decision making, it was a "representation" sort of participation, and that is why the participatory design stage was initiated. The aim of the participatory design was to give members of the vendors' community power to determine the outcome of the Market design. The means of achieving this was through a series of workshops with different groups of vendors. A scaled model of the existing Tablita Market was constructed as an aid to help the participants communicate their ideas after implementing the first and second group workshops, the reactions to those events necessitated a revision of the process as well as the execution of several follow-up steps by the team. This part presents the participatory design process that was initially planned as well as its development and adjustment during implementation. It also presents the two outcomes of the process.



*Fig 10: Community Participation Workshop*

Through a participatory design workshop fig 10, a large body of rich data was collected. Analysis yielded concrete information which was not restricted solely to the future design of the market, but rather covered other organizational and managerial issues that could be pursued in parallel to the development of the design for the Market. That is why in categorizing this information, they were best classified as:

The structure of the participatory design process was developed based upon the purpose of the participatory design, and the gathered information. Participatory design aims usually to communicate to the designer four aspects: Goals, Issues/Concerns, Needs, and Ideas. Information regarding the first three aspects was partially available and therefore the aim was to make design decisions, as well as verify and elaborate on those three aspects. The plan was to meet once with three or four groups of 5-8 participants so that consensus decision making could be met. This was the part of the participatory team. The design team was faced with the dilemma of the presence of the Market in a very dense zone; the heart of the historical city and surrounded by the archetypes of the real tissue.

The concept was the rejuvenating of an already “Active” place and an approach to have a new model for both native and foreign. The Methodology on the macro level was a new social focus for the market to create a new focal point integrated with the historical tissue. On the Micro level the idea was to have a space for people and not to create a monument negating the surroundings. And to be a part of the domestic fabric, not of the historical, to be a similar character but not the same. The approach was fulfilled by the real look to contents and envelop merging them in a harmonious way, a rethinking of the traditional architecture and urban vocabulary.

**The project serves several areas, including:**

Building potentials: through creation of the initiative spirit, stimulation of individual and collective motives for independence, building institutional potentials for governmental and nongovernmental institutions and associations of local community present in the region);

Social mobilization: the project has stimulated the public and continues to mobilize the community to take up local initiatives to address urgent needs and stimulates social capital toward positive change;

Improvement of the habitat conditions: through a program for rehabilitation of residential buildings and the provision of loan program for housing to provide opportunities for the poor to maintain and reform their houses in order to obtain the appropriate habitable houses;

Urban development, through a program for rehabilitation of the historic urban environment through awareness-raising and clean-up campaigns to ensure a clean and healthy environment; restore local monuments, in order to be used by the community.

Therefore, the alternatives are not really alternative designs, but rather alternative approaches to the project as a whole: (1) as a market upgrading, and (2) as an opportunity to contribute to the rehabilitation of the area as well

Retracing the urban fabric, fig 11: The Deconstruction of History Theory did not mean reviving historic conditions but rather finding a starting point from which we can conceptualize the Suq layout. As in traditional mentality that considered important design decisions as benchmarks for subsequent decisions, used the retraced urban fabric as a basic layer upon which we laid down the rest of the design in an attempt to tie the Suq design with the logic of the place. This setting led to see the Suq not as a large monolithic structure but as a series of places, each one developed around a portion of the retraced urban fabric. The places in this sense represented the subsequent theme with an orientation that shifted according to the retraced fabric. Project Description, fig 12,13 The ground floor accommodates a total of 116:100 units inside the market, and 6 units outside of the market boundary along Harret Hammam al-Masbagha. No exterior units were located along the Mohamed Akin Street boundary to avoid any problems with the Local authorities or the Antiquities regarding lay public right of way in front of a historic building.

The two entrances on Mohamed Abdou Street are maintained since this street carries the main flow of customers, Also because street vending, according to the discussions with the vendors and the Local Authorities, was not associated with the entrances, but rather, to local authorities' provision of licenses and the fact that the historic building across the street was not in use. The entrance from eastern dead end will be maintained for merchandise circulation. Two more entrances were added from Herat'. Hammam al Masbagha. The width of all entrances is such that it does not invite encroachment by street vendors, Entrances are flanked by units, thus allowing the merchandise to be seen by passersby on the streets.

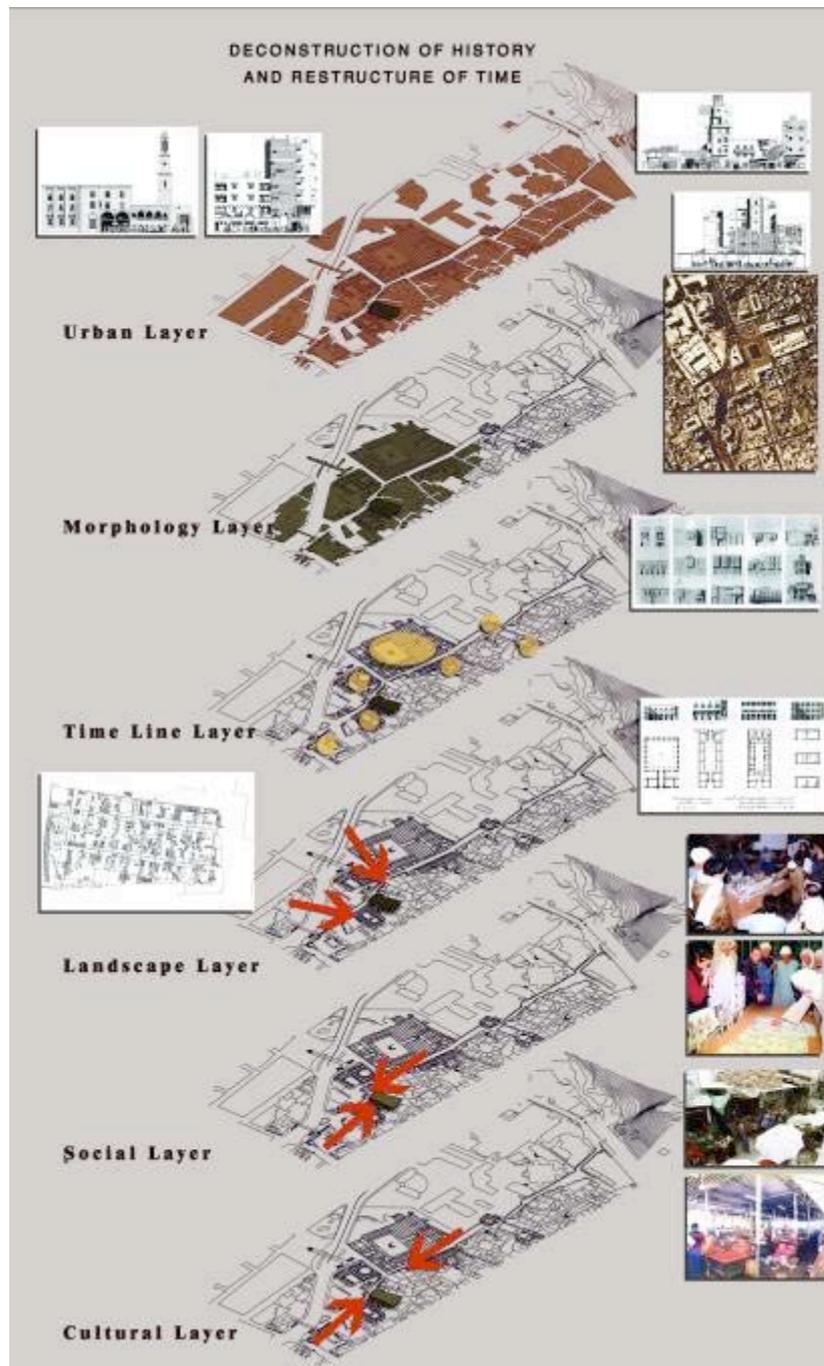
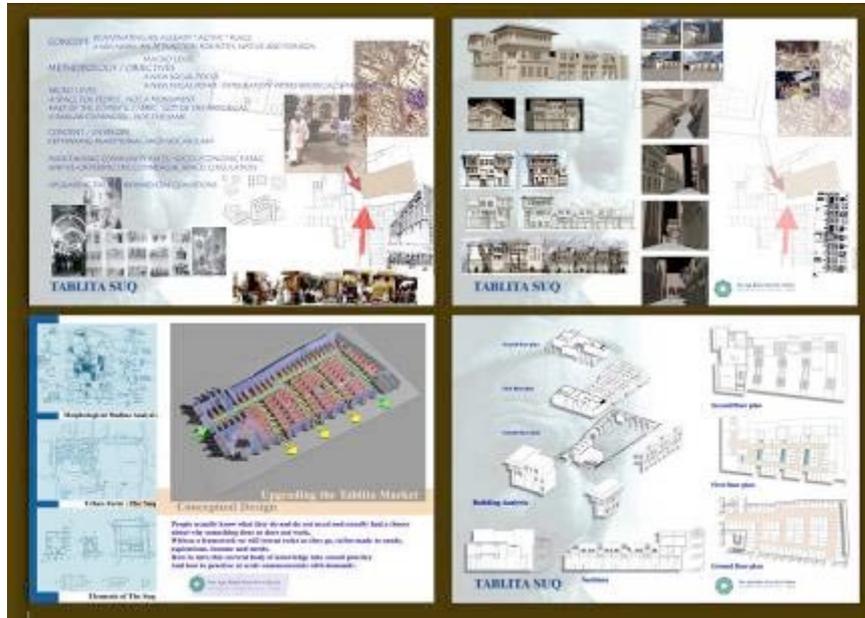


Fig 11: The Deconstruction of History Theory and methodology



*Fig 12: Conceptual and Preliminary sketches for the implementation of different archetypes; residential to the side related to housing and a rejuvenating idea to the main elevation.*

Two passageways are added to the existing design in order to provide additional lateral access and increase the utilization of the deepest corner of the market. Passageway width is increased from 1.5 to 2.1 mats. So as to allow circulation yet not invite encroachment by vendors in certain units.

Structural elements are distributed every two units to allow the flexibility for one vendor to rent more than one unit. No barriers will be constructed between the units (low partitions are still an option to be discussed among the vendors when deciding upon interior design details at a later phase).

Ground floor market height will be increased 04, 5 meters so as to improve ventilation and lighting possibilities.

To increase lighting and ventilation, traditional light wells shokhsheikha(s)' are distributed above the passageways. The market boundary is only 2.5 meters high, leaving 2 meters clearance below the upper floor.



*Fig 13: Final Project: the layering of historical precedent and the merge of heritage.*

### **5.Continuity context between past, present and future**

In order to understand how the physical environment of the Muslim city came about, one can look at it as a 'whole' and attempt to provide an interpretation of urban forms through their historical and cultural contexts. We will not deal with elements of urban forms, but look at the forms themselves as part of a broader Islamic tradition.

#### **5.1.The Past**

The preservation of tradition works at different levels reflects if anything, differing contemporary functions and ideological needs (e-g. the need for legitimacy) by ascendant elites or their rivals. On one

level, there is the effort to preserve the best examples of traditional buildings as exemplars, sources of contemporary inspiration and/or custodians of part of what its bearer regard as their contemporary cultural identity.

On a different level, the preservation and reuse of individual buildings in contemporary society raises serious functional and ideological problems. Yet, such adaptive reuse appears to be the only possibility of maintaining vitality for the buildings and avoiding the museum approach to important elements of an organic living city.

The preservation of a single building, whether reused or not, is different from the preservation of the character of an area and, here, different criteria come into play. Of these, the sense of urban context is a fundamental one, as is the question of scale, proportions, street alignments, fenestration, articulation of volumes, relations between solids and voids, and, most of all, activities permitted in the public space and inter-relationship between the public and private domains.

Decoding Symbols of the Past. Architects must acquire the sophistication to read the symbolic content of this heritage in a manner that enriches their ability to produce relevant buildings for today and tomorrow, and to guide the "authentification" efforts between the twin shoals of Kitsch and alien inappropriateness.

This sophistication can only come through a strengthened educational process which engenders in future architects the critical sense required to decode the symbolic content of the past in a realistic, as opposed to an ideologically mystifying, fashion. This, of course, necessitates a broad knowledge of the methodology as well as the content of historical studies, a sense of the growth of societies as a process of successive attempts at tantalization and above all an ability to see the built environment of the past as it was perceived by contemporaries.

## **5.2. Understanding the Present**

The societies of the Muslim world are inescapably societies in transition, however much some members of those societies may try to avoid this basic process by denying it, or by absolutising a past which exists only in their own minds as a counterweight to the present reality they deny and the future which they fear. The demographic, technical, economic, cultural, political and ideological components of this transition process are well known. Drowning in a flood of Western technology and cultural imports that are frequently ill-matched to local conditions and insensitive to cultural traditions, Muslim societies are

today struggling to create a cultural environment that provides them with a viable sense of self-identity and which is suited to regional and national conditions. Authenticity for an Indonesian will not be the same as authenticity for a Moroccan. Yet there is this fine thread of commonality of the nature of the search with variability of the conditions under which it is undertaken. This is part of the creative genius of the Muslim culture, whose hallmarks have always been unity with diversity. Contemporary "regionalism" must express itself in new and contemporary ways. This truism must be restated frequently in the face of a strong current that seeks refuge in perpetuating the myth that traditional vernacular architecture is enough. This "escape into the past" must be forced to recognize the scale and technology that increasingly link and undergird the urban built environment. Slavish copying of the past is not the answer. For those who would try, the dimensions of modern technology and its related infrastructural requirements will quickly remind them that the path of excellence requires creativity.

### **5.3. Anticipating and Preparing for the Future**

A Timeless Continuity: Reading the Signs. Architects must be masters of a wide range of skills and their deployment - a range far greater than architectural education currently prepares them for. First, architects must be able to decode the past so they can understand how their predecessors viewed their past, present, and future. Armed with this comparative knowledge, they must secondly attempt to read the signs and trends of the present. This is particularly tricky as, while buildings last a long time, current trends may prove ephemeral, and become so within the space of a few years. Third, architects must not only think of their single building, but of its relationship to the wider community. Fourth, and most significantly, they must pull all of this analysis together and design and implement a product which, over its lifetime, can justly win a place in the timeless continuity of world architecture, as have the great buildings of the past which, speak of excellence, not of an age, but for all time. (Serageldin, Ismail, 1991)

### **Conclusion**

Searching for identity is a crucial issue, dealing with history is also a sensitive matter, the deconstruction of history and restructure of time needs many applications to prove true. In architecture, we need to

reject the avant garde's pursuit of novelty and its belief that new technology should sweep away the past, in favor of design based on enduring human values. We have to relay on the groundwork that there are continuing patterns underlying all traditional architecture, which modernists have abandoned, but to which we must return in order to build on a human scale to symbolize these enduring values.

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