



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF TRADITIONAL ENVIRONMENTS

WORKING PAPER SERIES

ARCHITECTS AND BUILDING

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2024

Volume 334

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ARCHITECTS AND BUILDING

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Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

Working Paper Series

IN SEARCH FOR IN-BETWEENNESS: PROBLEMATISING THE MUNDANE OF 20TH CENTURY MACANESE MODERN ARCHITECTURE

Luk Ying Xian (Cassandra)

Volume 334

Pages 1-25

2024

IN SEARCH FOR IN-BETWEENNESS: PROBLEMATISING THE MUNDANE OF 20TH CENTURY MACANESE MODERN ARCHITECTURE

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This paper not only problematises the naval-gazing tendencies of Lusophone scholarship on 20th century Macanese Modernism, but also the perceived ‘mundanity’ of its architectural constructs. It is a search for in-betweenness, a seemingly unremarkable phase straddling the colonial entrepot’s transition into a phantasmagorical, postmodern city, while also responding to the urgent call for research on modern architecture, the underdog in the global conservation movement. This historical research focuses on the early 1960s, the critical years of post-war economic rejuvenation. Exploring the works of an important but little-known architect named Alfred Vitor Jorge Álvares, the paper illustrates, through the case of Hotel Estoril, how regional symbiosis between two distinct colonial systems – Portuguese Macau and British Hong Kong – has shaped modern architectural development in the city. Challenging Janus-faced discourses dwelling on the Portugueseness and Chineseness of Macau’s cultural ‘objects,’ the author exemplifies through Hotel Estoril the multi-faceted identity of glocalised architecture. Finally, the paper leverages Sheller and Urry’s (2006) new mobilities paradigm, advancing future research objectives that could better situate Macanese Modernism within broader, global discourses on architecture. While architectural historians, as per George Kubler (1962), are identity detectors of “shapes of time,” the author calls for deeper scrutiny of the overlooked, that is, the mobile, gaseous-like flow of people, knowledge and products between different places, which is the basis of understanding their eventual crystallisation as architecture.

1. INTRODUCTION

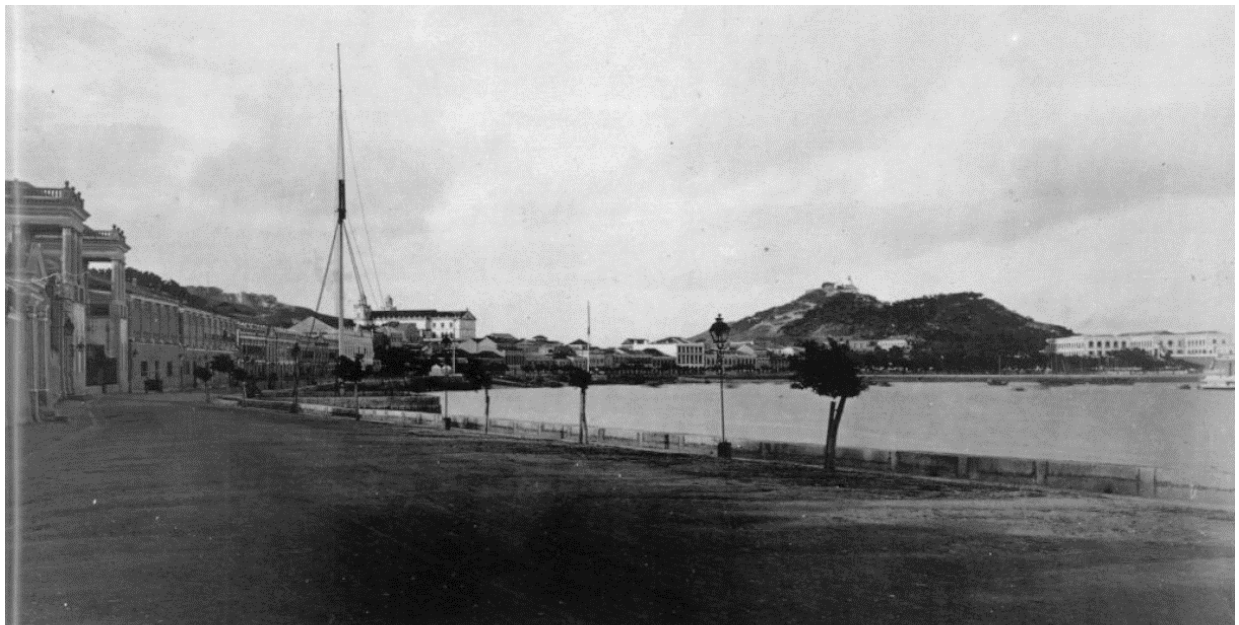


Fig. 1 Praia Grande, Macau, late 19th century. (Source: Sítios, Gentes e Vivências, Cecília Jorge, Beltrão Coelho, Macau: Banco Nacional Marinho / Fundação Oriente, 1991, 143)

“Um português que, adormecendo em Lisboa, acordasse por artes mágicas em Hong Kong, poderia não saber bem em que terra se achava, mas com certeza saberia que, em terra portuguesa, não; o mesmo português que acordasse pela altura das Nove Ilhas e, avançando, avistasse do navio a ermida de Nossa Senhora da Guia, depois o Hospital de São Januário, mais adiante a extensa fila de casas da Praia Grande, mais acima as do Chunambeiro e, no alto, a capela de Nossa Senhora da Penha, consigo logo diria: qual é não sei, mas estou vendo uma cidade Portuguesa à beira-mar. (...) não era tudo tão português como qualquer bairro do Porto, de Braga ou de Coimbra? (...) Hoje já assim, em grande parte, não é. Há trinta anos a esta parte, a cidade, Macau, tem vindo a desportuguesar-se tristemente. (...) O que estava, o que tem sido destruído, era caracteristicamente português e caracteristicamente chinês. Tínhamos uma cidade como ninguém tinha no Extremo Oriente, uma cidade digna de ser vista, de ser visitada. Hoje, temos uma cidade a que foi tirado quase todo o seu pitoresco, desnudada de atractivos, incaracterística, informe.”¹

Manuel da Silva Mendes.²

What is Portuguese? How is it Portuguese? Should one insist on understanding colonial cities through the lens of Mendes (1902), their *genius loci* would be relative to their degree of *Portugueseness*, with this factor influenced by two variables: their tangible and intangible character defining elements. With the former taking precedence in this case, Portugueseness in Macau (see Fig. 1) would be measured by their authenticity and integrity of its architectural aesthetics in relation to its ‘origin’: Portugal. Although Mendes’ account expresses how diffuse the Portuguese identity may be in the *ultramar*, it is nonetheless warped by colonialist understandings of a place, for it not only downplays its unique spatiotemporal dynamics but also goes against the ebb and flow of society. Despite their earlier presence in Macau, it was only in 1557 that the Chinese Ming Dynasty leased the Peninsula, then approximately 3 km², to the Portuguese. A *de facto* colony until 1999, Macau was a beachhead of Portugal’s proto-globalisation and imperial expansion during the Portuguese Age of Discovery, their *Golden Age* (1557-1640) to “spread Faith and Empire.”³ Cathedrals like the Igreja de São Paulo, which were amongst the earliest manifestations of Portuguese colonial architecture, were often the nucleus for the unplanned, sporadic growth of quarters and institutional buildings in the later days.⁴ Nonetheless, already dwindling in significance since the Dutch-Portuguese War of 1622, the vitality of the historic port city was further threatened by the burgeoning trade at Canton, with the final blow being the Treaty of Nanking and founding of British Hong Kong in 1842. Worse, Macau had also become increasingly peripheralized by its metropole, with disproportionate resources channelled to Portuguese Africa amidst Continental Europe’s Scramble for Africa (1885-1914). In a bid to save its troubled economy, the Portuguese colonial government legalised gambling in 1849, which became the basis for revolutionary developments in the gaming industry over a century later, but Macau, as some might argue, has since become a place no different from fiction:

“Macau is fiction...It is a place that exists most vividly in books. Today it is a place to gamble or buy antiques or daydream. Macao was once an important place, a hundred years ago. No more.”

Pamela G. Hollie.⁵

Nonetheless, such perceptions ought to be problematised, for there is so much more to Macau, beyond its colonial architecture, UNESCO World Heritage status and postmodern epithet as the ‘Las Vegas of Asia.’ Unlike its flamboyant counterparts, modern architecture that shapes Macau’s quotidian has often been overlooked, with its image further tarnished by substandard building maintenance. The following paper is thus a search for in-betweenness, that is, Macanese Modernism, a seemingly unremarkable phase straddling the transition of the colonial entrepot into a phantasmagorical, postmodern casino city. It is conceived firstly in response to the lacuna in architectural and historical literature on this topic, with existing publications only focussing on the works of specific architects like Manuel Vicente, buildings and clusters.⁶ There is also a disproportionate wealth of research on Portuguese Africa, with the works of Ana Tostões and Ana Vaz Milheiro, for instance, offering critical insights into the core-periphery dynamics that shaped modern architecture development in these territories.⁷ The second concerns omphaloskepsis or the *naval-gazing* tendencies of Portuguese scholarship, with its discourses and archival sources typically delimited to the Lusophone world.⁸ It would be worthwhile upscaling existing debates on Macanese Modernism, situating them within regional and global discourses in architecture. After all, borders are porous and amorphous despite their notions of physicality. Not only is its dynamism attributed to the *mobility* of people, ideas, and products between or among different localities but also space-time compression in an increasingly globalised world.

Thirdly, the paper responds to the call for more research on modern architecture, the underdog of the conservation movement in Macau. It is worthwhile mentioning how the restoration of Sino-Luso ties in 1951 corresponded with the growing efforts of Portugal at cultural diplomacy, which perhaps became most salient in the years leading up to handover in 1999.⁹ Some classic acts included the rescripting of historical narratives, construction of new infrastructure, erection of statues in the exaltation of Portuguese heroes, and the conservation of colonial architectural heritage.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the impregnation of urban spaces with Portuguese road signages (named after Portuguese cities, figures, etc.), an aspect almost inexistent in historic Macau,¹¹ as well as *calçadas portuguesa* (paved Portuguese cobblestones), further attest to their desire to leave behind the legacies of *Portugueseness*. Nonetheless, the nonchalance towards *faceless*, modern-day constructs prevail despite the growing advocacy of Docomomo and other local grassroots communities for its protection in the recent decade. Such a disparity is unsurprising given the then antiquated, pro-colonial conservation policies of the *Direcção-Geral de Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais* (DGEMN: Directorate-General of National Buildings and Monuments) in the Portuguese metropole, not to mention the lack thereof formal

debates on cultural heritage until the polemic restoration of the *Casa dos Bicos* in Lisbon by Manuel Vicente in the 1980s.¹² In this respect, research that fleshes out the multi-scalar significance of Macau's modern architecture would be critical which, besides reaffirming its cause for conservation also serves as the basis for more holistic policymaking in heritage management. Research findings may also be of relevance and transferrable to other tropical Asian cities.

In this research, the author examines the implications of mobility, that is, the flow of people, knowledge and products, on modern architectural development in Estado Novo Macau (1973-1974). The focus is on the early 1960s, the critical years of post-war economic rejuvenation. Leveraging the works of an important but little-known architect named Alfred Vitor Jorge Álvares, the paper illustrates, through the case study on Hotel Estoril, how regional symbiosis between two distinct colonial systems – Portuguese Macau and British Hong Kong – has shaped the city. In doing so, it challenges the classic *core-periphery* model that has shaped past understandings on the subject matter, not to mention the Janus-faced discourses dwelling on the Portugueseness and Chineseness of Macau's cultural objects. For data collection, the author scrutinised scholarly materials not limited to journals, books, and conference proceedings on her topic. She then performed desktop archival research, gathering data in Portuguese, English and Chinese from newspapers, architectural journals, graphic illustrations, and government gazettes from the databases of Macau, Hong Kong and Portugal. These included the Arquivo de Macau (Macau), Digital Repository @ HKUL (Hong Kong), Hong Kong Public Records Office (Hong Kong), Arquivo Nacional Torre do Tombo (Portugal), Arquivo Científico Tropical (Portugal) and Fundação Portugal-Africa (Portugal). Textual and discourse analyses were applied to assess the credibility of historical evidence and to identify embedded messages critical to reconstructing the contexts of the past.

While Chapter 2 offers some context to modernisation and economic development in post-war Macau, Chapter 3 delves into the case study of Alfred Vitor Jorge Álvares and his trans-colonial experiences in modern architectural construction. Chapter 4 then compares Hotel Estoril to the earlier works of Álvares, through which it not only reveals certain particularities but also the dynamism of his architectural aesthetics. The author then further scrutinises the construction materials, industry players and technology involved in the development, validating her hypothesis on the presence of symbiosis in architectural production between British Hong Kong and Portuguese Macau. She then critically debates on the Hotel's design in relation to *glocalisation*, leveraging discourses on the *new mobilities paradigm* in the final chapter to articulate future research directions. Chapter 6 ends with several concluding remarks on the research.

2. MACAU AND ITS MARCH TOWARDS MODERNITY

“...architecture and the environment in Hong Kong is being systematically killed as a result of uncoordinated development. Unfortunately the sad story does not end there. The **concrete cancer** is also spreading to Macau, in the wake of Hong Kong construction companies who have one to tear down the city’s Mediterranean-style, stucco-finished colonial buildings and started to replace them with multi-storey high-rise apartment blocks, whose cosmetics are compounded of plastic, marble and stick-on tiles.”

Asian Building & Construction, November 1973, 15.¹³

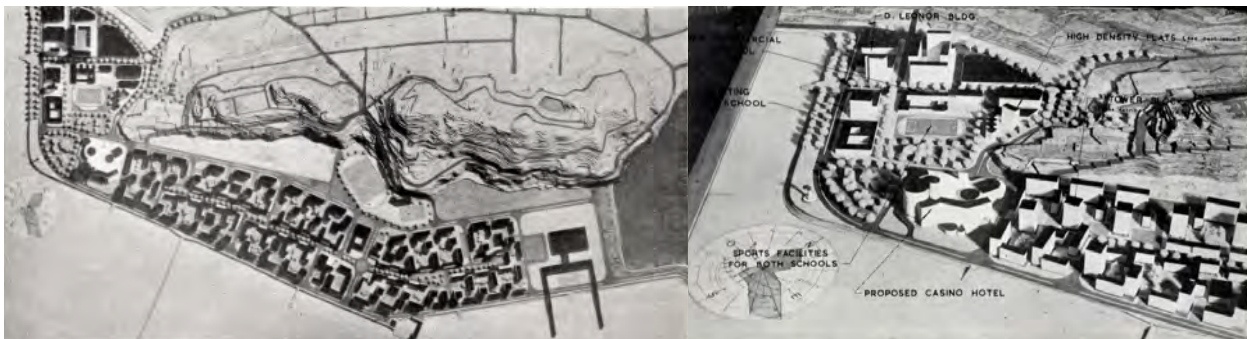
Martin Woollacott (1931-2021), a distinguished journalist for *The Guardian*, had been unmerciful in his commentary on *Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau’s* (STDM) hallmark, Hotel Lisboa (1970). A testimony to “Chinese bad taste,” the building, as he would describe, was a “dreadful Chinese Blackpool-cum-Las Vegas” no different from a “giant ornate marmalade jar plonked down on the shore.”¹⁴ Woollacott’s account encapsulates the ambivalent attitudes, or perhaps growing negativity of the locals towards the ‘architectural kitsch’ that was destroying old Macau and its “civilised architecture.”¹⁵ Nonetheless, given the specificity of social perceptions and constructs to time, person and context, an objective understanding of the city’s developmental dynamics would be fundamental before further analyses.

Despite its deteriorating economy since the founding of British Hong Kong, partly deterministic of its fate was also the irreversible silting of its harbour. For decades, the city had been searching for viable means of survival while dealing with the aftermath of a shrinking population brought about by the sustained waves of emigration to Hong Kong.¹⁶ Fuelling hopes for post-war economic rejuvenation was the reversal of its natural decline, with its population burgeoning with its role as a refugee centre during WWII and other Chinese civil crises. Nonetheless, the reality proved to be otherwise, with the 1950s marking an era of awareness and acceptance of Macau’s laidback pace of development. Apart from its modest scale of industrialisation was tourism, the mainstay of its economy, which primarily fed on tourist arrivals from Hong Kong. While its idyllic, low-rise, historic setting enraptures its counterpart, the avant-garde and fast-paced modernity of Hong Kong appeal to the people of Macau. More critically, the role of power differentials in driving trans-colonial mobility and fostering mutualism becomes increasingly salient at this juncture.

Nonetheless, a construction boom would soon awaken this sleepy haven of the East. In 1962, Lr. Col. Antonio Adriano Lopes dos Santos announced a \$54 million plan aimed at transforming the city into the “Garden City of Asia” and “Casino of the Orient,” of which only the latter came true.¹⁷ Soon came the cession of the gambling monopoly to STDM, which eventually bore a seminal role in the city’s march towards modernity.¹⁸ Among the earliest highlights was Hotel Estoril, a 32-room hotel-casino along Avenida Sidónio Pais, then already under construction in 1963 while plans for the flagship casino-hotel – Hotel Lisboa

– were underway.¹⁹ Gaming tourism was to enable and drive local development, be it in aspects like land reclamation, the construction of multi-modal transportation systems or even grand schemes like the Ilha Verde project.²⁰ It seemed as if Macau was on a new journey to “making up for the lost 400 years,”²¹ stealing the limelight in the Asia-Pacific region as newspapers detailed the “newest sins in the world’s wickedest city,” for perhaps it was so rare to have such “places in the world...so exotic, so decadent, so excitingly wicked.”²²

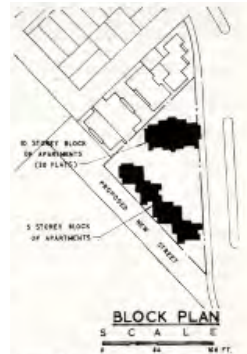
A town planning crisis nonetheless erupted from this drive for tourism, which, in turn, saw five notable Portuguese architects then working in Macau join forces to form a pertinent committee in October 1962.²³ The team conceptualised developmental plans for both green and undeveloped reclaimed land, allocating adequate sites for immediate development whilst keeping the remaining parts of the city ‘frozen’ until the completion of the general master plan (see Figs. 2 and 3). Even so, the city’s laissez-faire governance, not to mention the rootedness of its bottom-up planning ‘tradition,’ inevitably fuelled public scepticism towards such grand endeavours. Another woe of post-war Macau was the exacerbating land crunch that came alongside its burgeoning population size.



Figs. 2 (left) and 3 (right) Aerial view of a model of Praia Grande, Outer Harbour district. On the right is the close up of the master plan, with circular buildings in the left foreground being Eric Cumine’s Hotel Lisboa (1970), the second milestone project of STDN (Hotel Lisboa). (Source: Far East Architect & Builder, March 1965, 46-47)

Despite the exigencies for vertical urbanism, high-rise developments over 5-storeys remained a rarity in Macau. In particular, there was a rooted preconception among private developers about communal amenities like lifts, fearing how the individualistic tendencies of its residents could turn such areas into spaces of friction, potentially ramifying collective administration and maintenance. While pertinent legislations, particularly that of the *propriedade horizontal* (horizontal property) system, only came into vigour in November 1966, local real estate businesses, unlike those of Hong Kong, typically inclined towards low-cost investments, “build[ing] cheap to sell cheap.”²⁴ Eventually taking form was a low-rise environment, with developments still falling within the maximum permissible height under the Portuguese Building Ordinances without lifts. It

then fell upon the local government and less conservative developers to lead by example, bringing avant-garde technology and ideas to Macau while demonstrating the prospects for larger developments. An example of such a dilemma in urban development would be the residential blocks (1963) designed by José C.S. Maneiras, with the low-rise, *partis pris* layout 5-storey block sold to private developers under the system aforementioned and its 10-storey counterpart (the “eye-opener”) coming under government ownership to house civil servants (see Figs. 4 and 5).²⁵

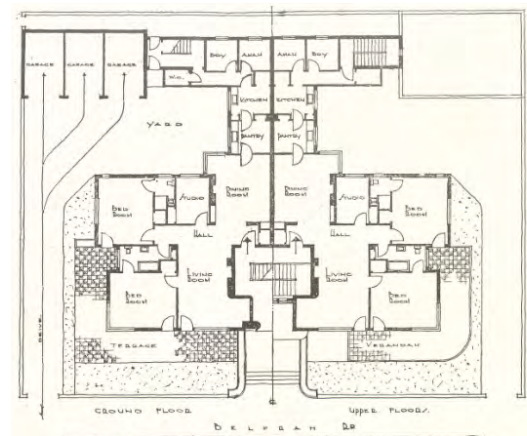


Figs. 4 (left) and 5 (right) View from the southwest of the 5-storey block and 10-storey block under construction at the rear. Most of the windows face south for a better intake of summer breezes (left). Block plan of the entire development (right). (Source: Far East Architect & Builder, April 1965, 52-54).

The first half of 1966 saw the construction of 53 buildings valued at HK\$8,526,709, marking the rise or, perhaps, impregnation of Hong Kong’s concrete culture into Macau.²⁶ The city would soon transform into a stage of conflicting activities, with remarkable leaps in economic and infrastructural development achieved at the expense of social equity and well-being. Despite efforts in heritage conservation, the uncoordinated, modern building ‘craze’ inevitably resulted in the annihilation of urban clusters deserving of collective protection.²⁷ It is paradoxical that history repeats itself today, with the then avant-garde constructions increasingly displaced by postmodern developments of the 21st century. The coverage by *Far East Builder & Architect* on Macau’s development had been written with foresight, highlighting how the then polemic constructions could eventually be cherished by society should they stand to the test of time. Almost 60 years from its writing comes the growing momentum to safeguard 20th-century modern architecture, revalidating how dynamic heritage values are and their capacity for metamorphosis with the ebb and flow of society.

3. ALFRED VITOR JORGE ÁLVARES AND HIS WORKS OF ARCHITECTURE

While countless architects had contributed to Macau's modern architectural scene during its nascent stage of development, many, with the exception of renowned figures like Manuel Vicente, seemingly remain unsung 'heroes.' This chapter flags up the works of a Macau-born Hong Kong-based Portuguese architect named Alfred Vitor Jorge Álvares (1910-1992), who was the brainchild of several exemplary architectural pieces in both territories. Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects since 1967 and President of the Hong Kong Society of Architects (now Hong Kong Institute of Architects, HKIA) in 1968, Álvares had an extensive repertoire of works ranging from private residences to public infrastructure not limited to factories, hospitals, swimming pools and schools. A graduate of the International Correspondence School in Pennsylvania, United States, Álvares' first project as an Authorised Architect was the Camille Apartments (1938), a 3-storey, late Art Deco residential apartment which was amongst the "most sophisticated quarters" in Kowloon at its time of completion (see Figs. 2 and 3). Post-WWII, he joined *Messrs. Crédit foncier d'Extrême-Orient* (CFEO, 1907-1959), a regionally acclaimed Belgium-French company with the reputation of designing contemporaneous, statement-piece yet homelike architecture with clean aesthetics. These, as per Asia's oldest trade magazine for architecture and engineering, *Hong Kong & Far East Builder*, were "object[s] of joy," especially with how "naturally [they were] blended with comfort and coziness."²⁸ CFEO would possibly have had a seminal influence on the architect's personal aesthetics and style in modern architectural design, as evidenced by the (un)precedented parallel observed between the repertoire of works by CFEO and the architect's projects later delivered in private practice. Not only did Álvares designed the Douglas Apartments (1949) (see Fig. 8) but also the New Aerated



Figs. 6 (top) and 7 (bottom) Camille Apartments by A.V.J. Álvares, which was located the intersection of Belfran Road and Knight Street in Kowloon, Hong Kong. The area, an upper-middle residential district for Europeans, was also home to a sizeable Portuguese community. (Source: Hong Kong & South China Builder, August 1938, 40-41)



Fig. 8 Douglas Apartments (1949), possibly the first project delivered by Álvares at CFEO. The development also featured Wrightian carports or open parking, which became recurrent features in his subsequent projects. (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, September & October 1949, 49)

Water Factory (1949) for A.S. Watson Co., Ltd., which was perhaps the most celebrated in his career at CFEO (see Fig. 9). Emblematic of the “most modern trends in industrial architecture,” the building was designed following a rigorous study of the typology in the industrialising Manila.²⁹ Characterised by its whitewashed façades and smooth curvatures, its geometric, glass block windows that punctuate its elevations articulate the rationalist spirit of its time. An architect profoundly inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright, Álvares further interweaved Usonian design principles into the factory building, as exemplified by its carports and space-saving mushroom columns among many other features (see Figs. 10 and 11).

“...first impressions of the visitor to the building centre around the spotless cleanliness, the brightness, and the spaciousness under which the manufacturing processes are carried out... [which were resultant of the] original planning of the structure in which high ceilings and broad areas spaced by columns at maximum centres are combined with wide conventional window and glass brick sections and hard rendered white painted walls.”

Hong Kong & Far East Builder, July & August 1949, 51-52.³⁰



Fig. 9 “A very impressive, very attractive building,” heralded the Hong Kong & Far East Builder, oldest trade magazine for architecture and construction in Asia. Depicted is the exterior of A.S. Watson’s New Aerated Factory. (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, July & August, 1949, 51)



Figs. 10 (left) and 11 (right) Usonian-inspired carports, recurrent features of the architect's works (left); the main factory area on the ground floor looking towards the bottling machines. Note the space-saving columns (right). (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, July & August 1949, 51-52)

Departing soon after to establish his practice, Alfred V. Álvares and Associates, projects like the Brenda-Anne Apartments (1951) (see Figs. 12 and 13) and the Arrowhead (1953) (see Figs. 14 and 15), also one alluding to Wright's Fallingwater (1935), were classic experiments through which the private practitioner explored his aesthetics taste in modern architectural design. Some other notable projects included the restoration and rehabilitation of the Portuguese Community School (1954) (see Figs. 16 and 17), as well as the construction of New Tregunter Mansions (1954) (see Fig. 18), Dr Carey-Hughes Residences (1956) (see Fig. 19), Canossa Hospital (1959) (see Fig. 20) and new wing of St. Teresa's Hospital (1959) (see Fig. 21).



Figs. 12 (left) and 13 (right) The Brenda-Anne Apartments (1951), with simple but bold geometric windows, extensive verandahs and a unique fan-shaped building plan (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, September & October 1949, 49-50)



Figs. 14 (left) and 15 (right) The iconic Arrowhead (1953) (left) at Deep Water Bay, Hong Kong, with a ramp installed in place of conventional staircase, connecting the living room to the lobby and lobby to the master bedroom suite (right). It was described as the most unusual but outstanding feature of the building's interior. (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, November & December 1953, 21-22)



Figs. 16 (left) and 17 (right) The former Kowloon Junior School in Cox's Path (left), which became the Portuguese Community School upon rehabilitation (right). (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, 1954, 35-36)



Fig. 18 Like the Douglas Apartments (1949), the New Tregunter Mansions (1954), Mid-levels District, was also developed for Humphrey's Estate and Finance Co., Ltd., a real estate company established in 1891. (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, 1955, 15)



Fig. 19 An architectural model of Dr Carey-Hughes' Residences, with its main entrance pictured on the right. While a circular building requires the least walling, founding and roof in theory, it is particularly challenging to design one in reality given the propensity for awkward floor layout. (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, March & April 1956, 13-14)



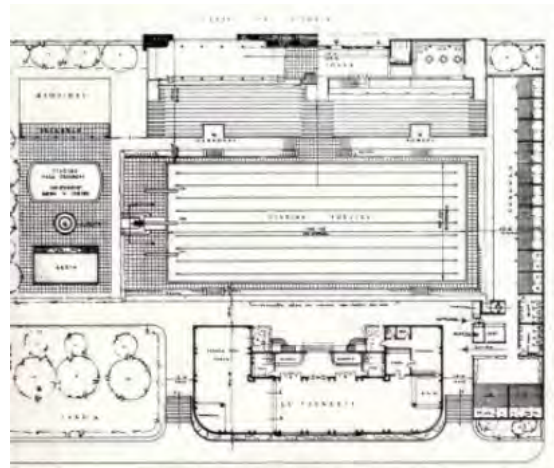
Fig. 20 New Canossa Hospital at the corner of Robinson Road and Peak Road. It was described as a dream come true – as “one of the cherished hopes of the Canossian Daughters of Charity (Italy)... [with the] new building a far cry from the first nursing home which was converted from two old buildings bequeathed to the Canossian Sisters in 1929.” (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, November & December, 1956, 14, 26)



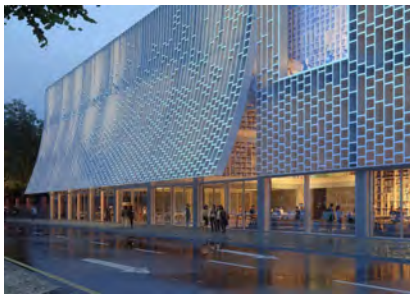
Fig. 21 Extension to St. Teresa's Hospital (1959). (Source: Hong Kong & Far East Builder, July – September 1959, 76)

3.1. Piscina Municipal and Hotel Estoril

Álvares was also involved in two milestone projects of Macau's modernisation and economic rejuvenation programmes: Piscina Municipal (1952) and Hotel Estoril (1962). The former, a \$1 million project designed by Álvares and José F. da Silva (formerly of Messrs. Atkinson & Dallas, Ltd. Shanghai) and tendered to the Jardine Engineering Corporation (Hong Kong), featured a swimming pool complex pivoting on "simple architectural treatment" in its layout and landscaping.³¹ Lying at its heart is a 162 by 65 feet, eight-lane swimming pool not only built in conformity to international health and Olympic standards but also one equipped with state-of-the-art water filtration system imported from Great Britain, which was among the most modern of all technologies "used in England and...[across] the British Empire."³² Positioned around the pool are the reinforced concrete spectators' stand and cabanas facing Estrada da Vitória, as well as a restaurant-dance hall along Avenida Sidónio Pais (see Figs. 22 to 24). While the former's tiled Portuguese roof reflects vernacular architectural influence, the latter is distinctively contemporaneous as characterised by its unornamented, whitewashed facades, curved building corners and simple windows and glass blocks. It also bears a 30 ft wide panoramic roof thrust by reinforced concrete frames, supporting its use as an open-air esplanade. The project stemmed from the decade-old endeavour to modernise Macau with the avant-garde, but construction halted soon after Hong Kong fell to the Japanese in 1941. At its time of completion, the Piscina Municipal, then among the largest in China, became a spectacle of the Portuguese Empire, with the premise inaugurated in the presence of the then Portuguese Minister of the Overseas Ministry.³³



Figs. 22 (top), 23 (centre) and 24 (bottom) The plan of the entire swimming complex (top); inauguration ceremony in 1952 attended by over 5000 local residents (centre); restaurant-dance hall facing Avenida Sidónio Pais (bottom centre part of Fig. 12; centre left of Fig. 13). (Sources: Hong Kong & South China Builder, January 1950, 49; February 1964, 117; David Barrote 1952)



Figs. 25 (top) and 26 (bottom) The newly opened Hotel Estoril (1964), then still without the Italian Futurist mosaic mural by Oseo Acconci (top); architect's impression of the future Macau Central Library (bottom). (Sources: Hong Kong & South China Builder February 1964, 116; Mecanoo)

Hotel Estoril (see Fig. 25), on the other hand, was conceived through latter-day additions and alterations (A&As) to the restaurant-dance hall (see Fig. 24). Inaugurated on January 17, 1964, in the auspicious Year of the Dragon, the new building was a “graceful structure of contemporary Portuguese design” that replaced the older “squat,” single-storey counterpart.³⁴ Álvares, the same architect for the project, had already foreseen the need for vertical expansion in the original restaurant-dance hall, thereby ensuring latitude of its first design. Still retaining its footprint, the \$1.5 million makeover featured three additional floors and a new entrance lobby, with the latter formed by the lining of pre-cast, hollow concrete blocks along the recessed front patio of the old building. To offer the luxury hotel-casino a touch of “external sophistication,”³⁵ the architect designed an imposing gridded façade composed of shading devices and ventilation blocks. Despite its significance as the first integrated casino resort ever constructed in Macau, the rise of Hotel Lisboa as the city’s new ex-libris sent the building spiralling into decline and its eventual abandonment in the 1990s. Apart from the Futurist Italian mosaic panel adorning its front elevation (see Fig. 31), Hotel Estoril is under demolition at the time of writing, making its way for the future Macau Central Library by Dutch architectural firm Mecanoo (see Fig. 26).

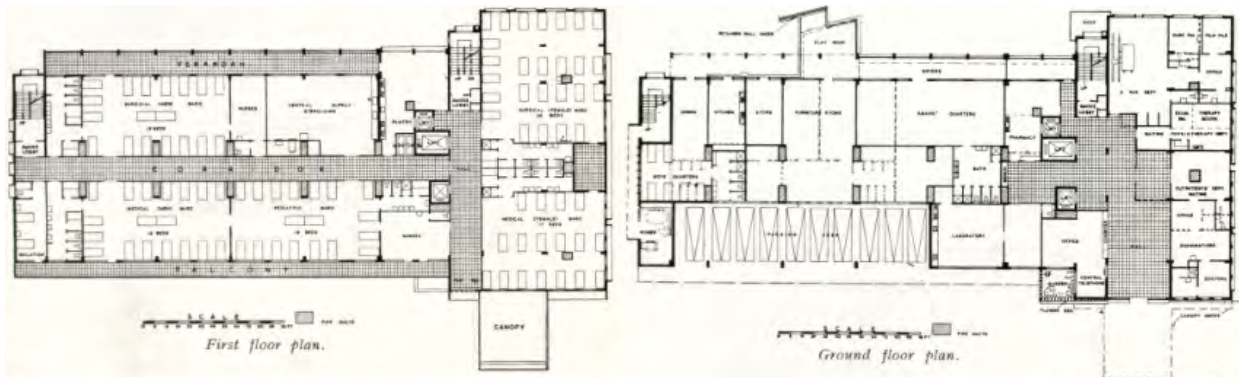
4. ANALYSIS

4.1. Architect's Aesthetics

Hotel Estoril bears several Usonian features like carports and the space-saving columns, which are aspects recurrent in the architect's earlier works like the Douglas Apartments (1949), New Aerated Water Factory for A.S. Watsons (1949) and New Tregunter Mansions (1954) in Hong Kong. Of interest is the building's evolution from a single-storey restaurant-dance hall into a hotel, which, upon scrutiny, reflects the dynamism of Álvares' architectural aesthetics throughout his career. Apart from its rear elevation, Hotel Estoril is almost stripped of all curved corners, a feature salient in the restaurant-dance hall and earlier projects. Examples include the Camille Apartments (1938) (see Fig. 6), with its curvature accentuated by the extensive, airy verandas wrapping its facades; A.S. Watson Co. Ltd.'s New Aerated Water Factory (1949), as articulated by the building's geometry, white-washed facades and the primary use of construction materials like concrete and glass blocks (see Figs. 9 to 11); and Dr Carey-Hughes' Residences (1956), a rare manifestation of circle-shaped construction in Asia (see Fig. 19). These juxtapose the growing angularity of buildings designed by Álvares in the late 1950s and early 1960s, with an exemplary antecedent of Hotel Estoril being the new Canossa Hospital (1960), which bears a distinctive monolithic reinforced concrete frame with brick-panelled walls (see Figs. 20 and 27). While the interior calls upon simple linear lines to ensure latitude in its spatial use (see Figs. 28 and 29), varied geometrical forms add texture and complexity to its façade, which bears two distinctive sections.



Figs. 27 (left), 28 (bottom left) and 29 (bottom right) View of New Canossa Hospital (1960) from the exterior, along with its ground (bottom left) and first floor plans (bottom right). (Source: Hong Kong & South China Builder, November & December 1959, 26-27)



Spanning two-thirds of the building's length is an extensive white plaster wall regularly punctuated by grey, vertical concrete clasps extending from the ceiling down to the windowsill. On the other hand, the remaining one-third has a similar but clasp-free plaster wall perceptibly boxed up within a 'crate.' In the case of Hotel Estoril, Álvares leverages the regularity and geometry of its gridded façade, bringing emphasis to the horizontality and verticality of the building. Equally worthy of mention is the vertical column that slices through its central axis, which, besides concealing the lift shaft and main staircase of the building, also holds in position the iconic vitreous mosaic mural of *Fortuna* by Oseo Acconci, a reputable Italian artist, architect and contractor. In some respect, Hotel Estoril also alludes to the Camille Apartments (1938), noting how its recessed axis – also decorated with three simple, vertical rows of glass blocks – endows upon the building its unique character (see Fig. 30). Despite the 'mundanity' of these modern architectural constructs, each of these recurrent elements bears subtle design variations across Álvares' works, which in turn stresses the zeitgeist of its time, whereby creativity lies in the play of simple shapes, form, lights, materials, space, and shadows.



Fig. 30 The central axis of Camille Apartments, Kowloon, Hong Kong. (Source: Hong Kong & South China Builder August 1938)

4.2. Materials, Technology and Regional Industry Players



Fig. 31 Oseo Acconci's Futurist mosaic mural at Hotel Estoril, which depicts *Fortuna*, Goddess of Fortune in Roman and Greek cultures. (Source: Macau Closer, 2015)

Nonetheless, there should be a multi-scalar understanding of Hotel Estoril, of which an inquiry into the technology used and regional industry players involved in its construction has been fruitful. Of significance here is the vitreous Venetian mosaic used in Acconci's Futurist mural (see Fig. 31). Unlike British Hong Kong, where these 2/5-to-1.25-inch coloured, imported mosaic squares had already been in vogue since the pre-war years, this decorative material remained a rarity in Portuguese Macau. Available in at least 220 different colours, these low-cost mosaics made their debut in Hong Kong's public swimming pools and fountains before rapidly gaining popularity for use in bathrooms, fireplaces and cocktail bars of private residences. The post-war years saw its demand soar, with their vibrance and unique tesserae making them indispensable to "contrast[ing]... the sobriety of... [modern architectural] design."³⁶ In Hong Kong, two local rival



Fig. 32 Advertisement of Raoul Bigazzi and his range of artistic services. (Source: Hong Kong & South China Builder, October – December 1960, 18)



Fig. 33 Macau's Santa Infância (1951), designed and built by Oseo Acconci, and with J. Nolasco da Silva being the engineer. Tiles were sourced from Vannini Construction Co. and sanitary fittings contracted to Wa Hing. (Source: Hong Kong & South China Builder, May & June 1951, 59)

Italian companies, Raoul Bigazzi (see Fig. 32) and Vannini Construction Co., Ltd, dominated the market in the sourcing of these materials. Its curiosity is Acconci's affiliation with the latter, where he also worked as a sculptor for Augusto Vannini. Like Álvares, he was an active player in the construction scenes of Hong Kong and Macau, but perhaps more (un)coincidental were the countless collaborations between both parties. Where marble, mosaics and terrazzo were to be featured in Álvares' projects, all orders would have been (sub-)contracted to Vannini Construction Co., Ltd., with this tradition of partnership rooting back to the building of New Tregunter Mansions (1954) (see Fig. 18). It is also worthwhile noting Acconci's role as an architect and contractor in the building of the new Santa Infância (1951) in Macau (see Fig. 33), with similar materials also sourced from the same company in Hong Kong. Considering the dynamics and particularities of both parties, it would perhaps be unsurprising for a similar phenomenon to recur for Hotel Estoril mosaic installations.

Further scrutiny of archival materials reveals the preponderant role of British Hong Kong companies in the construction of Hotel Estoril. Notable examples include the Jardine Engineering Corporation Ltd. (Schindler) for lift construction, a subsidiary of Jardine Matheson Holdings Limited;³⁷ British General Electric for air-conditioning;³⁸ Dreyer & Co. for asphalt roofing;³⁹ Paramount Interior Decorators for interior decoration;⁴⁰ and Lee Yu Kee Ltd. for plumbing.⁴¹ Some of these well-established firms are amongst the oldest in their trade, enjoying a considerable reputation locally and regionally. Recalling the rarity of lifts in the then low-rise Macau, the feature of avant-garde technology and industry giants from Hong Kong in STD's first milestone project upholds several meanings. Albeit a contemporary gaze would have informed otherwise, Hotel Estoril as a spectacle had immense socio-political significance in the then fledgling economy. Secondly, despite its seeming dependency on its neighbour, Macau was also an indispensable regional market and source of labour for Hong Kong. Sustaining the flow of industry players, ideas, and technological products between both lands is the power differentials – abundance in one and scarcity in the other. In this context, regional symbiosis was inevitable in modern architectural development given the lack of similar provisions within Macau and the Portuguese Empire, not to mention the geopolitical peripheralization or 'divestiture' by its metropole with Portugal's growing stake in Portuguese Africa since the late 19th century.

4.3. Local, Global or *Glocal*?

Hotel Estoril exemplifies the notion of *glocalisation*, whereby there is a fittingness of its architectural interventions into both local and global discourses on Modernism. Despite the growing popularity of brise soleil and ventilation blocks in architectural construction of the 1960s, it is unlikely for its concrete manifestation in subtropical Macau to stem entirely from the need for climatic adaptation but the rapidly changing undercurrents of post-war Modernism at scale. The British Building Research Station, for instance, was seminal to the dissemination of architectural solutions for the tropics through the *Colonial Building Notes* (1950-1958) and *Overseas Building Notes* (1958-).⁴² Not only did these redefine the trajectories of modern architectural practice in Hong Kong and other British colonies, but also its regional neighbours, especially where trans-colonial exchanges have both been possible and salient.

Despite claims of Modernism as a perpetrator of cultural homogeneity, Hotel Estoril demonstrates otherwise, with its vernacularist spirit well-articulated in its *glocalised* pastel-coloured exterior render (see Fig. 34). While its yellow façade, similar to Hotel Lisboa, symbolises prosperity, wealth and good luck in Chinese geomancy or *fengshui*, such pastel colours also articulate the Lusophone identity of the building. This shade, almost identical to the *Fortaleza da Guia* (Fortress of Guia, Macau), aligns with the Portuguese vernacular tradition of painting building facades in bright colours to reflect heat during the dry, hot summers, which is typical of the Mediterranean climate. Nonetheless, such exuberance bears different meanings in the case of post-war Modernism, with bright colours manifesting as an outright demonstration against the pre-war architectural culture of ‘whitewashing.’ Back then, a smooth, cleansed façade emphasised the simplicity and purity of functionalist designs, boldly remarking a clean rupture in history and tradition in a new era of machine and technology. On the other hand, the growing colour palette in post-war modern architecture echoed the optimism society had towards a future enriched and enlivened by technological advancements. With the significance of colour in expressing the “limitless[ness] of the newfound spirit,”⁴³ Hotel Estoril is thus a building that encapsulates the hopes and dreams Macau has in its pursuit of modernity and economic development.



Fig. 34 Hotel Estoril, c.1965. (Source: MO/AH/ICON/MTL/MO/127, Macau: Yat Cheung Co., 1965, held at Arquivo de Macau)

5. DISCUSSION

While globalisation is not a process unique to the modern-day, neither is Modernism and its ethos a one-size-fits-all solution to problems in architecture in different parts of the world. It is a mere umbrella term that encapsulates the zeitgeist of its time, whereby one observes the *repetition* of particular architectural elements, forms or philosophy at multiple scales and across a sustained period of time. However, as the renowned architectural historian George Kubler would have argued on the issue of identity and style in *The Shape of Time* (1962), or as Fernando Távora would, too, have proven through the *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa* (1947), there would never be one *Style* but varied manifestations of *styles* amidst constant but uneven rates of change.⁴⁴ With how subliminal their transformations can be, it then falls upon architectural historians, be it as “identity detector[s],”⁴⁵ or as predators of “the shapes of time,”⁴⁶ in deciphering traditions in *repetition* and in composing meanings out of it. Nonetheless, an understanding of modern architecture solely through tangible forms ought to be problematised. Previous chapters have articulated how central mobility is to the conception of Hotel Estoril and, more broadly, the trajectories of modern architectural development in Macau. Even so, delimiting would it be to confine the debate to physical (and virtual) movement, for a fixed ‘mooring’ like Hotel Estoril is a place *in* and *of* movement and not a rigid container of social processes. To problematise traditional social science perspectives on space is to put into question the overlooked, that is, to search for in-betweenness. In this case, it concerns the networks and circulations of human and nonhuman agents central to the conception of a place.⁴⁷ The *new mobilities paradigm* is enlightening in this respect, accentuating how indissociable discourses on mobility are from the immobile. Echoing Mimi Sheller and John Urry’s arguments, this is given the indispensability of “extensive systems of immobility,”⁴⁸ or rather, fixed “spatial, infrastructural and institutional moorings,” in organising the physical and virtual flow of people, information and objects. For mobility is both localised and materialised, Hotel Estoril likens to a product of sublimation, whereby the seemingly fluid, gaseous flow of architects, architectural knowledge, and construction technology within Portuguese Macau, as well as between other parts of the world crystallises into a “shape of time.”

For places are not mutually exclusive, insular entities, further research on Macau’s modern architectural development amidst the growing space-time compression of the world should be that on relationships, proximities and (im)mobilities in their “fluid interdependence.”⁴⁹ More critically, it needs to transcend the typical Janus-faced discourses on *Portugueseness* and *Chineseness*, deepening our understanding of how ‘static’ places ‘move’ alongside the mobile flows and visions of a city. In this light, future research on Macau’s regional symbiosis in modern architectural production could examine the mobilities of trans-colonial architects [e.g. Macau-born, Hong Kong-based architects (e.g. A.V.J. Álvares, José Lei, etc.) and vice versa, other practitioners with cumulative experiences in both territories (e.g. Jon Prescott, Eric Cumine, etc.), etc.]

among knowledge and technological transference. Firstly, this (re-)validates and strengthens the argument on symbiosis between Portuguese Macau and British Hong Kong in modern architectural production. On the other hand, it becomes the basis for realising more ambitious objectives, such as in upscaling debates on Macanese Modernism and bridging the gap both within architectural history and between other ‘distinct’ disciplines. After all, all places can be enmeshed in “thin networks of connections,” and their ductility renders that “nowhere can be an ‘island.’”⁵⁰

6. CONCLUSION

While historical events like the Dutch-Portuguese War (1622) and Treaty of Nanking (1842) had led to an almost irreversible decline of Macau, efforts channelled to rejuvenating its economy in the 1960s through gaming tourism have been successful, allowing for its transformation from a colonial entrepot to a phantasmagorical, postmodern casino city. Nonetheless, falling victim to this drive for development has been cultural heritage protection, which, paradoxically, is also the impetus for the enforcement of conservation laws. Even so, there has been differential treatment accorded to Portuguese colonial architecture, whereby there is an enduring romanticism of its aesthetics and grandeur, in comparison to the aesthetically ‘mundane’ modern counterparts. The same phenomenon recurs when juxtaposing the latter with flamboyant architectural constructs of the late 20th and early 21st century. The following paper is thus a search for in-betweenness, that is, Macanese Modernism, a seemingly unremarkable phase straddling the colonial era and postmodernity. The author has noted how substandard building maintenance has not only marred the image of significant modern landmarks but also heightened its propensity for demolition. In this respect, the paper echoes the call for research on modern architecture, the underdog in the global conservation movement. Besides the paucity of research on 20th-century Macanese Modernism, the paper has also problematised the naval-gazing tendencies of Lusophone scholarship, thus the attempt to resituate such debates within broader discourses on architecture, starting with the regional scale. Leveraging the works of an important but forgotten architect named Alfred Vitor Jorge Álvares, the paper illustrates, through the case of Hotel Estoril, how regional symbiosis between two distinct colonial systems – Portuguese Macau and British Hong Kong – has shaped modern architectural development in the city. Challenging Janus-faced discourses that dwell on the Portugueseness and Chineseness of Macau’s cultural ‘objects,’ the author exemplifies through Hotel Estoril the multi-faceted identity of globalised architecture. The paper elucidates how the abundance-scarcity dyad, or the power differentials between both territories’ economy and industrial capacity, have driven the flow of architects, architectural knowledge, construction technology and materials. Mobility, in other words, fuels regional symbiosis, although Portugal’s growing ‘divestiture’ of Macau since the late 19th century has also conditioned such dynamics. Deserving of further exploration is then the issue of reciprocity, which concerns the bi-directional flow of architects, ideas and products between Macau and Hong Kong for modern architectural development. Future

research would constitute a more in-depth analysis of A.V.J. Álvares' works, examining how his experiences in Macau could have shaped that in Hong Kong. An inquiry into the works of other trans-colonial architects would be quintessential to both (re-)validating and strengthening the argument for regional symbiosis. Finally, the paper leverages Sheller and Urry's (2006) new mobilities paradigm, advancing future research objectives that could better situate Macanese Modernism within broader, global discourses on architecture. While the role of architectural historians, as per George Kubler (1962), is to detect living 'tradition' and cultural identity in the inanimate "shapes of time," the author calls for deeper scrutiny of the overlooked, that is, the mobile, gaseous-like flow of people, knowledge and products between different places, arguing that it is the basis of understanding their eventual crystallisation as architecture. In this respect, the paper is an effort to bridge the gap between seemingly distinct disciplines like architectural history and critical mobility studies, with more of such research fundamental to constructing a more holistic understanding of the dynamism and 'mobility' of places.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

¹ "A Portuguese that, falling asleep in Lisbon, [and] w[a]k[ing] up in Hong Kong by magic, might not exactly know where he was, but would certainly know that [he wasn't] on Portuguese land; the same Portuguese who woke up at the height of the Nine Islands and, moving forward, saw from the ship a hermitage of the Nossa Senhora da Guida, then the Hospital of São Januário, further on, the long row of houses in the Praia Grande, above those in Chunambeiro, and at the top, the chapel of Nossa Senhora da Penha, would immediately say: what is it, I don't know, but I can see a Portuguese city by the sea. (...) wasn't everything [in Macau] as Portuguese as any neighbourhood of Porto, Braga or Coimbra? (...) Today it is already not to a large extent. Thirty years ago, the city, Macau, had been sadly [losing its Portuguese character.] (...) What was there, what had been destroyed, were characteristically Portuguese and Chinese. We had a city that no one had in the Far East, a city worthy to be seen, to be visited. Today, we have a city in which almost all its picturesque has been removed, stripped of its attractions, uncharacteristic, shapeless."

² Manuel Teixeira, *Macau Através do Séculos* [Macau Across Centuries] (Macau: Imprensa Nacional, 1977), 68-70.

³ Diogo Burnay, "Colonialism and Architecture in Macao," *29th AICA Congress*, Macao, September 1995; Jonathan Porter, "'The Past Is Present': The Construction of Macau's Historical Legacy," *History & Memory* 321, no. 1 (2009): 63-100.

⁴ Francisco Figueira, *Macau visto do Céu* [Macau from the Sky] (Macau: Argumentum, edições Lda., 1999), 11.

⁵ Pamela G. Hollie, "Last Fortress of the Portuguese," *Straits Times*, May 20, 1982, 4-5.

⁶ See e.g. Bruno Miguel Gonçalves Alves, "A Obra de Manuel Vicente – Leitura Crítica pelos Ex-colaboradores [The Work of Manuel Vicente – Critical Reading by Ex-Collaborators], Master's Dissertation, Universidade Lusíada, 2019; Patrícia Selada Lameiro Domingues, "Autoria e Arquitetura. Autonomia Disciplinar e O Arquiteto Hoje [Authorship and Architecture. Disciplinary Autonomy and the Architect Today]," Master's Dissertation, Universidade de Coimbra, 2012; Jorge Figueira, "A Periferia Perfeita. Pós-modernidade na Arquitectura Portuguesa Anos 1960-1980 [The Perfect Periphery: Post-modernity in

Portuguese Architecture Years 1960-1980],” PhD dissertation, Universidade de Coimbra, 2009; Jorge Figueira, “The Return of the *Casa dos Bicos*, Lisbon, 1983,” *The Journal of Architecture* 22, no. 2 (2017): 328-351.

⁷ See e.g. Ana Tostões, *Modern Architecture in Africa: Angola and Mozambique* (Lisbon: ICIST, Técnico, 2013); Ana Vaz Milheiro, “Modernity and Colonization in an African megacity; The Case of Luanda,” In Deden Rukmana, *The Routledge handbook of planning megacities in the global south* (Routledge: New York, 2020); Milheiro, *Nos Trópicos sem Le Corbusier - Arquitetura Luso-africana no Estado Novo* [In the Tropics without Le Corbusier – Luso-african Architecture in the Estado Novo] (Lisboa: Relógio D’Água, 2012).

⁸ Jorge Figueira, Ana Tostões, and Rui Leão, *Design Activism in the Context of Macau*, 2013.

⁹ Macau’s official status had been altered several times since the rise of the Estado Novo in 1933, the first being its declaration as part of the “Império Colonial Português” of Portugal in the *Constituição de 1933* (Título VII, Artigo 132º) and later “províncias ultramarinas (overseas provinces)” in the legislation of 1951 (titled “Lei n.º 2048 de 11 de junho de 1951”). The latter was resultant of the escalating international pressure (partly from the United Nations) regarding colonisation in the post-war years. Nonetheless, these alterations were superficial especially with the reluctance of the Estado Novo to give up its possessions in Africa and Asia. Note how Sino-Luso ties had soured between 1933 and 1951 but substantially improved since 1951. Also see Porter, “The Past Is Present,” 2009.

¹⁰ In the last 7 years leading up to 1999, the colonial government initiated the construction of new infrastructure and monuments every year, many of which embedded with diplomatic messages. Examples include the Gate of Understanding, Arco de Oriente, Friendship Statue and Guan Yin Statue.

¹¹ Jorge Manuel Flores, “The Portuguese Chromosome: Reflections on the Formation of Macau’s identity (16th-18th Centuries),” *Macau on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, Macau: Macau Ricci Institute 2003, 39-56.

¹² Established in 1929, conservation philosophies of the DGEMN were founded upon Viollet-le-Duc’s conjecture-based (rather than evidence-based) approach to conservation, engendering that the spurious could be destroyed while new elements or edifices can be introduced to ensure harmony or “unity of style.” Also see Figueira, “The Return of the *Casa dos Bicos*,” 2017; and Paulo Pereira, *Arquitetura Portuguesa* [Portuguese Architecture] (Porto: Temas e Debates, 2022), 567-578.

¹³ “The Concrete Sets on Macau,” *Asian Building & Construction*, November 1973, 15.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Other popular destinations of migration include Shanghai and Southeast Asian territories like Malaysia and Singapore.

¹⁷ “Casino of the Orient,” *Straits Times*, August 28, 1962, 3.

¹⁸ The *Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões Macau* (STDm) held a monopoly over Macau’s gaming industry from 1962 until 2002. The redistribution of rights corresponded to the proliferation of casinos across the city, especially along the reclaimed Cotai Strip. Originally planned by the Portuguese colonial government as a residential ‘haven,’ the neighbourhood, strategically located away from casinos and the polluted urban cores, was to feature a diversity of leisure and recreational facilities, as well as eco-friendly infrastructure.

¹⁹ “Drive for Tourists,” *Straits Times*, July 8, 1963, 1.

²⁰ “Bold Development Plan for Macao,” *Hong Kong & Far East Builder*, 1962, 65-66.

²¹ “Macau’s 400-year wait,” *Business Times*, November 12, 1979, 2.

²² “Macao. The Newest Sin in the World’s Wickedest City,” *Straits Times*, June 18, 1967, 18.

²³ The five architects were Manuel Vicente, José C.S. Maneiras, Raul Chorão Ramalho, Henrique Mendia, and Natália Gomes. “Macau. Its History. Its Town Planning. Its Architecture,” *Far East Builder & Architect*, March 1965, 45-48; Micael Almeida Soares, “Reflexos da Experiência de Macau: Arquitetura e Pós-modernidade a

partir do Atelier de Manuel Vicente [Reflections of the Macau Experience: Architecture and Post-modernity from the Atelier of Manuel Vicente],” Master’s dissertation, Universidade de Coimbra, 2018, 25.

²⁴ “Multi-storey flats on Triangular Site,” *Far East Architect & Builder*, April 1965, 52-54.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ These “buildings consisted of 606 apartments, 75 shops, one office, one garage, three warehouses, one factory, one school and one orphanage.” Also see “Building Boom in Macau,” *Far East Architect & Builder*, September 1966, 33.

²⁷ Ibid, 47.

²⁸ “Forfar Road Flats. Modern Apartments off Argyle Street,” *Hong Kong & Far East Builder*, February & March 1941, 36-38; “‘Martinhoe.’ Three Storied Apartment House on Barker Road,” *Hong Kong & Far East Builder*, January & February 1949, 37.

²⁹ “New Aerated Water Factory for A.S. Watson & Co., Ltd. in Kowloon,” *Hong Kong & Far East Builder*, July & August 1949, 51-52.

³⁰ Ibid, 51.

³¹ “The Macao Municipal Swimming Pool,” *Hong Kong & Far East Builder*, January & February 1950, 49-50.

³² “Campo Desportivo da Caixa Escolar de Macau – piscina,” Arquivo Macau, 1941, MO/AH/EDU/CEM/13/0001.

³³ David Barrote, *Visita do Ministro do Ultramar a Macau em junho de 1952*, Macau: Repartição Central dos Serviços Económicos, Secção de Propaganda, Publicidade e Turismo, 1952; “The Macao Municipal Swimming Pool,” *Hong Kong & Far East Builder*, January & February 1950, 49-50.

³⁴ “Macao: Hotel Estoril Remodelled at Cost of \$1.5 million,” *Far East Architect & Builder*, February 1964, 116-118.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Vitreous Mosaics,” *Hong Kong & South China Builder*, August 1938, 17-18.

³⁷ The Jardine Engineering Corporation (JEC) was first established in Shanghai in 1923 to support the import of machinery into China. Taking over the responsibilities of Jardine, Matheson & Co. Ltd’s Engineering Department, the corporation also had branch offices in Chung King, Hankow, Nanking and Tientsin. Headquartered in Hong Kong since 1950, JEC currently has operations across Asia, offering services in building design, supply and installation, facility operation and management and the sourcing of specialised electrical and mechanical equipment and architectural fixtures among many others.

³⁸ The British General Electric represented the General Electric Company (GEC) in the Far East, in localities not limited to Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. Established in 1886 as G. Binswanger and Co., GEC, which was amongst the most significant industrial conglomerates in the world, was specialised in manufacturing consumer and defence electronics among many others.

³⁹ Founded in 1949, Dreyer & Co., Ltd. is a well-established supplier of building materials, particularly bathroom fittings and accessories, metals and small machinery. Its board of directors were H. Dreyer, Pong Wing Tong, C.W.L Cole, B.R. Rasmussen and Lee Wah Chue, all highly experienced in handling building and engineering supplies in Hong Kong and China. Mr Dreyer was the most senior with 38 years in the Far East.

⁴⁰ Paramount Advertising Agency was amongst the top few advertisement agencies in British Hong Kong. It was founded by James Kwok in the late 1940s, who eventually established Paramount Interior Decorators between 1956 and 1957. This came in tandem with the post-Korean War construction boom, which saw the intensifying development of hotels and offices by foreign investors in Hong Kong, and quickly gained a foothold in Hong Kong and Macau for interior design and neon light installation. Some of its clients included Miramar Hotel, Imperial Hotel, Astor Hotel, Deutsche Bank, Jardine and STDM. Both companies dissolved in 1995 and 1986 respectively.

⁴¹ Lee Yu Kee, formerly Lee Kee and Co., is amongst the oldest plumbing companies in Hong Kong. Established by building contractor Lee Pui Kee in 1896, it was eventually renamed by his son Lee Iu-cheung, who specialised in hydraulic and sanitary engineering, in the 1920s. This marked the company's critical transition into a principal manufacturer of drainage pipes, sanitary fittings and other plumbing supplies in Hong Kong.

⁴² Leão, Rui, and Lai, Charles. "Tropical Modernity: a Hybrid-Construct in South China," *Docomomo* 63, no. 2 (2020): 57-61.

⁴³ Susana Bauer, "Are we still modern?" The dilemma of contemporary architecture," In Eliana Sousa Santos, *Systems of History: George Kubler's Portuguese Plain Architecture* (Coimbra: UC Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2013), 43.

⁴⁴ Fernando Távora, *O Problema da Casa Portuguesa* [The Problem of the Portuguese House] (Lisboa: Editorial Organizações, 1947); and George Kubler, *The Shape of Time* (Connecticut, CT: Yale University Press, 1962).

⁴⁵ Patrícia Miguel, "The Corporema of the Portuguese House," In Eliana Sousa Santos, *Systems of History: George Kubler's Portuguese Plain Architecture* (Coimbra: UC Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2013), 52.

⁴⁶ Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, 32.

⁴⁷ Mobilities is an inquiry into the forces that mobilise as much as they immobilise the movement of people, things and information. The new mobilities paradigm is a contemporary approach to theorising and conceptualising how different mobilities lie at the heart of power constellations, identity-making, and the microgeographies of the quotidian. Recognising the propensity for traditional social science to trivialise human mobility patterns and to view places as rigid, non-moving 'containers' of people and things, the new mobilities paradigm is a call for 'sociology beyond societies,' but never one insistent on a 'grand narrative' of mobility, fluidity or liquidity. Instead, it proposes a set of questions, theories, and methodologies rather than a totalising description of the present-day world. Also see John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (Routledge: London, 2006); Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," *Environment and Planning A* 38, (2006): 207–226; Tim Cresswell, 'Mobilities I: catching up', *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 4 (2011): 550-558.

⁴⁸ Sheller and Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm," 210.

⁴⁹ Ibid, 212-213.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 210.

Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

Working Paper Series

TRADITIONS: MERGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST

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Volume 334

Pages 26-36

2024

TRADITIONS; MERGE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST



The Merge between different 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.

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 all 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 fabric of Istanbul 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. This paper is an attempt to answer the following questions: What are the contributions to discover the potential of continuity between merging Past, Present and Future? By analysing and interpreting basic urban and architectural patterns of Istanbul 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?

1. INTRODUCTION

This research explores the convergence of architectural and planning traditions between the East and the West. It investigates how the merging of these traditions has influenced the development of architectural styles, design principles, and urban planning approaches. By examining key factors, examples, and case studies, this research seeks to understand the cultural exchange and synthesis that has occurred in the field of architecture. Merging East and West can result in a unique and innovative architectural style that combines elements from both traditions. This fusion can create buildings that are visually striking, culturally resonant, and functionally efficient.

2. WAYS IN WHICH MODERN WEST AND ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE CAN BE MERGED:

Design Principles: Combine the clean lines and simplicity of modern Western architecture with the geometric patterns and decorative elements of Islamic architecture. Incorporate elements such as arches,

domes, and intricate carvings into contemporary building designs. Use geometric patterns and calligraphy in building facades, interior spaces, and decorative elements.

Materials and Technology: Utilize modern construction materials and technologies while incorporating traditional materials from both Western and Islamic architecture. For example, combine sleek glass and steel structures with ornate tile work, marble, and wood. Implement sustainable and energy-efficient technologies that align with both Western and Islamic architectural principles.

Courtyard Concept: Incorporate the traditional Islamic courtyard concept, known as the "haram," into modern building designs. Create open-air spaces within the building complex that provide natural light, ventilation, and a sense of tranquility. These courtyards can serve as gathering spaces and offer a connection to nature.

Integration of Cultural Symbols: Integrate cultural symbols and motifs from both Western and Islamic traditions into the architectural design. This can include incorporating elements such as Christian crosses, Islamic crescents, or symbols from other religious or cultural traditions to reflect the diversity and inclusivity of the building's purpose.

Harmonious Coexistence: Design buildings that foster a harmonious coexistence of different architectural styles, creating a visual dialogue between Western and Islamic elements. This can be achieved by juxtaposing contrasting architectural features in a complementary manner or by seamlessly blending different styles throughout the building.

Functionality and Adaptability: Ensure that the merged architecture maintains functionality and adaptability to meet the needs of the users. Consider incorporating flexible spaces that can accommodate different activities and functions, while also respecting the cultural and religious requirements of the users.

3. HOW CAN THE FUSION OF MODERN WESTERN AND ISLAMIC ARCHITECTURE CONTRIBUTE TO CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING

The fusion of modern Western and Islamic architecture can contribute significantly to cultural exchange and understanding in several ways:

Bridging Cultural Divides by merging architectural elements from different traditions, buildings become physical manifestations of cultural exchange. They provide a tangible representation of the shared values and aesthetics between Western and Islamic cultures. This can help bridge cultural divides and foster a sense of unity and understanding.

Promoting Dialogue, the architectural fusion can spark conversations and dialogue between different cultural and religious groups. It can serve as a catalyst for discussions about shared histories, values, and aspirations. This exchange of ideas can lead to increased understanding and appreciation of each other's cultures.

Challenging Stereotypes, the fusion of architecture challenges stereotypes and preconceived notions about Western and Islamic cultures. It showcases the complexity and diversity within these traditions, breaking down simplistic stereotypes and promoting a more nuanced understanding of cultural identities.

Cultural Exchange through Built Environment, the fusion of architectural styles creates spaces that encourage cultural exchange. Buildings designed with elements from both Western and Islamic architecture can serve as venues for cultural events, exhibitions, and gatherings. These spaces become platforms for people from different backgrounds to come together, fostering interaction, learning, and appreciation of diverse cultures.

Symbolic Representation, the fusion of architectural styles can symbolically represent cultural harmony and coexistence. It demonstrates that different cultural and religious traditions can blend harmoniously and contribute to a shared built environment. This symbolism can inspire people to embrace diversity, respect cultural differences, and work towards a more inclusive society.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage, the fusion of modern Western and Islamic architecture can also contribute to the preservation of cultural heritage. By incorporating traditional architectural elements into contemporary designs, it ensures that these elements are not lost or forgotten. This helps to maintain a connection to the past while adapting to the present.

Overall, the fusion of modern Western and Islamic architecture promotes cultural exchange, understanding, and appreciation. It encourages dialogue, challenges stereotypes, and fosters a sense of unity and shared identity. Through the medium of architecture, people can engage with each other's cultures, break down barriers, and work towards a more interconnected and inclusive world.

4. EXPLANATION OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHITECTURAL AND PLANNING TRADITIONS.

Architectural and planning traditions play a significant role in shaping the built environment and reflecting the cultural, social, and historical aspects of a society. Here are some key points highlighting the significance of architectural and planning traditions:

Cultural Identity: Architectural and planning traditions are an expression of a society's cultural identity. They reflect the values, beliefs, and aesthetics of a particular culture or community. Traditional architectural styles

often incorporate elements that are deeply rooted in local customs, rituals, and historical narratives, thus preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

Sense of Place: Architectural and planning traditions contribute to the creation of a unique sense of place. They establish a visual and spatial identity for a specific location or region, fostering a sense of belonging and attachment. Traditional buildings and urban layouts can evoke a sense of nostalgia, continuity, and cultural pride among residents and visitors.

Sustainability and Environment: Traditional architectural and planning practices often prioritize sustainability and harmonious coexistence with the natural environment. Indigenous knowledge and techniques are employed to adapt to local climatic conditions, optimize energy efficiency, and utilize locally available materials. Integrating these traditions into contemporary design can inspire sustainable practices and promote ecological balance.

Social Interaction and Community: Architectural and planning traditions influence the social dynamics and patterns of human interaction within built environments. Traditional designs often consider communal spaces, gathering areas, and public realms that facilitate social cohesion, interaction, and community engagement. These spaces foster a sense of community and contribute to the social well-being of individuals.

Historical Continuity: Architectural and planning traditions provide a link to the past, preserving historical continuity and cultural memory. Traditional buildings and urban landscapes serve as tangible reminders of a society's history, allowing future generations to understand and appreciate their heritage. They contribute to the preservation of cultural narratives and collective memory.

Aesthetics and Beauty: Architectural and planning traditions influence the aesthetic qualities of the built environment. They encompass principles of proportion, harmony, and beauty, creating visually pleasing spaces that evoke emotional and sensory responses. Traditional architectural styles often incorporate decorative elements, craftsmanship, and symbolism, enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal of the surroundings.

Urban Planning and Functionality: Planning traditions guide the organization and development of cities and communities. They address aspects such as transportation networks, zoning regulations, public spaces, and infrastructure development. Traditional planning approaches often prioritize functionality, efficient land use, and the needs of the community, contributing to the creation of livable and sustainable urban environments.

5. EXAMPLES OF EAST-MEETS-WEST ARCHITECTURE

The architecture that merges traditions from both the East and the West is often referred to as "East-meets-West" or "East-West fusion" architecture. This style combines elements, principles, and design philosophies from Eastern and Western architectural traditions to create a unique and harmonious blend.

Interplay of Forms and Spaces: East-meets-West architecture often involves the interplay of different forms and spaces. Traditional Eastern architecture often features open courtyards, gardens, and interconnected interior spaces, while Western architecture may emphasize defined rooms and enclosed spaces. In East-meets-West designs, these contrasting spatial qualities can be combined to create a sense of openness, flow, and connection with nature while maintaining privacy and functionality.

Harmonious Integration of Nature: Both Eastern and Western architectural traditions appreciate the relationship between architecture and nature, although they approach it in different ways. In East-meets-West architecture, there is an emphasis on creating a harmonious integration of built forms with the natural environment. This can be achieved through features such as landscaped gardens, water elements like ponds or fountains, and the use of natural materials that blend with the surroundings.

Cultural Symbolism and Meaning: East-meets-West architecture often incorporates symbolic elements from both Eastern and Western cultures. These symbols can represent cultural values, historical references, or spiritual beliefs. For example, a building might feature traditional Chinese motifs like the dragon or phoenix alongside Western symbols such as columns or arches. This blending of symbolism adds layers of meaning and cultural depth to the architectural design.

Sustainability and Energy Efficiency: The fusion of Eastern and Western architectural traditions in East-meets-West architecture can also address contemporary concerns such as sustainability and energy efficiency. Traditional Eastern architecture has long emphasized passive design strategies, such as natural ventilation, shading devices, and energy-efficient materials. By incorporating these principles with modern Western techniques, East-meets-West designs can create environmentally conscious buildings that respond to the local climate and reduce energy consumption.

Adaptive Reuse and Preservation: East-meets-West architecture can also be seen in the adaptive reuse and preservation of existing buildings. This approach involves transforming older structures, such as heritage buildings or traditional homes, by integrating modern design elements and functionalities. By respecting the historical context while incorporating contemporary interventions, East-meets-West designs breathe new life into these spaces while preserving their cultural and architectural heritage.

Cultural Centers and Museums: Cultural centers and museums often provide opportunities for East-meets-West architecture to shine. These buildings serve as platforms for showcasing and celebrating the cultural diversity of a region. They may incorporate architectural elements from different traditions to create a space that fosters cultural exchange and dialogue. Examples include the National Museum of Qatar in Doha, which blends traditional Qatari architecture with contemporary design, and the China Design Museum in Hangzhou, which combines Chinese architectural motifs with modern materials and technology.



Fig. 1: China Design Museum in Hangzhou



Fig. 2: National Museum of Qatar in Doha

Urban Planning and Cityscapes: East-meets-West architecture can also extend to urban planning and the overall cityscape. In cities where East and West converge, there may be efforts to create a cohesive architectural language that reflects the cultural diversity of the area. This can be achieved through strategic urban design, the integration of public spaces, and the use of architectural elements that draw from both Eastern and Western traditions. Cities like Istanbul, where East and West meet geographically, exemplify this dynamic blending of architectural styles.

In East-meets-West architecture, you may find a combination of traditional Eastern architectural features, such as intricate ornamentation, use of natural materials, and emphasis on harmony with nature, along with Western architectural elements like symmetry, geometric forms, and functional design principles. The goal is to create a synthesis that respects the cultural heritage of both traditions while embracing innovation and contemporary aesthetics.

Some examples of East-meets-West architecture can be seen in various parts of the world, particularly in regions where Eastern and Western cultures have historically intersected. For instance, in cities like Shanghai, Hong Kong, or Singapore, you can find buildings that blend traditional Chinese architectural elements with modern Western design concepts. These structures often incorporate elements like curved roofs, symbolic motifs, and traditional materials, alongside sleek glass facades, clean lines, and modern construction techniques.

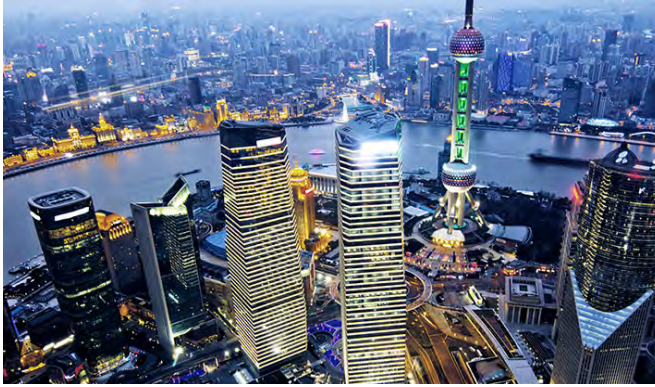


Fig. 3: Shanghai City



Fig. 4: Hong Kong City

Another prominent example is the fusion of Islamic and Western architectural styles seen in buildings like the Hassan II Mosque in Casablanca, Morocco. This mosque combines traditional Islamic architectural features, such as geometric patterns, arches, and intricate tilework, with contemporary construction methods and technologies.



Fig. 5: Entry of AL Hassan Mosque Casablanca



Fig. 6: AL Hassan Mosque Casablanca

The East-meets-West approach to architecture is not limited to specific building types or regions. It can be applied to various scales and contexts, including residential buildings, commercial complexes, cultural centers, and even urban planning. The key is to strike a balance between the two traditions, respecting their unique characteristics while creating a cohesive and visually appealing design. Overall, East-meets-West architecture represents a fascinating exploration of cultural exchange, embracing the best of both worlds to create a distinct architectural style that reflects the globalized nature of our contemporary world.

5.1. 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.

5.2. The Past

The preservation of our cities at different levels reflects if anything, differing contemporary functions and ideological needs by ascendant elites or their rivals. 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 "authentication" 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.

5.3. 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 absolutizing 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, 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.

5.4. Anticipating and Preparing for the Future

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)

6. CONCLUSION

Understanding and appreciating architectural and planning traditions allows designers, urban planners, and policymakers to draw inspiration from the past while addressing the challenges and opportunities of the present. By incorporating elements of tradition in contemporary design, it is possible to create innovative and culturally responsive built environments that promote sustainability, cultural diversity, and the well-being of communities. East-meets-West architecture represents a fascinating exploration of cultural exchange, embracing the best of both worlds to create a distinct architectural style that reflects the globalized nature of our contemporary world. The concept of East-meets-West architecture continues to evolve as architects explore new ways to combine and reinterpret elements from different cultural traditions. This fusion creates architectural expressions that are not only visually captivating but also foster a sense of cultural exchange and dialogue in our increasingly interconnected world. Addressing these challenges and criticisms requires careful research, collaboration with experts, community engagement, and a commitment to cultural understanding and respect. The fusion of modern Western and Islamic architecture should be approached with sensitivity and a focus on fostering meaningful cultural exchange and dialogue rather than mere superficial aesthetics.

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Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

Working Paper Series

MODERN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF IRAN: LEARNING FROM WHAT IS LEARNED

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Volume 334

Pages 37-56

2024

MODERN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF IRAN: LEARNING FROM WHAT IS LEARNED



Since the 20th century, with the initiation of the Modern Movement in the West, architecture in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries like Iran, has been significantly influenced. In Iran, this phenomenon began with the arrival of European architects and the return of Iranian architects educated abroad, accompanied by significant political, social, and cultural developments. This choice of development resulted in urban changes and the construction of many modern-style buildings from 1920 to 1980. However, this modern architectural movement opened new challenges for Iranian architects and researchers to connect the past to this imported way of development, mainly to answer to the new socio-cultural demands and preserve the Iranian architectural identity.

Accordingly, the development of modern architecture in Iran enjoyed a trend of changes that formed a chain of different architectural styles. This architectural movement found a unique character by learning from Iran's traditional and vernacular architecture. This style is unlike other modern styles worldwide and created a unique characteristic by utilizing new materials besides the traditional master ships that were a big deal during the time, managed by the academic architects and traditional masters. Thus, valuable buildings in the modern architectural history of Iran emerged that struggled to represent the connection between modern movements and the vernacular and traditional traditions to revitalize Iranian architectural identity and values.

On the other hand, during this time, most of the consideration on architecture was focused on thorough public and governmental buildings by architects and authorities. So, the modern movement's impacts on other buildings, especially residential buildings, were less considered. The result of this less consideration has been highlighted in the last decades that caused blind imitations of prepared architectural forms, mainly considered the structural part of buildings dominated by modern materials (steel and concrete). This phenomenon has accelerated in Iran's new cities and rural areas, leading to identity lessness, which has been highlighted as one of the most critical challenges for Iranian architects and authorities. In order to address this problem in this research, the "Modern Architectural Heritages" of Iran will be investigated as they were the primary consideration from the time authorities and practitioners to revive the Iranian architectural identity.

Thus, this question will be considered how and to what extent has Iran's modern architectural heritage revived Iranian architectural identity? By answering this question, this research could ease the identity lessness challenge through a new discourse by learning from Iran's "Modern Architectural Heritages" to recommend indicators that could revive Iranian architectural identity in the present and immediate future. This research aims to consider the "Modern Architectural Heritage" from a new lens that could highlight the importance of learning from these buildings rather than considering them just for conservation and preservation. In order to achieve the aim of this research, the case study methodology using triangulated methods (interview, observation, fieldwork) will guide this research through inductive generalization. This study could formulate recommendations of indicators that could revive Iranian architectural identity in the present and future.

1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional Iranian architecture occupies a prominent position in the broader spectrum of Iranian cultural heritage. It serves as a tangible representation of the values, beliefs, traditions, and aspirations embedded in the collective consciousness of the Iranian people. Over the course of history, this architectural tradition has evolved, meticulously considering both tangible and intangible elements that encapsulate the very essence of Iranian culture and identity¹. Nevertheless, starting from the 20th century, the emergence of the modern

architectural movement in the Western world exerted a profound influence on architectural practices worldwide, particularly in developing nations like Iran. This transformative period witnessed the influx of European architects and the return of Iranian architects who had pursued their education abroad. This transition was accompanied by substantial political, social, and cultural shifts ². This architectural development led to changes in urban planning and the proliferation of modern-style buildings, especially during the Pahlavi era (1925-1979). Notable examples include the simultaneous construction of public buildings such as universities, schools, government buildings, ministries, and industrial plants.

This phenomenon presented Iranian architects and scholars of the period with a compelling challenge: to reconcile the disparities between civilization and culture, the Occident and the Orient, the universal and the specific, modernity and tradition, and notably, the divide between identity and architecture ³. In 1946, Vartan Hovanesian articulated a pivotal query that continues to resonate within the discourse of Iranian architecture. He posited a dichotomy faced by Iranian architects, "should we imitate the past and replicate the valuable works of that era, or should we look to the future and adapt the architectural design to the modern way of life?" ⁴. Considering this, the Pahlavi era (1925 to 1979) witnessed several regionalist endeavors aimed at reinterpreting both the tangible and intangible facets of traditional Iranian architecture within the framework of modern Iranian architectural practice, with the overarching goal of bridging the chasm between identity and architecture. In the context of modern architectural undertakings in Tehran, for instance, a synthesis of traditional and vernacular elements with contemporary design strategies was employed in diverse approaches to address this schism. The outcome was a distinctive architectural idiom that set it apart from other modernist styles worldwide ⁵.

In the period from 1925 to 1979, Iran's modern architectural heritage was significantly influenced by the re-evaluation of traditional Iranian architectural principles. However, there is a notable lack of comprehensive research that thoroughly investigates and evaluates the extent to which this re-evaluation shaped architectural development in Iran during this era. This gap in knowledge prevents a nuanced understanding of the historical and cultural contexts that have shaped Iran's modern architectural heritage and its wider significance in the field of architecture. Closing this knowledge gap is of paramount importance as architecture is an important cultural expression that requires an understanding of the intricate interplay between tradition, modernity, and identity in the Iranian milieu of the time. Moreover, filling this knowledge gap could potentially alleviate the problem of identity deficit in contemporary Iranian architecture, a concern that Iranian scholars have repeatedly expressed over the last three decades.

This study follows a rigorous academic approach that includes a comprehensive literature review and a qualitative case study methodology with participatory fieldwork, observational analyses, and in-depth

interviews. The literature review serves as a basis for examining the existing scholarly knowledge on the reinterpretation of traditional Iranian architecture in the context of Iran's modern architectural heritage (1925-1979) and identifies gaps and points of contention. Furthermore, the methodology of qualitative case studies enables an in-depth investigation of a selected architectural example that provides contextually embedded insights. Participatory fieldwork enables an experiential understanding of architectural spaces, while observational analyses examine the physical manifestations of reinterpretation. In-depth interviews with key stakeholders provide nuanced perspectives. Using these methods, this study attempts to shed light on the complex interplay between traditional Iranian architectural paradigms and the development of modern Iranian architectural heritage during this period.

Based on the sophisticated findings and careful analyses presented here, this study represents a significant advance in the discourse on modern architectural heritage and reveals hitherto unexplored facets for scholarly consideration. The potential implications of this research are far-reaching and promising for practitioners and scholars grappling with the need to find a sensible balance between the preservation of rooted cultural values and the demands of modernity in the architectural environment. This nuanced reconciliation, if skillfully executed, plays a central role in mitigating the conspicuous gap between cultural identity and architectural realization in the contemporary milieu of Iranian architecture. Consequently, this enquiry not only enriches the academic sphere but also offers tangible, pragmatic insights with immediate and lasting relevance that can illuminate and enhance architectural practice in Iran and potentially spill over into global architectural discourse.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative case study methodology with participant observation and in-depth interviews to investigate the impact of the reinterpretation of traditional Iranian architecture on Iran's modern architectural heritage in the period from 1925 to 1979. The study aims to comprehensively examine the reinterpreted architectural aspects, the methods used in their reinterpretation, and the resulting contributions to the preservation and rejuvenation of Iran's architectural identity while incorporating universal influences. This methodological fusion facilitates the generation of nuanced and contextually rich data, which is essential for a comprehensive assessment of the research objectives and the final resolution of the research question.

The first phase involves a thorough literature review aimed at establishing a solid theoretical framework and collating the existing knowledge on architectural theories on the convergence of identity and architecture, traditional Iranian architectural principles, and the architectural landscape of the Pahlavi era (1925-1979). This research includes a variety of international and Iranian scholarly sources, including articles, books, and

relevant publications, to provide a holistic understanding of the subject. The identified critical concepts and elements of traditional Iranian architecture serve as the basis for the following observations and in-depth interviews.

In order to ensure a representative sample, a purposive sampling technique will be used in the second phase to select architectural projects from Iran's modern architectural heritage (1925-1979) that exemplify the reinterpretation of traditional Iranian architecture. In the selection process, factors such as architectural significance, diversity of reinterpretation approaches and availability of relevant data and resources are considered.

In the third phase, the study uses participant observation as a methodological tool to collect data on the material and immaterial aspects of the selected case studies in Tehran, Iran. This approach enables the meticulous documentation and analysis of architectural elements, materials, spatial configurations, and design principles used in the reinterpretation of traditional Iranian architecture during the Pahlavi era. Detailed field notes, and photographs are used to comprehensively document the physical characteristics of the buildings and their immediate surroundings.

In the fourth phase, in-depth interviews will be conducted with architects and scholars familiar with traditional Iranian architecture of the Pahlavi era. These interviews, each lasting a maximum of 60 minutes, will provide invaluable insights into the perceptions, perspectives and experiences of the professionals involved in the reinterpretation of traditional Iranian architecture of the Pahlavi era. The semi-structured interviews, characterized by open-ended questions, provide flexibility in exploring different themes and conducting focused research. Ethical considerations are emphasized throughout the research process. These include obtaining informed consent from participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and conducting the research with due respect and cultural sensitivity. The study strictly adheres to the ethical guidelines and regulations for research involving human subjects and the use of archival material.

3. STUDIES ON TRADITIONAL IRANIAN ARCHITECTURE

Traditional Iranian architecture can be categorized into two main groups: pre-Islamic and Islamic, delineated by their respective historical epochs, spanning from 6500 BC to 642 AD for the pre-Islamic era, and from 642 AD to 1889 AD for the Islamic era. Furthermore, Iranian scholars have undertaken a classification of traditional Iranian architecture based on distinctive features, resulting in various styles (Fig.1) ⁶. It is noteworthy that these architectural marvels were erected by the accomplished craftsman-architects of their time, commonly referred to as artist-architects. These skilled artisans were products of a traditional educational system that imparted instruction in mathematics, scientific principles, theological tenets, and

symbolic language, while also providing training in both physical and metaphysical dimensions ⁷. In the 20th century, a multitude of experts delved into the study of traditional Iranian architecture, with a particular emphasis on communal spaces such as mosques, madrassas, baths, and caravanserais. Early scholars were primarily devoted to the restoration and preservation of these time-honored Iranian edifices, occasionally offering insights into the architectural facets of their historic structures ⁸.



Fig 1: Different styles of traditional Iranian architecture that are classified by Pirnia. (Source: Edited by author, Pirnia, 1990)

The studies on Iran's traditional architecture underwent a transformation, primarily spearheaded by Iranian experts, resulting in a dual classification: tangible and intangible aspects. The scrutiny of tangible features took a twofold approach. Initially, it delved into the mechanical and structural elements, encompassing components such as domes, vaults, structures, and arches, with significant momentum building after 1987 ⁹. Subsequently, with the burgeoning importance of environmental sustainability in construction practices over the past two decades, a novel discourse emerged, centering on the exploration of the tangible attributes of traditional Iranian structures for their eco-friendly characteristics. Notably, certain studies have opted to categorize these historic edifices based on the climate of their respective regions rather than their temporal construction period ¹⁰.

The intangible facet of traditional Iranian architecture, particularly in the Islamic period, was primarily explored by Ardalan and Bakhtiar (1973), who authored the seminal work 'The Sense of Unity'. This book delves into the intangible elements that underlie traditional Iranian architectural practices. Several other studies also delved into this dimension ¹¹. Both tangible and intangible aspects collectively underscore the comprehensive nature of architectural technology in traditional Iranian constructions, arising from a profound synergy between engineers and craftsmen. This perspective affirms the adage that 'art without science is nothing' ¹². The intangible dimension of Islamic-style traditional Iranian architecture is profoundly influenced by the religious and social beliefs that govern the daily lives of its inhabitants. Tradition serves as a guiding force, shaping societal values and imbuing vitality into the collective existence of individuals ¹³. Islamic art serves as a reflection of the material world intertwined with the spiritual realm, encapsulating even the form of Qur'anic revelation, a subject seldom explored for its symbolic and intangible essence ¹⁴.

4. IDENTITY AND ARCHITECTURE

Different meanings are expressed in the definition of 'Identity'. The root of the word 'Identity' is "sameness, oneness, state of being the same", from French *identité* (14c.), from Medieval Latin *identitatem* (nominative *identitas*) "sameness", ultimately from Latin *idem* (neuter) "the same" ¹⁵. Identity feeds on many sources, such as nationality, ethnicity, and social class, which can conflict with each other. Thus, although identity is rooted in 'similarity', it is always associated with differences ¹⁶. According to Woodward, "Identity is marked by similarity, that is, of the people like us, and by difference, of those who are not" ¹⁷. According to Aly (2011), "Identity is the foundation to place attachment and sense of belonging. It reflects people's traditions, culture, aspirations, needs, and their future" ¹⁸. Identity can be defined as being and resembling oneself and insiders, and in another sense, as being different from outsiders and others. In the Iranian context, it is defined in *Farhang-e Farsi-ye Moein*, an encyclopaedic Persian dictionary, as follows: The essence of transcendence, existence and that which brings about a person's identification ¹⁹. In another encyclopaedic Persian dictionary, *Dehkhoda*, identity, *huviyat*, means indication, which is well known among the sages and theologians. Identity, *huviyat*, is derived from the word '*hu*', which refers to the absence, which is about God Almighty, to the essence of his essence, according to his names and attributes, referring to its absence ²⁰.

Different meanings are expressed in the definition of 'Identity' in the West and Iranian context. When it comes to the relationship between 'Identity' and 'Architecture', most people ask whether the architecture corresponds to the traditional architecture of a region. Architectural identity could be defined as a particular local culture that represents itself as a living landscape with the individuality of place, developed over time and showing its own perspective on life ²¹. Architecture '*Memory*' in Iranian thought has always been based on supernatural communication. According to the encyclopaedic Persian dictionary, *Dehkhoda*, the definition of

an 'Architect', *Memar*, is the one who builds and brings about prosperity and excellence. And the definition of Architecture, *Memary*, is an architect's practice and occupation ²². So, it is evident that 'traditional Iranian architecture' respects identity when it establishes a relationship between the building and the cultural traditions of the people. It is important to remember that the word 'Iranian architecture' is different from 'Islamic architecture'. It is Iranian architecture in the Islamic version, according to the Islamic tradition in Iran since 650 AD. So, there is no Islamic architecture in the general sense because the architecture of Iran in the Islamic era is different from the architecture of other Islamic countries in the same period, such as Pakistan, Syria, and Malaysia ²³. However, the predominant culture in all these countries is Islam.

According to previous studies, the most critical indicators of traditional Iranian architecture are respecting the human Scale (*mardum-vârî*), being inward-looking (*Darûngerāyî*), self-sufficiency (*khudbasandagi*), avoiding non-essentials (*parhîz az bihudagi*), structural rigidity (*niyarish*) and homogeneous proportion (*paymun*) ²⁴, equilibrium, the perfection, the unity ²⁵. A more direct expression of this might be that the builders employed symbolism and cryptographic skills, not in the sense of complexity and ambiguity (work) and ostentation (architect), but to imbue every action and phenomenon with spiritual meaning. In other words, a divine and spiritual principle was considered in all traditional architectural works ²⁶. Thus, it should be kept in mind that by merely focusing on the symbolic use of tangible aspects of traditional components in contemporary Iranian architecture, which has increased in Iran in recent years, the Iranian identity cannot be preserved ²⁷.

The crucial aspect is rather the transcendence of the spirit and concept of traditional architecture, which should be considered in contemporary Iranian architecture ²⁸. According to previous studies, for a reinterpretation of identity in architecture, three basic factors need to be considered: the new material and spiritual needs of people, environmental conditions, and the latest available skills and technologies ²⁹. These crucial goals can be achieved through smart innovation ³⁰.

5. STUDIES ON CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE OF IRAN

The development of contemporary architecture (modern architectural heritage belongs to this category) in Iran over the last two centuries reflects the political dynamics of a nation that has harnessed its oil and natural resources and its quest for cultural and economic greatness amidst a series of foreign interactions that culminated in a recognizable form of colonialism. A comprehensive consideration of contemporary Iranian architecture therefore requires an examination of the processes of modernization in Iran's history. The impact of these modernization efforts on Iranian architecture can be traced back to 1865 when Western architects began to shape the architectural landscape of Iran. Nevertheless, the idea of preserving architectural identity during modernization has been emphasized through the reinterpretation of both the tangible and intangible

elements of traditional Iranian architecture in different ways. To achieve this goal, numerous efforts were made during the Pahlavi era (1925-1979), which were also labelled differently by scholars.

Scholarly inquiry into contemporary Iranian architecture, specifically during the transition from the Qajar to the Pahlavi eras, initially gained momentum after extensive research on traditional Iranian architectural practices. The pioneering work in examining the architectural landscape of the Pahlavi era was presented in the book titled "Iranian Architecture in the Pahlavi Era" by Parviz Rajabi ³¹. Further contributions to this discourse were made by Behrouz Pakdaman, who authored an article titled "A Brief Look at Architectural Styles and Trends in Tehran" published in the fourth, fifth, and sixth volumes of the 1994 Tehran Book. In this piece, he classifies the architecture of Tehran from the Qajar period up to the conclusion of the initial Pahlavi era (1941) based on Western architectural influences ³².

The focus in the field of contemporary Iranian architectural studies is on the classification of architecture during the Pahlavi era. While the tangible and intangible elements of traditional Iranian architecture are already known, the specific impact of its reinterpretation during the Pahlavi era on architectural identity remains largely unexplored. The crux of the matter is the lack of comprehensive research addressing the extent and nature of this influence, which prevents a deeper understanding of architectural identity in this era. The transformation of the tangible and intangible facets of traditional Iranian architecture during the Pahlavi era presents a multi-layered and complex challenge to the expression of architectural identity within Iran's modern architectural heritage.

Given the importance of architecture as a cultural manifestation and the need to understand the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in the formation of architectural identity, the study of this topic is essential. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how the remodeling of the material and immaterial aspects of traditional Iranian architecture influenced the expression of architectural identity during the Pahlavi era. By examining emblematic elements, assessing their influence, and considering the insights of architects and scholars, this study seeks to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics between tradition, modernity, and architectural identity in Iran. Viewing Iran's modern architectural heritage through this new lens could open a new discourse on the study of Iran's modern architectural heritage to learn from and bridge the gap between identity and architecture in Iran's contemporary era.

6. CASE STUDY

6.1. Case Study Selection

In this study, Azadi Monument, also known as *Shahyad Aryamehr* Monument, which was built between 1967 and 1971 in Tehran, is deliberately selected as an object of study in the field of modern architectural heritage due to several compelling factors. The Azadi Tower was built at a time characterised by changing socio-political dynamics in Iran. It is a tangible embodiment of the nation's evolving ideological ethos. This iconic architectural structure epitomises Iran's distinctive architectural milieu, interweaving elements of Islamic and pre-Islamic traditional Iranian architectural paradigms with contemporary modernist influences and represents a crucial turning point in architectural development (Fig.2).

Its official inscription on the National List of Iranian Cultural Heritage is a testament to its outstanding position within Iran's cultural heritage and makes it an example of a careful study of modern architectural heritage. The double recognition by the DOCOMOMO organisation and the forthcoming application for recognition by UNESCO underlines the great international importance of this building. Furthermore, the wealth of existing scholarly debate and academic research on the Azadi Monument provides a solid analytical framework that offers the scope for a comprehensive explanation of its nuanced facets. The deep cultural resonance emanating from this architectural artefact serves as a touchstone for national identity and collective pride, as it was designed with the conscious intention of reconciling the needs of cultural heritage with the demands of contemporary architecture.



Fig 2: Azadi Monument (Shahyad monument). (Source: Author)

6.2. Azadi (*Shahyad*) Monument

In September 1966, a tender was published in the newspaper *Etelaat* inviting architects to design a square for the largest public square in Tehran. The aim was simple: to create a monument that embodies 2500 years of the Persian Empire³³. The proposed design by Hossein Amanat, a young graduate of the Tehran University School of Architecture, has been selected. The monument could be described as the best symbol of modernism in Iran. This tower was designed to commemorate the history and civilisation of the two thousand five hundred years of the Iranian Empire. This tower represents Iranian civilisation and culture from pre-Islam to after Islam³⁴. The architecture of this tower is inspired by the traditional elements of Iranian architecture, including the Iranian quadrangle, the Persian arch, the pointed arch of Islamic

architecture, the Toghrol Tower, Seljuk architecture (mainly 13th century) and the Persian garden ³⁵. According to the architect of this monument:

“The Shahyad monument built to represent the Persian civilization and culture, forms a symbolic entrance complex for Tehran. It has become the most significant icon of the country and an active plaza for celebrations, parades, cultural events and activities. The plaza contains foun-tains and landscaping in patterns similar to traditional Persian gardens. The monument built of onsite concrete with solid marble as form-work and clad-ding. At the time (1971) the con-struc-tion technique and use of com-puters to define its complex woven surfaces was unprecedented. It has been widely published, and is the most prominent gathering place in the capital city. Below the monument is a Museum displaying relics of the Persian civilization.”

Hossein Amanat ³⁶.

The architectural language of the Azadi Tower is essentially based on the classical Persian iwan typology, a spatial configuration characterised by a monumental arched opening leading to an enclosed space. This design motif, which can be found in numerous historical Persian buildings, has been reinterpreted in the towering form of the monument. The central arch, which rises with imposing verticality, is reminiscent of the grand entrances of ancient Persian ceremonial and palatial buildings. This allusion to historical models serves to create a direct visual dialogue with the historical architectural heritage of Iran (Fig. 3).

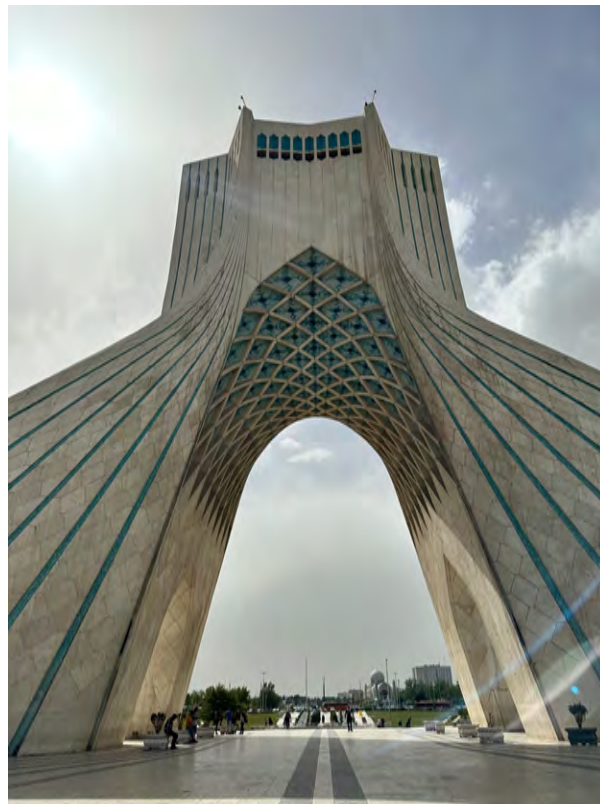


Fig. 3: Persian and Islamic arches reinterpreted in the design of the Azadi monument. (Source: Author)

Materiality plays a central role in the aesthetic narrative of the Azadi Tower. The extensive use of white marble, a material synonymous with traditional Persian architecture, lends a luminous quality to the building while also referencing the tradition of craftsmanship that makes up Iran's architectural heritage. The use of this material also emphasises the monument's connection to historical precedents. Tiles, a hallmark of traditional Iranian architecture, play an important role in the exterior decoration of the Azadi Tower. Islamic geometric patterns and calligraphy, reminiscent of Iran's rich artistic tradition, have been carefully transferred to the façade, giving the structure a deep visual resonance. This intricate tile work underlines the cultural anchoring of the monument and its dialogue with the wider canon of Iranian art (Fig. 4).

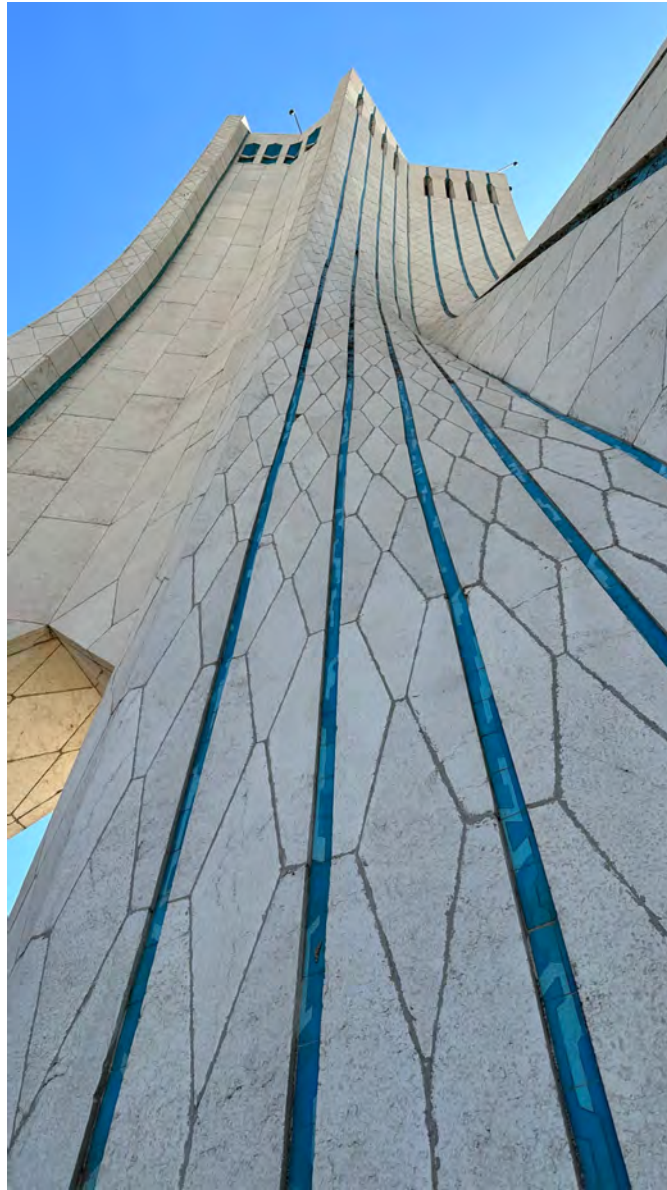


Fig. 4: White marble and tiles on the façade of pre-Islamic and Islamic architecture reinterpreted in the design of the Azadi monument. (Source: Author)

The utilization of concrete in the construction of the Azadi Tower represents a departure from traditional Persian building materials and reflects the influence of modernist building techniques. Concrete, a symbol of 20th-century architectural practice, gives the tower its verticality and structural integrity which distinguishes it from traditional historical Persian buildings. The plasticity and load-bearing capacity of concrete facilitated the realisation of the tower's soaring arches and intricate geometries. Reinforced concrete enabled the construction of the slender spire, which culminates in a dynamic ornamentation that conveys a sense of ascent (Fig. 5).

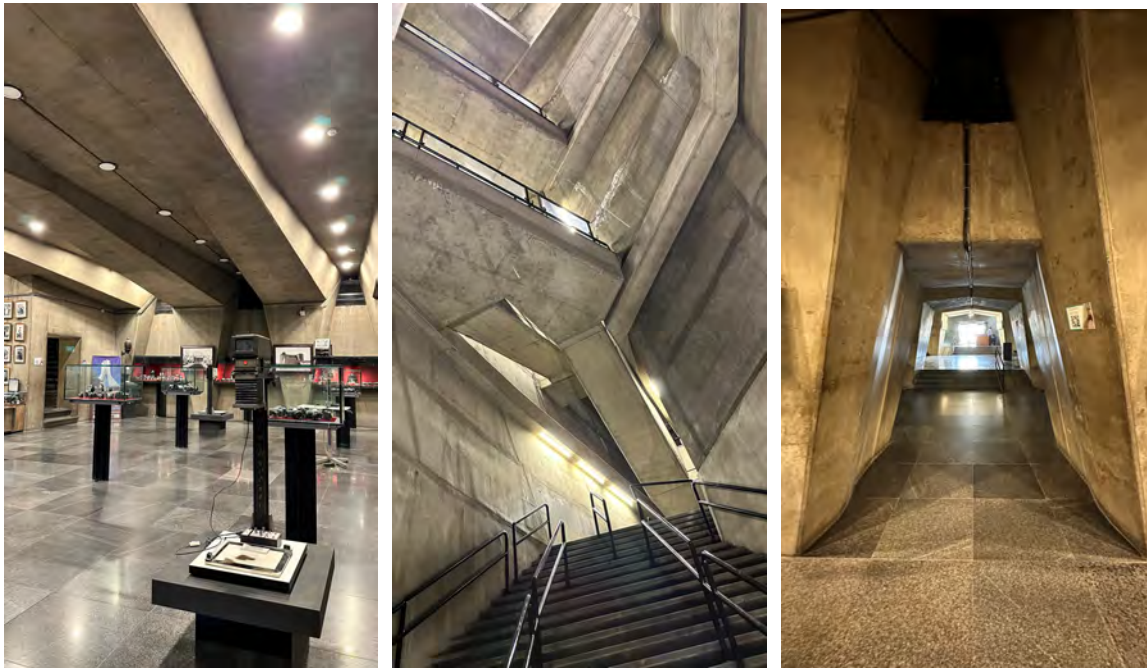


Fig 5: The photos show the interior of the Azadi monument and illustrate the use of concrete in its construction. (Source: Author)

While concrete serves as the primary structural medium, its surface treatment mimics the texture and appearance of traditional masonry, mediating between modernist construction methods and an engagement with historic architectural forms. This treatment reinforces the visual continuity with historical Persian architectural traditions, albeit through a modernist mode of expression. The integration of concrete into the structure of the Azadi Tower thus represents a central aspect of the monument's architectural narrative and epitomises the paradigmatic shift towards modern construction methods in Iran in the second half of the 20th century. This transition from conventional materials and techniques reflects a broader architectural discourse that aimed to harmonise heritage with modernity and contribute to the development of Iran's architectural identity.

The inclusion of windcatchers, *badgirs*, in the design of the Azadi Tower is a direct reference to the traditional and vernacular architectural practices of Iran. Wind catchers are essential elements of Iranian architecture that ingeniously utilise natural ventilation and provide passive cooling in dry climates. In the case of the Azadi Tower, the integration of wind catchers serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it pays homage to the sustainable building techniques that have been refined in Iran over the centuries. By incorporating such features, the monument is part of a long tradition of environmental friendliness in Iranian architecture. Secondly, the use of wind catchers in the design of the Azadi Tower testifies to the adaptability and continuity of vernacular architectural solutions in contemporary contexts. By incorporating these elements, the architects have not only demonstrated a deep respect for historical precedents but also a keen understanding of how traditional strategies can be translated into a modern architectural expression.



Fig 6: The photo shows the designed windcatcher of the Azadi monument. (Source: Author)

The presence of wind catchers in Azadi Tower thus emphasises the synthesis of heritage and modernity, illustrating a nuanced approach to architectural design that draws inspiration from indigenous solutions while incorporating contemporary design paradigms. This integration is a testament to the continued relevance of traditional Iranian architectural wisdom in the face of evolving architectural practices and environmental challenges.

The integration of a Persian garden into Azadi Square is a deliberate allusion to the profound horticultural and urban planning traditions of Iran, of which the classical Persian garden is a prime example. Persian gardens are known for their careful design, harmonious arrangement, and cultivation of plants, all of which are endowed with symbolic and aesthetic significance. The inclusion of a Persian garden in Azadi Square not only serves a decorative purpose but also contains deeper cultural and historical resonances. The carefully planned arrangement of plants, water features and pathways in the garden provides a calm counterpoint to the monumental presence of the memorial. This interplay between monumentality and tranquillity reflects a hallmark of Persian garden design, where the juxtaposition of elements creates a balanced and serene environment.

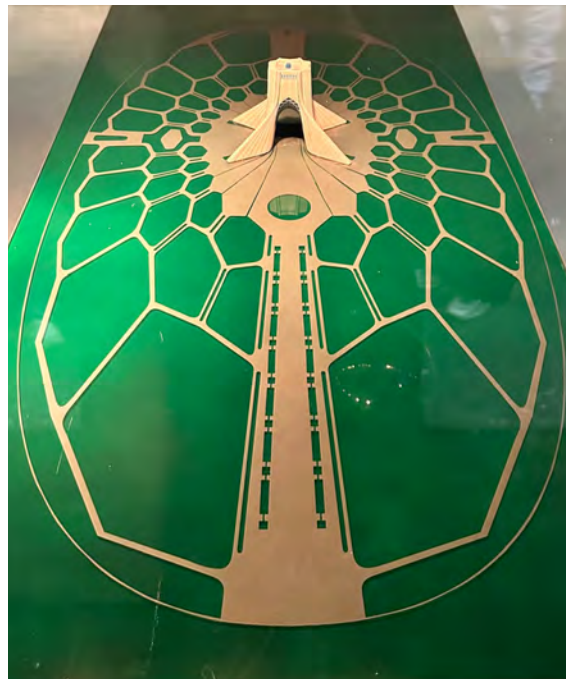


Fig. 7: The maquette of the Azadi Square shows a reinterpretation of the Persian garden pattern in its design. (Source: The maquette is available in the Azadi Tower Museum, photo by the author)

Furthermore, the Persian garden in Azadi Square provides a tangible link between the urban space and the wider cultural heritage of Iran. It pays homage to the enduring influence of Persian garden aesthetics on the country's architectural and urban planning traditions. By placing this garden in a prominent public location, it invites visitors to engage with this rich cultural heritage and promotes a sense of cultural continuity and identity. Overall, the inclusion of a Persian garden in Azadi Square is a deliberate and sensible architectural decision. It not only enhances the aesthetic and experiential dimensions of the square, but also serves as a testament to the continued importance of the classical Iranian garden tradition in the contemporary urban

space. This integration is an example of a nuanced design approach that aims to celebrate and preserve cultural heritage in a modern context.

The incorporation of traditional Iranian architectural symbolic patterns into the design of the Azadi Tower is a testament to the cultural resonance of the monument and pays homage to Iran's rich artistic heritage. These patterns, drawn from a vast repertoire of geometric and calligraphic motifs, serve as a visual language deeply rooted in Iranian culture. In the Azadi Tower, these patterns adorn the exterior surface, creating a visual tapestry that reflects the intricate craftsmanship and aesthetic sophistication of traditional Iranian art. The careful application of these symbolic patterns gives the structure a multi-layered meaning, evoking themes of unity, spirituality, and continuity. The geometric patterns, which are often derived from Islamic mathematical principles, convey a sense of harmony and order. They embody the precision and mathematical skills that characterise Iranian art and architecture.

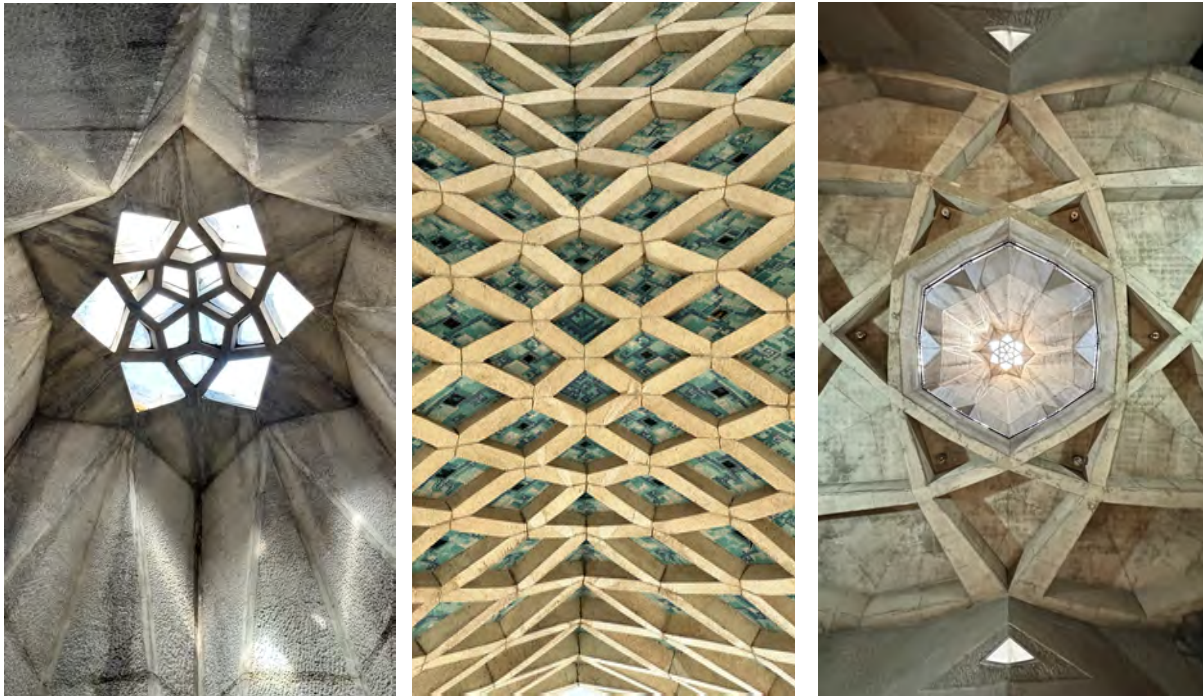


Fig. 8: The images show various reinterpretations of Iranian architectural patterns in the design of the interior and exterior of the Azadi Monument. (Source: Author)

The integration of these symbolic patterns into the design of the Azadi Tower is a deliberate act of cultural expression and preservation. It refers to the continuity of a visual language that has characterised Iranian architecture for centuries and builds a bridge between the past and the present. Through this integration, the architects have not only created a visually stunning monument but have also elevated it to a cultural landmark that resonates with both Iranians and the global public. To summarise, the use of traditional Iranian

architectural symbolic patterns in the design of the Azadi Tower is a profound manifestation of cultural heritage and artistic expression. They give the monument a multi-layered meaning and reflect the intricate craftsmanship and aesthetic sophistication of Iranian culture. This integration is a testament to the enduring power of traditional artistic forms in contemporary architectural contexts.

The Azadi Monument is an example of the harmonious interplay between the modern influences of the time and the vernacular and traditional Iranian architectural vocabulary. Its synthesis of contemporary techniques and historical Iranian motifs serves as a symbolic representation of Iran's architectural continuity and cultural resilience in the face of modernisation. Moreover, the monument's resonance as a symbol of national identity underscores its seminal role in the preservation and revitalisation of Iran's architectural heritage. The Azadi Tower is a testament to the skilful fusion of modern architectural principles of the time with traditional pre-Islamic and Islamic design elements of Iran. Its lasting significance lies in its ability to bridge temporal and aesthetic boundaries and thus express Iran's architectural identity and cultural heritage in an impressive way.

7. CONCLUSION

In the reassessment of modern architectural heritage, the Azadi Monument serves as compelling evidence of the transformative potential of synthesizing traditional and contemporary architectural paradigms. The careful reinterpretation of traditional and vernacular elements in the monument's design offers a nuanced perspective on how cultural identity can be dynamically reinterpreted through the prism of modern architectural sensibility. The deliberate use of iwan, traditional materials and intricate geometric patterns not only pays homage to Iran's rich architectural heritage but also demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of how these elements can be re-contextualized to meet contemporary needs. This innovative approach challenges conventional notions of architectural preservation and demonstrates that heritage can serve as a dynamic source of inspiration that informs and energizes modern architectural discourse.

Furthermore, the Azadi Monument provides a compelling impetus for a reassessment of modern architectural heritage from the perspective of learning and adaptation. By carefully examining the integration of wind catchers, concrete and the Persian garden into the monument, architects and scholars can learn valuable lessons for environmental sustainability and cultural resonance in contemporary design. This proactive engagement with modern architectural heritage not only enriches the discourse on the preservation and revitalization of historic sites but also reinforces the notion that architectural innovation is an evolutionary continuum that draws on the accumulated wisdom of the past to shape the built environment of the future.

The Azadi Monument thus presents a compelling case study that shows that by taking a fresh look at modern architectural heritage, we can unlock its latent potential to develop and inspire a more sustainable, culturally appropriate, and aesthetically pleasing architectural practice. This case study could be a suitable example of the "architecture with and without architects" ³⁷ emphasized by the author. In this way, we pave the way for a contemporary design ethos that harmoniously balances tradition and innovation. In this way, we enrich the architectural landscape for future generations and consider learning from (rather than copying) what has been learned before us to bridge the gap between architecture and identity.

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Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

Working Paper Series

MINNETTE DE SILVA (RE)INVENTING THE TRADITION OF THE CEYLONESE ARTS AND CRAFTS - A GUIDE TO TRACE THE DYNAMICS OF THESE CULTURAL PRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY SRI LANKA

Inês Leonor Nunes

Volume 334

Pages 57-82

2024

MINNETTE DE SILVA (RE)INVENTING THE TRADITION OF THE CEYLONESE ARTS AND CRAFTS - A GUIDE TO TRACE THE DYNAMICS OF THESE CULTURAL PRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY SRI LANKA



Minnette De Silva constructed her unique architectural expression by anchoring her modernist education in the deep roots of the Ceylonese traditions. The (re)invention of the vernacular arts and crafts through architecture, and the consequent uplift of the craft-makers, became significant contributions to the newly independent Ceylon. Entangling a thorough analysis of De Silva's autobiography with extensive fieldwork, I aim to trace the dynamics of these cultural practices throughout history. Furthermore, exploring the legacy of the 'Asian woman architect' highlights how profoundly the hand of the artisan has touched artistic, cultural, socio-political, class-related, and colonial features of the Sri Lankan identity.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper builds on the work of the Ceylonese architect Minnette De Silva (1918-98). It explores how the (re)invention of the vernacular practices of the Sri Lankan arts and crafts of Kandy determinedly contributed to De Silva's unique architectural expression, and, furthermore, to her broader reinvention of architecture.

Historically, the arts and crafts have played a crucial role in Sri Lanka's identity. In Ceylon's feudal-oriented society, they thrived with the patronage of the sovereign monarchy, particularly during the reign of the Kandyan Kingdom. Afterward, under British rule, and later influenced by industrialization, these traditional practices entered an era of irreversible decline that still echoes today. During the push for independence, the revival of vernacular vocabularies became vital in fostering a sense of nationalism. The city of Kandy, the final stronghold of the genuinely authentic pre-colonial traditions, emerged as a relevant national symbol.

Minnette De Silva was born and raised in Kandy. Her familiarity with the region's arts and crafts fabrications and fabricators rose from childhood reminiscences inherited from her parents, being the father's political affiliation or the mother's social convictions. After completing her architectural studies in London, she returned home in the aftermath of colonialism, willing to build an independent Ceylon. Hence, this shift in colonial status significantly influenced De Silva's intervention. Her architecture performed a sophisticated and innovative synthesis between these cultural practices and a decidedly modernist language. Through her unique architectural expression, Minnette wrote a crucial chapter on the history of the arts and crafts in Ceylon.

Her pioneering theoretical and practical contributions don't match the attention that De Silva has received from historiography. Only a handful of authors dedicated research exclusively to her.¹ Moreover, if De Silva's significant architectural legacy remains broadly unnoticed, even less has been specifically scrutinized about her

innovative approach to arts and crafts. Anooradha Siddiqi has been playing a crucial role in the acknowledgment of De Silva's legacy, namely through the article *Crafting the Archive: Minnette De Silva, Architecture, and History*. Besides, for research directed to gendered contributions to the arts and crafts, two books by Maureen Goggin and Beth Tobin are noteworthy. The diverse essays give a pioneering contribution to exploring and theorizing the rich but "overlooked and often despised categories of women's decorative arts (...) as sites of important cultural and social work.", although exclusively focused on Western cases.²

This paper aims to explore the dynamic adaptability of the vernacular Sri Lankan arts and crafts, whose creative fabrication methods are often unrecognized by an academic historiography that disregards manual practices. Furthermore, studying the arts and crafts of Kandy through the legacy of Minnette De Silva denotes entanglements of overlookedness between a career, a city, and a material practice, exposing gaps in the research that this paper aims to contribute to bridge.

Regarding the structure, a retrospective of the history of the Kandyan Kingdom highlights the unique conditions of the region to flourish these cultural practices. Moreover, Minnette's intervention will be contextualized between Corbusier and Coomaraswamy, the mentors of her intellectual project, integrated into the overall Sri Lankan framework. Next, the entanglements between Minnette De Silva's career, Kandy, and the arts and crafts - whether the crucial role played by the city and these practices in De Silva's legacy, or the significant contribution played by her architecture in Kandy and Kandyan handicrafts history - will be scrutinized. Lastly, I will describe my fieldwork, following an itinerary constructed around De Silva's legacy.

The theoretical framework of this paper proposes an interdisciplinary approach. It is mainly related to architectural history, but also entangled with anthropology and sociology, significant fields in the study of the vernacular. In the absence of a formal archive, the methodologies employed included a thorough analysis of De Silva's autobiography as a crucial primary source. *The Life and Work of an Asian Woman Architect* was posthumously printed in a single edition, in a lively scrapbook format, and documents Minnette's remarkable contribution to the Ceylonese, Asian, and worldwide architecture. Following De Silva's autobiography, I identified references to arts and crafts and pinpointed the corresponding locations in a map of the island. This research methodology resulted in a collection of places and the subsequent draft of a travel itinerary that I followed during my recent trip to Sri Lanka. Primarily, I focused on visiting Minnette's remaining legacy in Colombo and Kandy. This research especially showcases Pieris and Karunaratne Houses, since it is in the unifamilial residential projects that Minnette had more freedom to compose the interiors and, therefore, better display the integration of the arts and crafts. Additionally, the Kandyan Art Association will also be analyzed. It displays De Silva's reemerged dedication to artisanship in her latest career, a poetic narrative she dedicated to the handicrafts' values and identities of her beloved Kandy.

Thereafter, the journey guided me to Anuradhapura, Sigiriya, and Polonnaruwa, millennial places-of-inspiration. Lastly, I traveled to the Dumbara Valley, where I encountered the weavers of dumbara mats, and to Palle Hapuwida, where I met the lacquer craftsmen in the same villages where Minnette used to go. While Minnette incorporated a variety of arts and crafts in her houses, these two specific places emerged as directly linked to the architect's documented visits. These experiences were invaluable dear to Minnette, so they were to me. During fieldwork, I collected qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions as a method of generating detailed narratives from participants, minimizing misunderstandings, and improving the quality of the collected material. These specific case studies offered exceptional value to the study of the subject matter. They provided strategic insights into the history and dynamics of these traditions, ultimately culminating in a discussion of the current state of Kandyan arts and crafts.

Retracing De Silva's footsteps and watching these processes of manufacturing unveiled the historical sites and the creative fabrication methods that motivated and inspired her remarkable intellectual grammar and showcased how they are today. Despite globalization's impact on these traditional practices, some continue to thrive, illustrating the resilience and adaptability of tradition. However, many traditional arts and crafts are fading, similar to the condition of some of Minnette's remaining houses. These developments reveal the complex dynamics between tradition, adaptability, and vulnerability in the realm of Ceylonese arts and crafts.



Fig. 1: Minnette De Silva in her first studio, Kandy. (Source: De Silva, 1998)

2. “THE KANDY OF THE GOD-KINGS”³

Sri Lanka’s rich and diverse history spans over millennia. Set at the intersection of foremost trade routes, its unique geostrategic position was a mandatory stopover for all the great empires. As such, the country hosted several civilizations and was colonized by the Portuguese, Dutch, and British. The island’s ‘cosmopolitanism’ is a striking identity marker, defining culture, traditions, ethnicity, religion, and history.⁴ Ceylon’s initial kingdom is attributed to Indian settlers, followed by the ones of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Kotte. And, as the Sinhalese “retreated slowly through the centuries South from capital to capital (...) they finally rested in Kandy in the middle of the hills.”⁵ Kandy especially flourished after the 15th century, when it became the capital of an independent kingdom. The city evolved intertwining the topography, the central lake, and the Temple of the Tooth, Kandy’s most iconic landmark. (Fig.2)

Parallely, in 1505 the Portuguese arrived in *Ceilão*. They established their dominance through coastal trading while, unsuccessfully, attempting to capture *Kanda Uda Pasrata*, ‘the mountainous Kingdom’, shortening its name to *Candea*. In the 17th century, the Dutch overpowered the Portuguese, repeating several failed attempts to annex the city. After Ceylon became a British colony in 1802, the British also couldn’t conquer Kandy. The herculean annexation of the region was built on its inaccessible location and terrain. The “lofty and steep hills covered with thick jungle”⁶ acted as a topographical shield, an incubator of tropical diseases, and an ideal ground for guerilla tactics, unlike European belligerent familiarity.⁷ Additionally, the monarchy safely guarded data as oral knowledge and promoted a deliberate anti-road policy⁸, dissuading jungle clearance.⁹ This isolation is also mentioned as influencing Kandyans’ character, since “the independence which their mountains enable them to maintain, have rendered the lines of their character more bold and prominent.”¹⁰

As one of the most compelling outcomes of this territorial and political seclusion, the vibrant cultural practices and traditions of the country particularly flourished in the Kandyan highlands, untouched by colonial influence. “It was the art of a poor people”, as described by the historian Ananda Coomaraswamy, “a beautiful and signified scheme of peasant decoration, based upon the traditions of Indian art and crafts”, recognizing the long-lasting connection between the two countries.¹¹ Organized in guilds under a feudal system of royal patronage, the craftsmen had the Buddhist temples as chief patrons, while the best exclusively served the king. Certain crafts were associated with certain villages - weavers, lacquer workers, silversmiths, potters, brassmakers, stone-carvers. Knowledge was hereditarily transmitted through apprenticeship. As pre-colonial practices, craftsmanship elevated Kandy to the last bastion of authentic Ceylon.

To conquer Kandy, the British employed *divide et impera*. They capitalized on discontent with the king’s rule, strategizing a complex puzzle within local politics, and forming alliances with the Kandyan chiefs to depose the monarch. In 1815, the ‘Kandyan Convention’ welcomed the British as saviors. They accomplished, after

three centuries of colonial resistance, what the previous powers couldn't. Kandy fell, and the Ceylonese territory became a nation. At that time, according to Robert Knox, Kandy was "the chief or metropolitical city of the whole Island."¹² Against the British rule, unsuccessful rebellions started as early as 1817.¹³

During the British colonization, the island was restructured into a single administrative colonial space and a Colombo-centered urban system. Consequently, Kandy's physical, social, and spatial pre-colonial structures were torn. Alongside, the Kandyan autochthonal tropical forest was replaced by monoculture plantations to serve the prosperous export-oriented economy, tearing the island's landscape. The construction of a network of roads and railways was supported by land surveys, "to bring the unruly territory of Kandy under the cool gaze of science."¹⁴ The local elites capitulated to the 'superiority' of English culture and willingly imitated it, driven by an educational system that disregarded local history in favor of Western ideas. Therefore, Sinhalese cultural tradition "lived on only among the common people."¹⁵ In architecture, English-style buildings, designed by English architects emerged, like the widespread imperial bungalow. The Kandyan buildings were repurposed, and, gradually, Kandy became a tropical British city, part of a worldwide Empire. The Ceylon-based British architect Andrew Boyd remarked how "English colonization has probably been better than any other in promoting cultural decay and disruption in subject peoples."¹⁶

Incorporated into this process, the withdrawal of royal patronage immediately led to the decline of the traditions of the Kandyan arts and crafts or its trivialization when reduced to mere decoration. This trend was degenerated by the arrival of affordable British machine-made materials and products, making it impossible for indigenous crafts to compete. As early as 1882, the Kandyan Art Association was founded to support these practices. Under British rule, Kandy lost more than its territorial independence: Kandy lost its cultural and traditional identity. The kingdom was so significant, that the 'destruction of Kandy', an expression of Nihal Perera, was decisive in the colonization process.¹⁷ James Duncan described the annihilation of the ancient city as such: "What the British couldn't use they let decay, mirroring in the landscape of the place the decay they wished to see in the institutions themselves (...) Kandy was no longer the city of the god-king."¹⁸



Fig. 2: Kandy Lake, 1870 (Source: Lawton, CCA Collections)

3. MINNETTE DE SILVA, BETWEEN CORBUSIER AND COOMARASWAMY¹⁹

In the preceding chapter, I aimed to provide a past overview, emphasizing the key aspects related to the research's main argument. Yet, the Ceylonese and Kandyan history has been thoroughly documented by a panoply of exceptional authors.²⁰ One of them is the Kandyan architect Minnette De Silva. In the 18th edition of *Sir Banister Fletcher's A History of Architecture*, De Silva is responsible, among others, for the chapters on India and Sri Lanka.²¹ It is displayed material collected during her travels, or periods of self-renewal, when “the isolation in Ceylon was overbearing.”²² Later she used in the course on vernacular architecture she lectured at the University of Hong Kong.²³ The book editor, James Palmes, was the renowned librarian of RIBA and Minnette's longtime friend. In the introduction of De Silva's autobiography, Palmes highlighted Minnette's architectural career choice: “an unheard-of impertinence for a girl of her country at that time.”²⁴

Indeed, impertinence aptly described De Silva. Starting by insisting on an exclusively male-dominated career, against her father's wishes, she was later expelled from a school of Architecture in Bombay for unapologetically striking in favor of Gandhi. Afterward, after extensive international experiences - including participation in vital architecture events, building networks of contacts with the brightest minds in all fields, and graduating from the Architectural Association of London, where she became the first RIBA Asian woman associate - she returned to Kandy. Despite the difficulties, Minnette refused the security of a salaried job.²⁵ She asserted on working independently, becoming one of only two women architects worldwide to run a female sole principal practice in the post-war period, established as early as 1947.²⁶ In doing so, she became Sri Lanka's first woman architect and its first modernist architect. Notably, Karunaratne House, her first commission, became the country's first building designed by a woman architect, and Pieris House showcases the first flat slab in the island's history - a pair of remarkable achievements in mid-1950s Ceylon. (Fig.3)

Overall, considering her broader career, De Silva was “the first architect in the world to explicitly define what she called a modern approach to regionalism.” Thanks to this unique architectural language and original approach during the mid-century, Minnette is also credited for anticipating ‘Critical Regionalism’ by thirty years.²⁷ She called it “an experiment in Modern Regional Architecture in the Tropics.”²⁸

Self-described as “free and wild and independent”, it would be no surprise that the modernist principles, learned in the A.A. and pledging the essence of architecture, would fit Minnette's architectural endeavors like a glove.²⁹ In fact, many did. The modernist free plan was greatly in tune with De Silva's vision of spatial flexibility, where movable partitions could be arranged to match current needs. Moreover, the liberation of Ceylon from colonial typologies was imperative, so the houses could embrace vibrant tropical nature through openings framing the landscape. Pilotis and geometric lines greatly enhanced an aimed intelligible space.



Fig. 3: Pieris House, Colombo, 1950s/2023 (Source: De Silva, 1998/Author)

However, besides her modernist affiliation, Minnette was deeply rooted in the manifold context of her country and region. If Le Corbusier was, arguably, her main inspiration, her other mentor was Ananda Coomaraswamy. Despite being naturally influenced by the British Arts and Crafts Movement of William Morris, Coomaraswamy's approach was diverse.³⁰ The nineteenth-century vision of craft's enduring qualities revealed tradition as timeless and not subject to rapid trends or obsolescence. Nonetheless, after Coomaraswamy's pioneer fieldwork near the Sinhalese arts and crafts environments, the tradition became a dynamic practice whose reinvention process should be equally dynamic. His campaign to inspire the Ceylonese to value their rich and diverse history marked Minnette's parents, and, through them, Minnette herself. While it had lost some momentum by the time it reached her generation, this historical revival movement regained strength during the independence prelude, which was ultimately achieved in 1948. Indeed, periods of independence or heightened nationalism often spur historical revival movements.³¹

Coomaraswamy's seminal book *Medieval Sinhalese Art* is a manifesto towards the preservation of Ceylonese vernacular traditions, in the shape of a meticulously descriptive catalog documenting the arts and crafts of the Kandyan Kingdom.³² Minnette was well-acquainted with these practices, inherited from childhood experiences nurtured by her parents. George de Silva was a prominent figure in the Ceylonese society, becoming a Minister in the post-colonial period.³³ Minnette used to accompany his political perambulations to the craftsmen's villages around their beloved hometown. Likewise, Agnes de Silva was not only engaged in charitable and social work but also the Arts and Crafts Movement. Consequently, Minnette's "search for expression." is naturally aligned with Coomaraswamy's ideas.³⁴

Noteworthy, both criticized industrialization. While Minnette noted how "a veneer of modernism was acquired second hand, ill-digested and bearing no relationship to Ceylon's traditions"³⁵, Coomaraswamy addressed "commercialism - that system of production under which the work of European machines and

machine-like men has in the East driven the village weaver from his loom, the craftsman from his tools, the ploughman from his songs, and has divorced art from labour.”³⁶ Additionally, Minnette reflected how “industrialisation had destroyed the beautiful products of hand-craftsmen and artists, who had always enriched architecture in its greatest periods”, resulting in “sterile architecture, beautiful in its use of modern materials and construction but (...) divorced from the needs of the people.”³⁷ Parallely, Coomaraswamy considered that the machine work “lack the peculiar surface characteristic of each material, and developed by hand-work on it; the technical perfection of the surface in the one case is simply uninteresting”³⁸ These discourses represent a tension between arts and crafts as tradition and industrialization as modernity. The ideas conveyed by Janet Abu-Lughod seem to align with why De Silva and Coomaraswamy defended craftsmanship as the prevalence of the specific over the universal:

“The reason we are interested in "traditional" (...) is that we believe that such achievements met human needs in a more sensitive way than contemporary and/or alien methods do. It is this belief that sends us back to the past, and that sends us to the local and the specific. (...) Our respect for these undeniable achievements, and our dissatisfaction with our current mechanisms for translating human needs into the built environment, are the motivations behind our renewed interest in vernacular architecture.”³⁹

However, none of them opposed progress. Minnette sought to observe, understand, and interpret Ceylon’s roots, to afterward “synthesize the modern and the traditional (...) to absorb what we absolutely need from the modern West, and to learn to keep the best of our own traditional forms (...) to develop an indigenous contemporary architecture and not to lose the best of the old that has meaning and value”⁴⁰, while Coomaraswamy advised, “for a re-union of art with labour, that machinery should be controlled.”⁴¹

Moreover, both believed that the revival of arts and crafts was the solution to the alienation of the mechanized world. Minnette, addressing Modernism, stated: “Architects in the West (...) have won their revolution. And now they seek (...) to bring back the artist and craftsman into architecture. (...) For us it is much easier. We have our crafts with us, still valid in our modern society. We must bring them back into an architecture which must be designed to suit our contemporary living.”⁴² Coomaraswamy also stressed Ceylon’s advantage, since “much of the indigenous traditions of art and craft still survive [thanks] to the affectionate devotion of the hereditary craftsmen to their art and its traditions.”⁴³ Yet, Minnette noted the urgency. For instance, when talking about the tiles in Karunaratne House, Minnette explained how the craftsmen were unable to create “original designs of any merit” so a stylized figure was used. According to her, this happened because “the craftsman has been completely isolated from the trends of contemporary life; he must be brought into it otherwise he will remain only as a museum piece and eventually cease to exist.”⁴⁴

4. MINNETTE DE SILVA (RE)INVENTING THE TRADITION OF THE ARTS AND CRAFTS

4.1. Minnette's Aesthetic Project

Assuming the revitalization of the arts and crafts as a career project, Minnette built a strategy, beginning with the decision of her office's location: "I decided to live in Kandy, it being the centre of Ceylon and the heart of our national tradition."⁴⁵ Following, she returned to the craftsmen villages of her childhood: "Throughout my childhood I had lived and moved among Kandyan craftsmen and artists. (...) All this seeped into my unconscious mind, later manifesting itself in my work."⁴⁶ The Danish architect Ulrich Plesner, who worked with her in Kandy, recalled their "journeys of discovery", where they explored "all over the Kandyan mountains, and we visited the old wood-construction and terracotta slate-roofed temples like Embekke, (...) ruins of stone temples and villages of dancers and weavers and lacquer makers, all of which received her as a respected friend."⁴⁷ Plesner's description reveals two takeaways: Minnette's profound connection with these places, practices, and people; and the value of visiting historical sites to learn from the past. Significantly, De Silva inaugurated her autobiography with photos of Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and other historic sites that she visited as a child. Embekke is also a prominent example of temple architecture and Minnette included it in *Sir Banister Fletcher's* work. It displays elements that later Minnette incorporated into her houses.

Terracotta tiles representing *Ridivihare* traditional temple dancers, lacquered wood carvings in window frames or stair balusters, iron-cast metal grilles in the shape of the sacred Buddhist bo-leaf, dumbara mats incorporated in architectural elements, such as door paneling, but also as curtains and drapes, earthenware pottery and other objects, and painted murals are examples of arts and crafts that inhabited Minnette's world, and consequently, her houses. It was also a world of colors: red, gold, and black were the main tones of the ancient temples and the ones that Minnette used the most. Supporting her initiative, potters, lacquer makers, blacksmiths, weavers, painters, artists, and other craft-makers worked with her, side by side.

Minnette's houses and pioneering architectural vision are illustrative of the complex ways in which craft defines and impacts the space they inhabit. The placement of crafted objects was not random, but rather a reflected consequence of a project where space and objects, and especially the relations created between them, were envisioned as a unified whole. With "an undeniable humanizing appeal"⁴⁸, crafted objects are a crucial part of the intelligibility of Minnette's spaces, giving meaning and defining much of the character of her architecture. Moreover, this character also challenges the commonplace that values immaterial practices over the material. By being a manipulation of materiality, which means performed by hand, with concrete materials and tangible techniques, crafts are often considered ordinary, unimportant, and even inferior, compared with immaterial practices. The dominant hierarchy of art that generates the 'art versus craft' trap, in

which the value of certain practices and objects prevail, is deconstructed by George Kubler in *The Shape of Time*:

“Let us suppose that the idea of art can be expanded to embrace the whole range of man-made things, including all tools and writing in addition to the useless, beautiful, and poetic things of the world. By this view the universe of man-made things simply coincides with the history of art.”⁴⁹

In this vision, the art realm embraces all human-made things, namely artistry, and not only the so-called fine arts. A vision in tune with Minnette’s discourse. The arts and crafts are seen as artistic expressions that encompass aesthetic qualities, cultural meanings, and social opportunities that should be valued as any other art form. They play resilient roles in creating epistemological meaning, materializing identity, and crystalizing history through a complex system that profoundly connects race, class/caste, ethnicity, and gender. Throughout time, this socially weak class of people has carved, woven, and stitched their history through these practices, which has as much to do with personal expression as with collective and community ties.

4.2. Post-colonial Ceylon

Based on these concepts, the (re)invention of the tradition became Minnette’s dynamic project for the future. On one side, reintegrating these practices into architecture was paramount to prevent its extinction and uplift the artisans, highlighting Minnette’s socially engaged architecture as a chief motor of her intervention. On the other side, regional connotations became post-colonial symbols of resistance, emphasizing De Silva’s legacy as integrated and significant in the revival movements during independence.

Architecture was naturally an important dimension of post-colonial cultural production.⁵⁰ Architects became designers of identity and Minnette was one of them. Her legacy was linked to broader questions of regionalism and national individuality.⁵¹ Her effort to revitalize local craftwork is integrated with the sense of identity and pride during independence, and into a broader context of revival movements amongst colonized countries. Tariq Jazeel points out that “her buildings have become entangled in the weft and warp of a more militant politics of nationhood in post-independent Sri Lanka”, where the national was coincident with the Sinhala Buddhist majority. The choice of arts and crafts objects reflects these political connotations: “Ornamental choices that usually involved the careful deployment of a Ceylonese work of classical art or craftsmanship - and usually in de Silva’s case, objects that mobilised Kandyan Sinhala history.”⁵²

4.3. Worldwide Frameworks

De Silva’s approach seems significantly influenced by Sigfried Giedion’s concept of ‘synthesis of the arts’, where architects worked alongside artists.⁵³ Regarding this matter is also noteworthy how Minnette defined

her work. In her correspondence, the letterhead consisted of two lines: “The Studio of Modern Architecture” followed by “architecture . arts . crafts”⁵⁴ Once again it emphasizes the multidisciplinary character of her work, which overcame barriers between disciplines, while simultaneously unveiling another facet of her creative project: Minnette produced crafts herself. Her autobiography showcases photographs of furniture, lacquered objects, pottery, and clothing. Concerning guiding figures and frameworks, *Marg Magazine* is also essential to mention. Established in 1946, it featured diverse content, encompassing art and architecture, but also crafts, dance, and photography.⁵⁵ This interdisciplinary approach surely influenced Minnette, who was the architectural editor. *Marg* was also her gateway for international events, namely the CIAM VI in Bridgwater, in 1947. But also, the bubbling intellectual production within the magazine might have been persuasive. In the article *A People's Tradition*, Andrew Boyd, regretting the decline of the traditional Ceylon after colonization, compiled an inventory of “small peasant tradition” that, combined with “new materials and potentialities which modern civilization has necessarily introduced could (given the social opportunity) be used to develop an architecture that would be both genuinely modern and genuinely of the country.”⁵⁶ Aligned with Minnette’s future work, Boyd’s article was written in the same year that she founded her practice.

4.4. Minnette’s Social Project

The social approach toward the arts and crafts and the craft-makers was especially dear to Minnette. During my fieldwork, I decided to visit the Laksha village of Palle Hapuwida, since it stands prominently in Minnette’s autobiography. She devoted it an entire page, featuring four photographs of herself among the craftsmen. The analysis of these images unveils motivating conclusions. In one of them, Minnette attentively observes the craftsmen at work, squatting at their level. (Fig.4) According to Coomaraswamy, the Lac-workers belonged to a community known as ‘Arrow-Makers’. Considering their lower caste, her choice of position, in the 1950s Sri Lankan context, can be, arguably, seen as progressive and inclusive. Her willingness to engage with and learn from people of different backgrounds and social hierarchies reflects a level of respect and recognition for their skills, regardless of their lower strata, denoting political militancy.⁵⁷ It suggests an open-minded approach and a desire to bridge social and cultural divides, break down barriers, and challenge caste-based norms, which was ahead of her time. This attitude aligns with her broader social vision. Since “the traditional craftsmen were among the poorest people in society, encouraging the development of arts and crafts became also a means of uplifting the under-privileged”⁵⁸ and integrating them into society again, through architecture. Indeed, the vernacular contains a distinction in social class, and tradition is mainly a socially situated practice. The appreciation for the value of traditional crafts and the artisans behind them is in line with her family’s values: “I was brought up in the atmosphere of the patriotic commitments of my parents - political and cultural - to the community and country. So I grew up with the renaissance of the arts

and crafts, social and cultural movements, - a live course in sociology and the relationship of architecture to it.”⁵⁹ Unsurprisingly, Minnette’s autobiography is dedicated to them: “To my parents whose life was an exemplar of love, compassion & justice for all.”⁶⁰

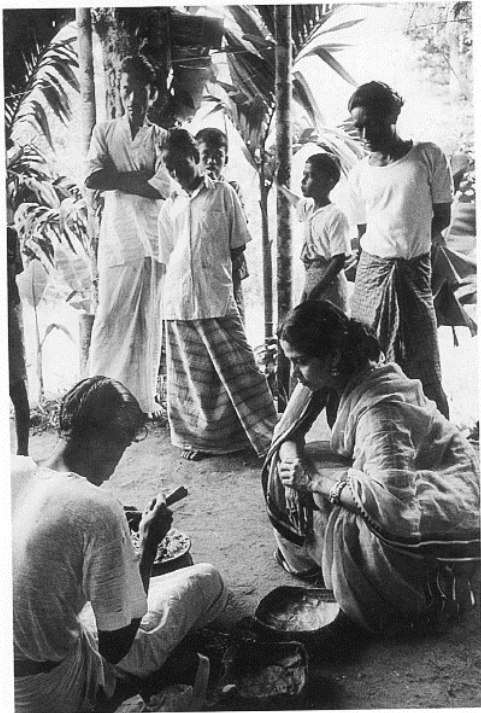


Fig. 4: Minnette De Silva in Palle Hapuwida (Source: De Silva, 1998)

4.5. Textiles

Though Minnette’s project was rooted in the past, it went beyond conserving it to prioritize its reinterpretation. Instead of simply being displaced into the domestic environment, arts and crafts elements were repurposed. Again, I see De Silva’s vision in line with the one from Abu-Lughod. Arguing that the concept of tradition should be “seen as a quality more related to process than product”, Minnette’s “creative applications” of tradition, recycling existing forms of past practices to meet present needs match the characteristics of the concept of “traditioning.”⁶¹

In this context, Minnette’s approach to textiles is particularly worth reflecting. Besides integrating traditional textiles, called *dumbara* mats, into architectural features, Minnette repurposed them. Referring to the curtains in Karunaratne House, she said that they were woven in her studio in a traditional way but “on modern looms, with designs improved on traditional patterns and motives and colors, to suit contemporary taste and needs.”⁶² By her studio, Minnette was referring to a handloom practice called *Ceylon Kandyan Handlooms* that seemed to have operated in the 1960s. A brochure is displayed in Minnette’s autobiography, including the different types of clothes produced - robes, coats, jeans, shirts, sarongs, accessories, cloth bags -, the textures,

and the prices. There, Minnette expanded dumbara designs to textiles, namely to modern-styled garments and even saris, which she personally wore.

De Silva's dedication to textiles is possibly connected with her close friendship with Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, an activist who inspired the development of the arts and crafts in India and stressed the role of handicrafts in uplifting their creators. Minnette was always closely tied to India, so the Indian context was undoubtedly familiar. Minnette's wish to study weaving abroad, in a private school in Kensington, so she could work alongside the weavers in her workshop, and the images of her weaving included in her autobiography are closely linked to the figure of Gandhi and his spinning wheel. India is probably the strongest symbol of nationalist revival, highlighting the socio-political power of cloth.⁶³

5. SEARCHING FOR MINNETTE DE SILVA'S LEGACY IN CONTEMPORARY SRI LANKA

After thorough consultation of the literature, fieldwork revealed imperative. 'What remains from Minnette's enduring legacy?' was the core and broader query preceding my trip to Sri Lanka. 'What remains from Minnette's arts and crafts legacy?' was the precise inquiry guiding this paper. The answers remain, to some extent, unanswered. Having Minnette's autobiography as the most robust source of data, and considering that only the first of two planned volumes was published, covering until 1962, the life and work of the Asian woman architect remained elusive until her death in 1998. Instead, she was rather forgotten, as swiftly as the annihilation of her legacy. After her death, her office was plundered and the majority of her buildings has been gradually demolished and altered. My exploration *in situ* revealed that much research is awaiting to be conducted. Additionally, this research holds not only paramount importance but also utmost urgency, considering the swift demolition of numerous houses. Namely, the recently visited Fernando Housen has been freshly flattened. On the brighter side, I was able to gather a wealth of exciting material during my extensive fieldwork in Sri Lanka. This chapter will provide insights into that research. (Fig.5)



Fig. 5: Itinerary of my fieldwork in Sri Lanka, 2023 (Source: Author)

5.1. Colombo

My journey to Sri Lanka was planned with enthusiasm and apprehension, stemming from the substantial uncertainty of the investigation. However, it surpassed expectations as it unfolded. Among the Minnette De Silva buildings I visited, I will primarily focus on Pieris House, in Colombo, Karunaratne House, and Kandyan Art Association, in Kandy, as they abundantly feature arts and crafts objects and techniques, and are clear representatives of Minnette's innovative approach to architecture.

As such, my research began in Colombo. Pieris House (1952-56) is located in Alfred House Gardens and was designed for Ian Pieris, a family friend. The son, Prianga Pieris, and his wife Eranga, have preserved the house with minimal alterations and kindly hosted me for a visit. The main façade, turned to the road, displays a rhythmic geometry of *brise-soleils*, striving for *fenêtre en longueur*. A London-trained Minnette is revealed in the clear lines and free plans. However, compromise is evident. Structurally, the house is elevated over pilotis, possibly inspired by Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye and by traditional elevated temples called *tampita viharage*, whose images are included in her biography alongside technical drawings of the house.⁶⁴ The courtyard and open carport have modernist fluidity while simultaneously recreating a traditional space known as *midula*. It serves a passive design strategy, as cross-ventilation regulates tropical climate temperatures, while also accommodating large gatherings during traditional ceremonies. Besides, local laterite and rough stone are used. Regarding crafts, lacquered wood balustrades on the stairs are carved in geometric and organic designs; a decorative terracotta tile panel wall repeats a *Ridivihare* temple dancer motif, topped with traditional wooden

railing beads or *beeralu*; the carport has an iron grille metalwork shaped on the Buddhist sacred bo-leaf; and also significant, a bookshelf, designed by Minnette herself. (Fig.6)



Fig. 6: Pieris House, Colombo - Lacquered wood balustrades; Decorative terracotta tile panel; Iron grille metalwork in bo-leaf shape; Bookshelf, 2023 (Source: Author)

5.2. Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Sigiriya

Afterward, I embarked on a journey to the North. I visited Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, and Sigiriya, Sri Lanka Unesco 'Golden Triangle'. The two ancient capitals' sprawling ruins and sacred stupas, of remarkable architectural significance, offer a glimpse into the island's profound heritage, whispering tales of kings and empires. Adorned with frescoes and surrounded by complex water gardens, the 'Lion Rock' rises like a sentinel of the past. As referred, Minnette visited these places during her childhood, learning from them, collecting knowledge about the past, and inspiration for her future work.

5.3. Kandy

The next destination was the World Heritage City of Kandy. Nestled in the greenery mountains of the central highlands, and spreading around the central lake, the last kingdom of Kandy honors the descriptions of the past. Robert Knox emphasized how “the surrounding scenery is rich and beautiful.”⁶⁵ Henry Sirr restated that “the position of Kandy is both romantically beautiful, and sublimely grand.”⁶⁶ Minnette De Silva highlighted how the city, “set romantically in a narrow valley (...), mirrors the last phase of true Sinhala architecture.”⁶⁷

Karunaratne House (1947-51) was Minnette's first commission. The house is located in a sloping terrain overlooking Kandy Lake. As the Pieris, the Karunaratnes were also family friends. The house remarkably adapts to the topography by spanning different levels, in which the staircase gains prominent importance in the spatial distribution. Modern elements such as concrete, glass bricks, and free and flexible plans opening the house to the landscape, are entangled with regional elements, namely local wood and stone, and traditional Kandyan arts and crafts. Lacquer work on the staircase railing and terracotta tiles with *Ridivihare*

temple dancer motif on the walls, although here inset at intervals, are aligned with Pieris House. Additionally, in Karunaratne, besides being incorporated as door panels, dumbara mats were revived as furniture drapes and curtains. Also, decorative earthenware jars in traditional designs were placed throughout the space, and a mural from the Kandyan artist George Keyt topped the staircase. The presence of traditional colors still features in the pillars and walls of the house, but the red, gold, and black tones, traditionally present in ancient temples, used to be also used in earthenware, woodcarving, murals, tiles, and fabrics. In sum, “in this house the architect, the craftsman, and the artist have worked together.”⁶⁸ Contrarily to Pieris House, Karunaratne is in a heavy stage of dilapidation, and certain parts of the house have already collapsed. (Fig.7)



Fig. 7: Karunaratne House, 1950s/2023 (Source: De Silva, 1998/Author)

Lastly, the actual building of the Kandyan Art Association was Minnette’s last major project and exceptionally exemplifies her lifelong dedication to the artisanship of her country and region. It houses a main performance space and craft workshops, in a village-like resemblance. Minnette integrated the new structure into an existing 150-year-old building and decided to integrate Kandyan elements, such as the traditional tile-roof, indigenous materials, and furniture design by local craftsmen: “it is their place, it is the traditional way.”⁶⁹ Notably, she chose this building to illustrate the front cover of her autobiography. Assembled as a craft, Minnette’s scrapbook is itself another of Minnette’s creative projects.⁷⁰

5.4. Dumbara Valley

From Kandy, following the indications provided in Minnette’s autobiography, I made two incursions to check the arts and crafts practices of the previous Kandyan Kingdom. The first took me to Thalagune, in the Dumbara Valley, where *Dumbara Rata Kalala*, or Dumbara mats, are still traditionally hand-made. (Fig.8)

A kind of hemp or long-leaved agave, known as *bana*, was used by traditional weavers. After removing the thorny point and the edges of the leaves, they are pressed against a log and scraped to remove the fleshy part

and extract the fiber, which is washed, sun-dried, combed, and colored. Traditionally, natural red, yellow, and black herbal dyes were used. Regarding the fabrication process, dumbara weaving's essence lies in its intricate motifs, making it extremely time-consuming. Weaving techniques were adapted to support the designs of this Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity practice. Unlike traditional handloom weaving, dumbara only uses matt and plain weave for the background fabric. Also, the looms have only two head shafts, operated through foot paddling. There is no pit for the weaver's feet, so the operator squats on the mat itself. The motifs were of high significance and included flowers, leaves, animals, and geometric shapes found in nature. Despite certain crafts being traditionally connotated as gendered, dumbara weaving is done by men and women alike.

5.5. Palle Hapuwida

The second journey was to Palle Hapuwida, in the region of Matale, around 25 km North of Kandy. The mountain village of Laksha craft-makers which is illustrated in Minnette's autobiography, still didn't break the isolation that is featured in the 1950s photographs. In one of them, a barefooted Minnette wads through a river, underscoring the village's unspoiled and roadless nature. During my fieldwork, I faced a similar situation. Although a road already existed, it was not suitable for cars, leaving me reliant on tuk-tuks or motorbikes that occasionally passed by. Eventually, to expedite the journey, the most practical solution was taking the road on foot and accepting the natural elements of the land, including the river crossing.

Lac craft or Laksha is a varnish that forms a hard and glossy surface when dried. It is typically used as a protective coating for several materials, namely wood, ivory, pottery, clothes, and shells, enhancing the surface's smooth appearance and durability. The essential component of the sticky glue is extracted from the resinous of the lac beetle insect, which nests in the bark of certain trees. Then, after heated and folded into golden strips, is mixed with natural dyes. However, nowadays resin and dyes are imported.

Laksha has a fascinating manufacturing process. I observed it being made using two distinct methods. The older form is called fingernail or nail work because is done with the finger or thumbnail without using machinery. This method involves heating the lac and applying it to the pole over a charcoal fire. Palm leaves smooth and create a coating. The yellow patterns at the base are created by extracting heated yellow lac threads and manually applying them to form the desired pattern, which demands great precision skills. In the other method, called lathe work, strips of lac are applied to rotating wood on a lathe. The heat generated by friction softens the lac, causing it to adhere to the wood, and form layers of different colors, following an order: first yellow, then red, and lastly black. The final product is polished and a stylus is used for engraving designs, once again requiring countless skills to achieve the desired outcome. Previously, Laksha's applicability was vast, in articles such as sticks, handles, or banners. Nowadays, the craft of small wooden objects, such as

candle holders or diverse boxes, is the main production. I was also told that the biggest commissions were the ones for balusters of temples, which process I also observed. (Fig.8)



Fig. 8: Weaver, Dumbara Valley; Lacquer Craftsman, Palle Hapuwida, 2023 (Source: Author)

6. FIELDWORK INSIGHTS

The contact with the practices and challenges of these two communities emphasized two distinct dynamics. Firstly, as highlighted in the interviews, the concerns between both the crafts practices are similar, so I foresee that they should be common to the other practices. As time-consuming and labor-intensive craftsmanship, known to only a few, increasing production is challenging (even if in response to demand) unless new technology is introduced. Moreover, as cast-based practices, younger generations are shifting away from industry and traveling to urban areas. It results in a decrease in the number of artisans continuing it, with increasing age. This issue was already felt during Minnette's generation. She recalled, when recruiting draughtsmen for her office, that they were "mostly sons of craftsmen, who instead of following their traditional crafts, took up minor clerical or caretaker jobs as there was no money or status for them in the traditional crafts."⁷¹ As such, most craftsmen anticipate a declining industry as traditional knowledge is not being transmitted to future generations. Indeed, grasping traditional ethics, tools, knowledge of the materials, equipment, decorations, and manufacturing methods is a long epistemological process that requires dedication and love for the craft. In sum, Annemari de Silva argues that the struggles in the crafts sector aren't related to "any inherent "backwardness" of craftspeople or lack of relevance of handicrafts to modern times but instead due to the combined effect of a decaying ecosystem of support for the sector and diverse sectoral challenges, its profit-making orientation."⁷²

On the other side, efforts are being made to revitalize. The realization that traditional crafts, originally created for utility purposes in rural communities or with ancient religious and royal drives, hold less or no value in urban and international contemporary markets obliges repurposing the objects with new meanings and functions. But, "what forces are determining what will be marginal and what will be considered significant.

Who is responsible for that hierarchy; who are its agents? How do these agents subject the physical existence and moral worlds of ordinary people to a logic that renders them subordinate?” are questions addressed by the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld. He stresses that globalization institutionalized a “global hierarchy of value” that labeled the manual artistry as obsolescent, highlighting “the political weakness of those whose competence is specifically local.” Herzfeld also discusses how “the artisans are threatened with categorical “deskilling” in a world that apparently no longer appreciates what it once praised in them.” In fact, past discourses about traditional and vernacular environments describing them as “‘barbaric’, ‘inferior forms’, ‘ugly’”, as highlighted by Necdet Teymur and Yasemin Aysan, are much in line with the current backwardness associated with crafts and crafts-makers.⁷³ Moreover, Herzfeld continues, “How they deal with the attendant corrosion of their lives is a story that tells us much about the world in which all of us live today.”⁷⁴

In that story, economic considerations are the core of the narrative. Although artisans face challenges in navigating competitive market conditions and have a limited understanding of how to meet customer needs, attending to business and tourism requirements seems to be a priority. Introducing new products, techniques, designs, motifs, and colors, beyond tradition, was often pointed out as a possible dynamic solution to improve the commercialization of the products and, subsequently, the social mobility of the craft-making communities. For example, in dumbara weaving, imported dyes are common, as well as cotton, silk, and synthetic yarns to replace traditional hemp. It is crucial to understand the commercial dynamics between the producer-customer interaction that, although inherent in the transformative journey of crafts, can simply transform them into mass-produced commodities.⁷⁵ Is it a subversion of their identity or simply a sign of the dynamism of the tradition that should be accepted? On one hand, adapting these crafts to urban demands may sabotage their original identity and purpose. For example, a Laksha maker pointed out that some new motifs are inappropriate or even unacceptable vis-a-vis the symbolic/religious meaning of the craft, yet still accepted by the tourists for ignorance of traditions. On the other hand, it can be seen as a sign of the tradition's adaptability and dynamism. And if craft matches the definition of tradition by Jean-Paul Bourdier and Nezar AlSayyad because it “satisfies two criteria: it is the result of a process of transmission, and it has cultural origins involving common people”⁷⁶, it also aligns with the premise that addresses tradition as “a dynamic project for the reinterpretation of the past in light of the present and often in the service of the future.” In the end, a dynamic approach to the arts and crafts tradition and a handloom studio motivated by commercial purposes wasn't exactly what Minnette aimed for?

4. CONCLUSION

The dedication to the arts and crafts followed Minnette De Silva throughout her career. Thanks to childhood experiences and the guidance of her parents, Minnette was introduced to Ananda Coomaraswamy's pioneer

work. In his monography on medieval arts and crafts, “offered to the Sinhalese people as a monument to a part of their departed glory”, Coomaraswamy cataloged the past in order to inspire the future.⁷⁷ He greatly inspired Minnette. Fearful of a forthcoming extinction, Coomaraswamy stressed the urgency of the endeavor. He was right, a few decades later these practices had become moribund. It was Minnette’s turn to intervene, facing, to some extent, similar challenges. British colonialization and ‘commercialism’, identified as against the arts and crafts in the early 1900s, became industrialization personified as Modernism in mid-century Ceylon.

However, they both believed in the future. And Minnette reached further than any other intellectual project. Between Corbusier and Coomaraswamy, and realizing the inappropriateness of both colonial and modern projects vis-vis Ceylon’s idiosyncrasies, Minnette’s creative discourse entangled design practices resolutely modernist with a firm rootedness in the traditions, framed by the Lankan climate and landscape. The revival of the vernacular Kandyan arts and crafts, a crucial symbol of pre-colonial Ceylon, became a leading and unique thread of her architectural language. From Karunaratne and Pieris Houses, her two inaugural works, until her last project, the Kandyan Art Association, this ambivalence of references is omnipresent. (Fig.9)



Fig. 9: Kandyan Art Association, 2023 (Source: Author)

Alongside, in post-colonial Ceylon, other prominent women, such as Barbara Sansoni and Ena de Silva, were also influential in their work with traditional crafts, namely textiles.⁷⁸ While their approaches should be considered within distinct contexts from that of Minnette, collectively, a set of personalities from diverse fields took significant strides toward reinvigorating these disciplines, opening doors for the future.

From Kandy's annexation to the British Empire, which once threatened its existence, to the Modern Movement's ideological shift towards functionality at the expense of artistic craftsmanship, nowadays, the enduring tradition of arts and crafts of Sri Lanka continues to pave the dynamic but challenging path that has defined its timeless journey. Through the pages of history, it has transformed, persisted, and thrived, recalling that the preservation of heritage is not only about the past but also about nurturing and renewing tradition in the context of the ever-changing world. Regrettably, this research also exposes its fragility. Like any labor-intensive material production, this ancient craft-based artistry has been severely affected by globalization and

needs support, innovation, and a renewal of appreciation to remain vibrant and alive today. The practices of the Dumbara weavers and the Hapuwida lacquer makers are fading, as are most of Minnette's houses - deserted, forgotten, deteriorating. Nevertheless, some others are enduring or even steadily thriving, just as some of Minnette's buildings still stand with original dignity. They represent tradition as a dynamic project, revealing the power of adaptability and resilience, yet also the same vulnerability that Minnette so eagerly fought against. In this story, Minnette De Silva wrote a remarkable chapter by recognizing that the artistic touch of the craft-maker, in the ornament, detail, or color, of everyday objects is "the humanization of his labour, and the witness that man does not live by bread alone."⁷⁹

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Traditional Dwellings and Settlements

Working Paper Series

EXPLORING THE LOST SENSE OF PLACE- INVESTIGATING THE INTERPLAY OF ARCHITECTURAL TYPOLOGY, MATERIALITY, AND AUTHENTICITY

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Volume 334

Pages 83-99

2024

EXPLORING THE LOST SENSE OF PLACE - INVESTIGATING THE INTERPLAY OF ARCHITECTURAL TYPOLOGY, MATERIALITY, AND AUTHENTICITY



This paper explores the impact of evolving architectural typologies on the community's connection to their surroundings. Utilizing various research methods, we analyzed the transition from traditional typologies to modern ones and how new construction materials influenced the people's shared memories and ties to their locale. Our findings suggest that these novel materials didn't echo the historical sentiments and living patterns of the community. Further, the swift changes and a lack of genuineness in the surroundings led to feelings of detachment. This study calls for design choices that honor historical essence, considering the deep link between the historical, architectural, social, and environmental.

1. INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by rapid urbanization and transformative architectural advancements, the essence of dwellings undergo a continual metamorphosis. The evolution of architectural typologies poses profound impacts on the perceptions and experiences of inhabitants, particularly influencing their sense of place and connection to their living environments. With the integration of contemporary styles and novel materials into traditional settings, it becomes imperative to comprehend the repercussions such transformations have on the collective memory and cultural identity of communities, notably in areas teeming with rich historical layers and diverse heritage. This study is situated within this context, aiming to explore the relation between materiality, memory, and place in the ever-evolving architectural landscape of the Bekaa Valley.

The Eastern Bekaa Valley, with its diverse architectural heritage and unique socio-cultural fabric, serves as a lens through which the impacts of shifting architectural paradigms on sense of place are observed. The region encapsulates a variety of architectural typologies, reflecting both the tapestry of its historical typologies into what it has evolved to in the contemporary era. The valley, thus, offers a fertile ground for investigating how transitions in architectural styles and materials influence the dwellers' perception of authenticity and their connection to their built environment.

The focal point of this research is to unravel the relationships among architectural elements, cultural identity, and the formation of a sense of place, understanding how the loss of a sense of place permeates through the dwellers as they navigate through varying architectural scenarios in this rapidly changing living environment. The investigation utilizes a mixed-method approach and archival research to gain profound insights into the local community's perspectives and experiences related to the transformations in their living spaces.

The evolution from traditional to “contemporary” architectural styles in the Bekaa Valley is not merely a visual or structural transition; it is intertwined with the residents' cultural memory and traditional ways of living. Hence, the introduction of new materials and architectural concepts impacted the inhabitants' connection to place, potentially eroding the perceived authenticity.

The change in architectural typology occurred in a time span of 70 years, illustrating a sudden change in architectural typology between four eras of construction typologies; traditional/pre-globalisation, transitional, modernism, and post-modernism. In this paper, we will discuss the reason of architectural transformation that occurred during each era, and its impact on the socio-cultural aspect.

The transformation and its ensuing impacts on the sense of place resonate beyond the confines of the Bekaa Valley, posing pertinent questions regarding the symbiotic relationship between architecture and cultural identity. It ignites a conversation on the need for a holistic and culturally sensitive perspective in architectural design, echoing the quintessential need to harmonize materiality and place.

2. METHODOLOGY

In examining the transformation within the Bekaa Valley's architectural typologies and its subsequent influence on authentic place-making, I adopted an integrated research methodology to offer a nuanced understanding reflective of the region's realities. I synthesized both the phenomenological and operative approaches. The former, emphasizing human perceptions, interactions, and interpretations, offers profound insights into the intricate relationships between space, inhabitants, and their surrounding milieu in the Bekaa Valley's diverse landscape. Conversely, the operative approach, inspired by the foundational tenets of the 2009-initiated Versus Project¹, stresses the indispensability of vernacular knowledge for sustainable development. This project systematically decoded vernacular heritage, distilling its essence into guiding principles crucial for contemporary architectural sustainability. It further framed operational definitions that bridge vernacular traditions with sustainability in architectural praxis. While the operative method provides a structured lens focusing on socio-cultural norms, economic implications, and environmental considerations, phenomenological insights enrich our grasp of inhabitants' lived experiences. The convergence of these methodologies in architectural research remains a pioneering endeavor. (Fig 1)

2.1. The Phenomenological Approach

The phenomenological research method is rooted in a philosophical tradition established by Edmund Husserl, which is primarily concerned with exploring human experiences from the perspective of those who experience them². This method is distinct due to its focus on subjective experiences, interpretations, and

meanings that individuals assign to their experiences. Phenomenology aims to obtain a deep understanding of human experiences to explore the essence of life phenomena as they appear to human consciousness³. In our case we used the phenomenological by indulging ourselves in the in a qualitative research, additionally, researching the existential qualities embedded by understanding different linguistic outputs from the region to understand its reflection on architectural space used and the regional landscape¹.

2.2. The Operative Principles

The principles approached are adopted from the versus project approach.

Environmental: This scope considers the human capacity to intervene in order to reduce or even prevent negative environmental impacts. It also necessitates the capacity to mitigate the effects of any human intervention and the recognition of the overall need to foster territorial regeneration⁴.

Sociocultural: This scope should be viewed as a benchmark of relationships, sense of belonging, identity, and individual and communal development. It attempts to compile all the Social and Cultural benefits observable in indigenous solutions.⁵ Generally, the related characteristics are more closely associated with the processes than with physical reality itself.

Socio-economics: This scope represents the most quantitative aspect of the sustainable sphere, with financial and monetary values serving as standard indicators. Due to its vernacular conceptual implications, the concept of cost is related to the concept of effort, which may be more applicable in situations where there is no capital-intensive system. ⁶

Environmental aspect

- 1- Respecting nature
- 2- To be situated appropriately
- 3- Reducing pollution and waste materials
- 4- Contributing to health quality
- 5- Reducing natural hazards effects

Socio-cultural aspect

- 6- Protecting cultural landscape
- 7- Transferring cultural constructions
- 8- Enhancing creativity
- 9- Recognizing intangible values
- 10- Encouraging social cohesion

¹ All findings on the etymological research for that particular context, which it relates the existential aspects in the Arabic linguistics, are to be find in this publication
El Moussaoui, M. (2020). Rethinking Heidegger's Dwelling Through Arabic Linguistics. Journal of Islamic Architecture, 6(2), 127–131. <https://doi.org/10.18860/JIA.V6I2.8454>

Socio-economic aspect

- 11- Supporting autonomy
- 12- Promoting local activities
- 13- Optimizing construction efforts
- 14- Extending the buildings lifetime
- 15- Saving resources

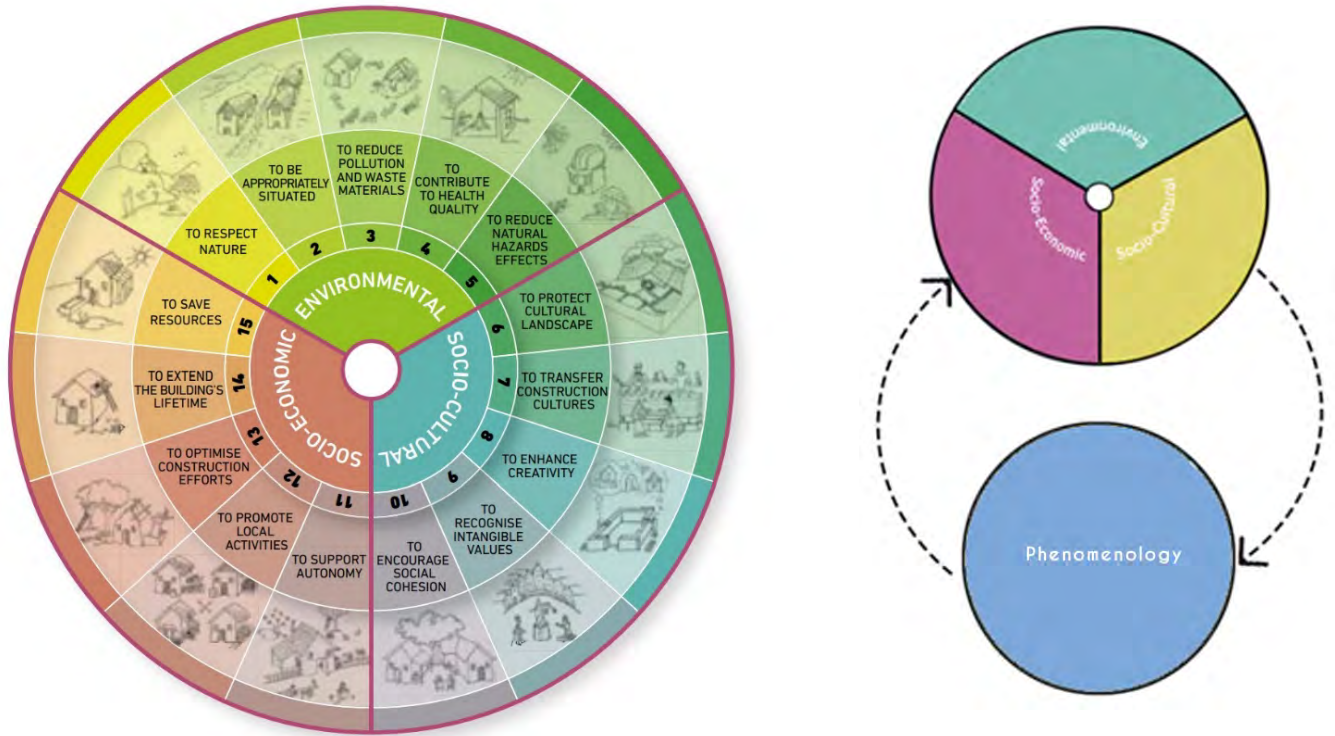


Fig. 1. On the left is the VerSus assessment method, on the right is its relation with the phenomenological (Source: VerSus 2014 and Author, 2020)

3. REGION AND HISTORY

In the Eastern Bekaa Valley, there has been a notable typological transformation over a concise period, predominantly driven by two primary factors: the incorporation of novel building materials and a pivotal political decision. Up until the late 1960s, the region had primarily witnessed the introduction of contemporary materials like concrete and steel. Additionally, it wasn't until this same period that rudimentary electrical connections were established. Consequently, there was a distinct shift from vernacular architectural practices as the local populace began embracing these modern building materials.

Recent times have seen an influx of globalized materials permeating local dwelling structures. Historically, residents, attuned to the exigencies of their environment, relied on locally sourced materials, integrating them seamlessly into their daily lives and routines.⁷ Architecture thus not only served the primary purpose of

shelter but also functioned as a repository for these indispensable material resources.

Historical accounts suggest that the original settlers of East Bekaa Valley were refugees fleeing oppression in Keserwan during the Ottoman Empire's reign.⁸ Their choice of this region was not merely fortuitous but was significantly influenced by its religious significance and inherent geographical features offering natural defense against the Ottomans.

The region's harsh climatic conditions necessitated adaptive strategies. Local residents deftly manipulated their environment, crafting tools essential for their daily subsistence. This profound connection to their environment was manifest not only in the physical articulation of exterior spaces but also profoundly influenced interior spatial configurations.

Externally, constructions prominently featured local stones, which varied in shape and size, to constitute their façades. These façades, predominantly, remained unrendered, showcasing the rawness of the bare stones. A specific construction methodology was employed to mitigate heat exchange between the dwelling's exterior and interior. This entailed the construction of a void between the exterior and interior stone walls, which was then infilled with a mix of mud, pebbles, and vegetal fibers. The inner walls were subsequently coated with a lime paint, derived from locally extracted limestone.

As mentioned, in the latter part of the 20th century, the area experienced technological progress. Prior to this, the residents primarily utilized natural stone and timber for construction, molding their living spaces based on familial needs, available materials, environment, and financial capacities. Constructed to withstand extreme seasonal temperatures, these homes accommodated a range of functions, including food storage, living spaces, animal shelters, and storage for farming equipment.

The construction practices of the time were largely informal, relying on indigenous knowledge and experience passed down through generations, rather than on formal engineering principles. Notably, the Order of Engineers and Architects (OEA) was established in Lebanon in 1951 under law 940, succeeding the Lebanese Organization for Civil Engineers and Architects formed in 1934.

However, despite the OEA's establishment, many in rural areas continued building without formal permissions. Several factors contributed to this trend: the newly acquired national independence in 1947, a centralized governance focused primarily on the capital and major cities, and political turmoil, including the several wars witnessed, widespread unauthorized construction.

Yet, despite the nation's tumultuous history, a significant aesthetic shift in architecture was staved off for some time, attributable to economic constraints and a lack of investment from emigrants. Post-2000,

however, returning emigrants began constructing homes, this time in compliance with the OEA and municipal work regulations.

In 2014, a pivotal policy shift significantly influenced the architectural landscape of the region. Following the ministerial formation on February 15, 2014, under the leadership of the then Prime Minister, Mr. Tamam Salam, Mr. Nohad El-Mashnook assumed the position of Minister of Interior. Later that year, he sanctioned a directive, although not a formal law, permitting municipalities in rural areas to authorize landowners to construct buildings under 150m^2 without necessitating formal approval from the OEA and the Ministry of Public Works & Transportation. This directive, titled Generalization No. 613, was ratified on May 5, 2014.⁹

The rationale provided by the ministry for this directive encompassed curbing erratic construction patterns, forestalling rapid urbanization, and facilitating citizens in regions lacking municipal oversight to establish their domiciles. The stipulations of this directive were explicit: buildings should not exceed a single story of three meters in height and a total area, inclusive of terraces and verandas, of 150m^2 . Furthermore, the constructions must adhere to existing building regulations, especially concerning setbacks, as outlined in the specified circular board.

Notably, under this provision, landowners in certain areas could erect two-story buildings and incorporate a basement if their property was situated below the adjoining road level. Those who had previously availed benefits from a similar directive could also add an additional story to their existing structures. Crucially, the onus of monitoring compliance with these regulations was transferred to security agencies. The rule briefly announces that the construction must be strictly 1 floor no more than 3 meters and under 150 m^2 including terraces and verandas.

4. ARCHITECTURAL TYPOLOGIES

As previously delineated, a sequence of specific events culminated in a marked transformation of architectural typologies over a span of five decades. To clarify the distinctive developments across these temporal junctures, we embark on a systematic exploration of each epoch, distinguished by its unique architectural styles and construction methodologies. The inaugural phase can be characterized by reliance on traditional construction practices, which we shall refer to as 'Premodernism' or 'Pre-globalization'. This was succeeded by a period wherein traditional methodologies began integrating novel construction materials, aptly termed the 'Transitional' phase. Subsequently, the 1980s ushered in a phase dominated by the utilization of entirely modern materials, denominated as 'Modernism'. The final epoch, which we shall categorize as 'Post-modernism', was catalyzed by a pivotal political directive, engendering a further evolution in architectural typology.

4.1. Premodernism/Pre-globalization

This era lasted from the early part of history until the middle of the 1960s, which was when concrete was first introduced to the region. Joists and beams were used in the construction of the home, along with stone walls, posts, pillars, or inner arcades, and an earthen roof. This straightforward representation of a local home can be obtained in two distinct manners. The first kind of house is known as a single-unit house, and it's typically found in more rural areas. The second type, which can be found in both urban and rural areas, is a house that contains more than one living unit for occupants. Both of these types of residences are typically very private and have limited access to the exterior of the building (Fig. 2, Fig 3).



Fig. 2. Traditional Vernacular architecture in El Nabisheith (Source: Author, 2020)

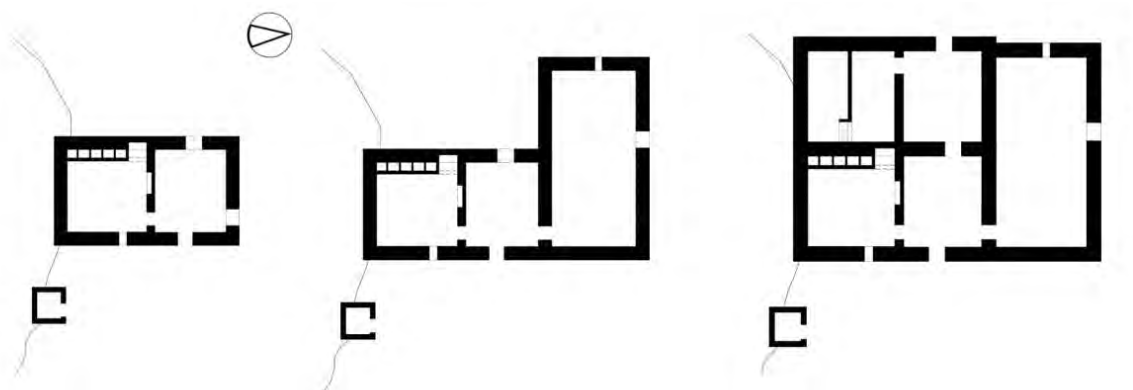


Fig. 3. Typological transformation on the ground floor through the years. The structure that is detached from the building is the toilet, as it was considered to be a bad omen to have the toilets part of the main space (Source: Author, 2019)

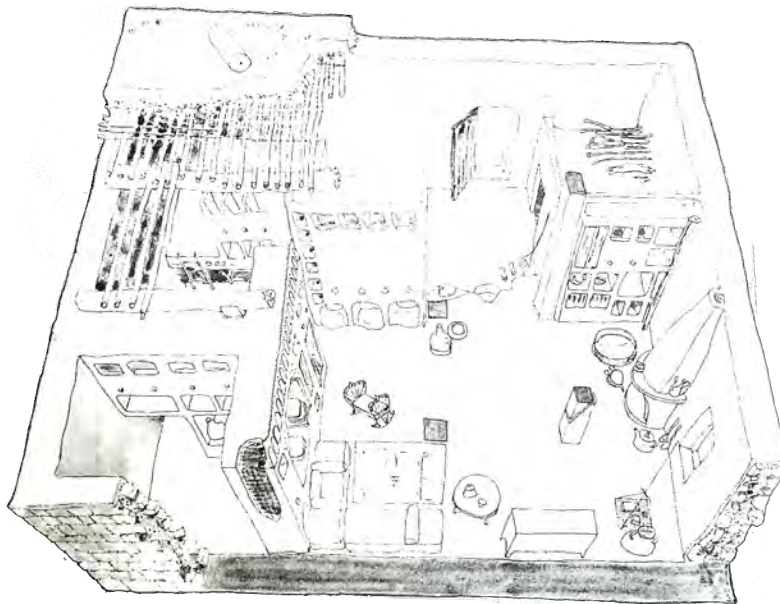


Fig. 4. A drawing of a typical traditional dwelling in the Eastern Bekaa valley. This dwelling doesn't have an exact date but it is estimated that it was built in the late 19th century (Source: Friedrich Ragette, 1980)

The one-unit house takes on the shape of a parallelepiped when constructed.¹⁰ The one-unit consists of a single large rectangular unit that is constructed with load-bearing posts, pillars, arcades, and occasionally vaults. These buildings would eventually undergo transformations that would result in the addition of additional rooms in addition to the primary one. The typology is based on the load-bearing structure, which both shapes the area and restricts the areas in which a variety of activities can take place (sleeping area, food storage, animal shelter...). Since the early days of human history, various typologies have been in use.¹¹ However, from the interior, spaces were articulate in a way that would save food with perfect atmospheric conditions to be used during harsh cold winters, and dry hot summers (Fig.4).

4.2. Transitional

In the closing years of the 1960s, there was a marked architectural transition characterized by the increasing utilization of concrete as a foundational building material. Historically, residential constructions predominantly used earth and plant fibers for ceiling reinforcement, primarily due to their natural availability. However, maintaining such ceilings was labor-intensive, leading to the quest for a more durable alternative. This shift saw the gradual replacement of traditional materials with concrete, offering enhanced structural integrity and longevity.

Initially, residences that weren't constructed using steel and concrete exhibited signs of fragility over time,

particularly in their ability to support the weight of the ceiling. To address this, steel reinforcements were ingeniously integrated between existing stones to bolster the structure's resilience. This intervention negated the immediate need for concrete columns, preserving the aesthetic of the original stonework.

Nevertheless, as architectural practices evolved and the benefits of concrete became more pronounced, there was a gradual shift towards using concrete columns in lieu of stone walls for enhanced structural support. This epoch of architectural transformation was not limited to just ceilings and roofs. The era witnessed an expansive utilization of concrete, revolutionizing space design and laying the foundation for modern construction techniques that we observe today. (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. Entrance photo showing the concrete intervention over the wooden ceiling (Source: Author, 2018)

4.3. Modernism/Globalization

During this period, residents completely started relying on steel and concrete, even previous local stone masons, and master builders shifted their skills and starting building for people with concrete and steel, rather than traditional materials. This era took place from early 1970's until now. (Fig. 6)



Fig. 6. Frontal facade of the 2 story building in the studied village in 1981 (Source: Rania Mohammad, 2019)

4.4. Post-modernism

In our case, post-modernism, is not the same as the international post-modern movement. However, It is based on an epoch of construction that took place after a political decision made by the Lebanese Minister of Interior back then. In 2014, the minister of interior Mr. Nuhad Al Mashnook approved a generalization (not an official law) for municipalities to provide legislations for landlords in rural areas to build without official legislation from “OEA and the Municipal of Public Works & Transportation”, for constructions under 150m² under the generalization No. 613 on the 2014/5/5.¹²

The verdict announced was justified in the paper following by the minister; limiting chaotic construction, avoiding urbanization, and permitting citizens living in areas without municipalities to build their dwelling

5. ANALYSIS, METHOD, AND FINDINGS

In synthesizing the Phenomenological Approach with the Operative Approach through architectural study, a detailed exploration was undertaken in the Bekaa Valley- Lebanon, seeking to illuminate the interweavings of vernacular heritage, sustainability, and human experience. This convergence unveiled a multidimensional perspective, incorporating environmental, socio-cultural, socio-economic, and phenomenological principles, creating a cohesive and integrative architectural analysis framework.

The Bekaa Valley, rich with its diversified histories, cultural nuances, and architectural heterogeneity, provided an apt milieu for this exploration. Here, the emphasis was not solely placed on the sustainable qualities imbibed through vernacularism or the rigorous exploration of environmental, socio-cultural, and socio-economic principles, as posited by the operative approach. Instead, it delved deeper, intertwining these elements with the profound insights gained through a phenomenological exploration of human experiences, interactions, and perceptions within this context.

The inherent aesthetic considerations within the specific national framework were not overlooked. The analysis probed into the nation's intrinsic valuations of artistic quality and aesthetics, exploring how these were shaped, influenced, and potentially altered by pre-globalization discourses and disputes. The integration of the phenomenological perspective enriched this exploration, allowing for a better understanding of how these aesthetic valuations are experienced, interpreted, and internalized by the individuals within their authentic cultural contexts.

Throughout the comprehensive research process, which was delineated into four distinct phases, we meticulously surveyed in excess of 300 residents to garner a holistic understanding of their living experiences. Additionally, a rigorous and detailed examination was undertaken on a minimum of three representative dwellings from each phase. Within these selected dwellings, we not only studied the architectural nuances but also delved into the socio-cultural dynamics of the families inhabiting them.

Each dwelling was then systematically evaluated using a specific point system. This evaluative framework drew upon principles from both Operative and Phenomenological architectural theories. The primary objective of this structured assessment was to discern the tangible shifts in dwelling authenticity over time. Fig 8 shows the filling of the point data for a sample dwelling from the pre-modernization phase.



Fig. 8. Evaluation report after applying the research method to one of the households which is during the premodernization phase (Source: Author, 2018)

Furthermore, we made a temporal analysis within each dwelling, meticulously cataloging the duration inhabitants spent in various spaces—be it private sanctuaries or semi-public areas. This exploration was pivotal in unveiling substantial social interactions that emerged as a direct consequence of the evolution in dwelling typologies, as illustrated in Fig 9.

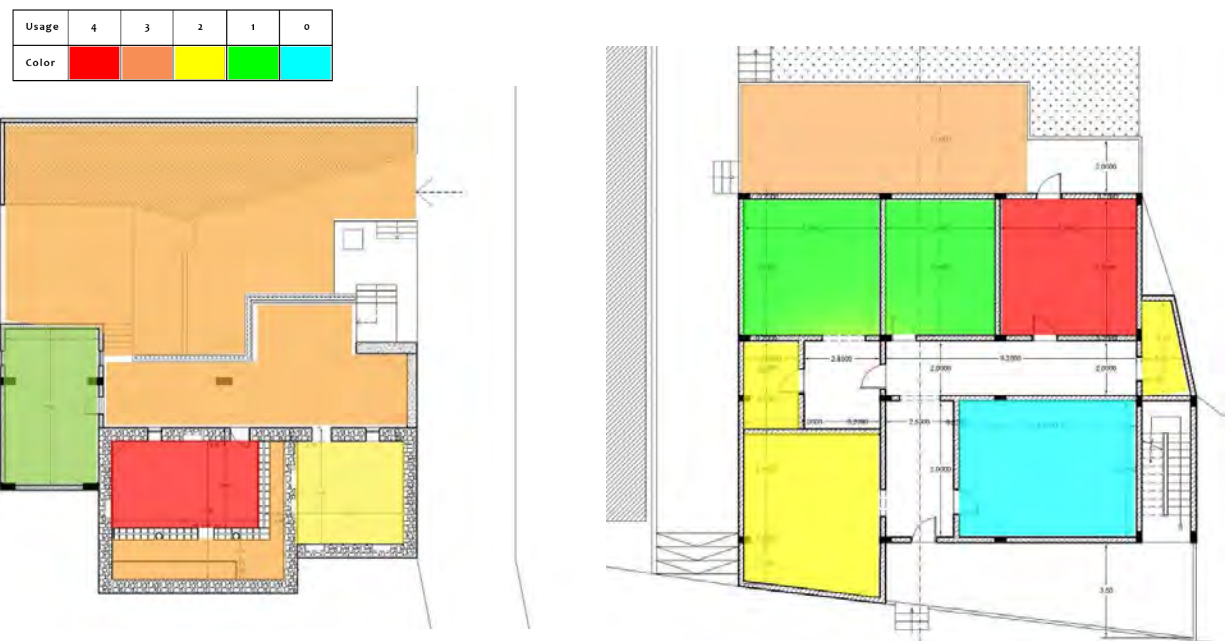


Fig. 9. Space usage difference according to different typologies, filled in by each resident of the house, and then compiled as the median for each household (Source: Author, 2018)

Our data unveiled contrasts in the authenticity and well-being of inhabitants, juxtaposing those from the pre-modernisation era with their contemporaries in the post-modern period, as depicted in Fig10.

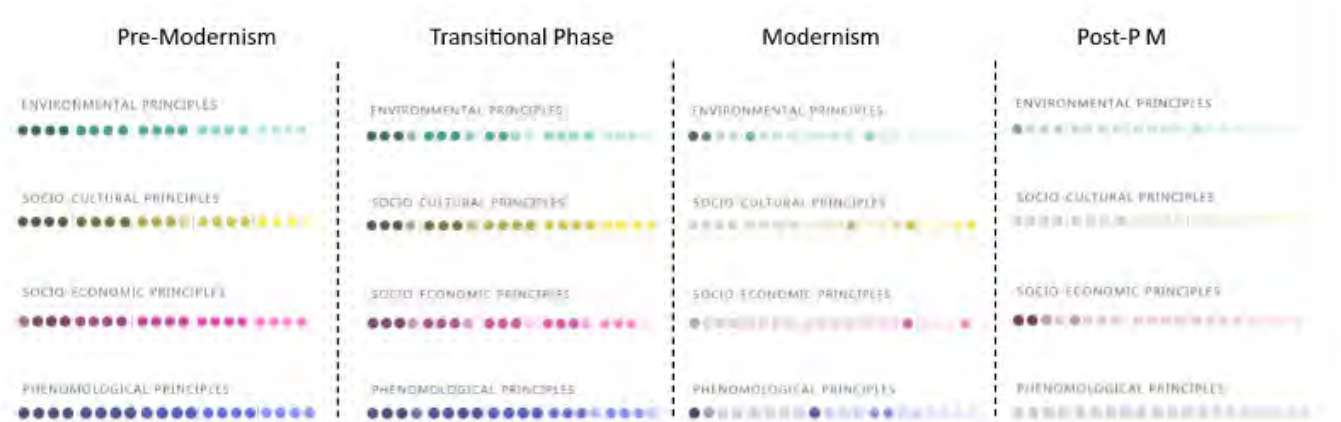


Fig. 10. The general assessment of all the dwellings studied between those four epochs (Source: Author, 2020)

It is also noteworthy that a segment of residents exhibited acute awareness of the socio-cultural shifts induced by these novel architectural typologies. This cognizance led some to reconsider their residential choices. A noteworthy number opted to repurpose their new dwellings into commercial entities, such as offices or retail spaces. Intriguingly, they exhibited a proclivity to revert to their ancestral homes, if available, underscoring the profound impact of architectural evolution on societal dynamics.

7. CONCLUSION

Finally, the Bekaa Valley exploration demonstrates the transformative potential of combining operative and phenomenological research methods in understanding the symbiotic relationships between architecture, the environment, economic frameworks, and societal structures. This region's intricate tapestry, with its diverse ecological, architectural, economic, and social threads, has provided a unique platform for investigating the various dimensions of human and environmental interactions.

The operational approach has provided invaluable, quantifiable insights, allowing for a thorough examination of the tangible interactions between architectural innovations, environmental sustainability, economic dynamics, and social norms within the Bekaa Valley landscape. This method has provided a structured framework for revealing the tangible effects and nuanced interdependencies inherent in the architectural-environmental-economic-social nexus.

Similarly, the phenomenological approach has acted as a bridge to the intangible, subjective dimensions of human experience and perception in relation to the built environment. It enabled an intimate exploration of

the inhabitants' unspoken narratives and lived experiences, revealing the myriad ways in which architecture is perceived, interacted with, and endowed with meaning by the individuals and communities who inhabit this intricate landscape.

The harmonious integration of these methodologies has allowed for a thorough understanding of the complex interrelationships at work, painting a comprehensive picture of the reciprocal influences and interconnectedness of architecture, environment, economy, and society in the Bekaa Valley. The combination of quantifiable and experiential data has yielded nuanced insights, allowing for an enriched, multifaceted exploration of the region's distinct contextual dynamics.

The findings of this study highlight the approaches used in architectural and environmental research. We were able to highlight the change in the existential well-being of communities and the authentic way of living in this study, both of which are heavily influenced by architectural typology change. Moreover, it was clear that the inhabitants of typologies built in the post-modernism period significantly sensed their lose sense of cultural-space, which pushed some of those residents to abandon those structures completely, by going back to live in the traditional dwellings, or partially, by creating timely family meetings in the courtyards of their vernacular dwellings (if they had).

The evaluation graphs demonstrate the impact of architectural typology changes on various implication principles. The change in the built environment had an impact on a variety of events in the region, altering the socio-cultural and socio-economic dynamics.

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