Erbil City's Traditional and Vernacular Architecture Disastrous Status

(A Perception Survey using Semantic Differential Scale)

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Abstract-In the period from 1970 to 2003, the region passed through conflicts and wars led to social, economical and cultural changes, some of them can be regarded as positive cultural developments, but architecture as a sub-culture especially vernacular and traditional part of Erbil city reached to a status that can be regarded as a disastrous one on physical and cultural levels, a status that needs serious reforms. The paper will make use of available documentation data for this part of Erbil city to detect the rate of deterioration of perception of the symbolic value of traditional architecture elements as part of the cultural identity of Erbil society.

The goal of the research is to inspect the factors that led the status of the vernacular and traditional architecture in Erbil city to a disastrous status regarding the perceptional vision of the intellectual community that the research selected to be tested. The Research covers the Traditional and Vernacular houses in the old sectors of Erbil city including the Citadel and the surrounding three traditional zones. The methodology of the research uses a perception survey using semantic differential scale for three intellectual selected groups (first year students, fifth year student and senior teaching staff in the department of Architecture) will be implemented.

The research finds that the survey outcome support the proposition that traditional and vernacular architecture of Erbil city are not the core of interest of majority of intellectuals living in Erbil city

The research reaches to a conclusion that the status of the vernacular and traditional part of Erbil city can be regarded as a disastrous one both physically and conceptually that need serious reforms to reinforce the role of traditional architecture as a subculture towards local identity.

Keywords

Semantic Scale, Urban Development, disaster, architecture identity, Perception, vernacular, tradition

I. INTRODUCTION

Vernacular architecture is a kind of architecture that represents the cultural values and human needs for the societies that produce it. Traditional vernacular houses in Erbil city faced a tragedy sense during four decades (1970-2003). The physical conditions of the buildings, the cultural aspects are all damaged. Wars and conflicts resulted in a severe segregation in the cultural mosaic of Erbil city, and architecture as a cultural form is highly affected. The perception of the symbolic aspects is changed. The research tries through a survey questionnaire to reach a common vision about the causes and effects of the disastrous status of the traditional and vernacular architecture in Erbil city regarding the perception vision of the selected community.

II. THE GOAL OF THE RESEARCH

General Goal: To inspect the factors that led the status of the vernacular and traditional architecture in Erbil city to a disastrous status regarding the perception vision of the selected community.

III. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

A perception survey using semantic differential scale for an intellectual selected community.

IV. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Traditional and vernacular architecture of Erbil city are not the core of interest of majority of intellectuals living in Erbil city.

V. VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE

According to Paul Oliver "Vernacular architecture comprises the dwellings and other buildings of the people. Related to their environmental contexts and available resources they are customarily owner- or community-built, utilizing traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of life of the cultures that produce them" [1].

Amos Rapoport, in his book (House Form and Culture), makes a comparison between the buildings that belong to the grand design tradition and those of the folk tradition [2].

According to Rapoport, the monument- buildings of the grand design tradition- are built to impress either the populace

with the power of the patron, or the peer group of designers and cognoscenti with the cleverness of the designer and good taste of the patron. The folk tradition, on the other hand, is the direct and unself-conscious translation into physical form of a culture, its needs and values – as well as the desires, dreams, and passions of a people. It is the world view writ small, the "ideal" environment of a people expressed in buildings and settlements, with no designer, artist, or architect with an axe to grind (although to what extent the designer is really a form giver is a moot point). The folk tradition is much more closely related to the culture of the majority and life as it is really lived than is the grand design tradition, which represents the culture of the elite. The folk tradition also represents the bulk of the built environment [3].

VI. DISASTER

It is a phenomenon that can cause damage to life and property and destroy the economic, social and cultural life of people.

In contemporary academia, disasters are seen as the consequence of inappropriately managed risk [4].

VII. THE CASE

In the case of this paper the disastrous occurred in two levels, physical and social.

VIII. PHYSICAL STATUS

It is clear from Figure 1 that old sectors of Erbil city is suffering bad condition and most of the old parts of the city are in a similar status, the local authorities started in the last 3 years under the UNESCO supervision to start some renovation actions, for this reason this will not be the case of this paper.

IX. SOCIAL STATUS

The social part of the story is case of this paper it is noticed that the booming development of Erbil City represented by horizontal and vertical expansion has left the traditional parts of the city as a very small neglected part of the city where the local, original and owners has left these parts to wards modern style sectors of the city

These buildings are left alone leaning on a stick covered by nylon sheet in best cases, like an injured person coming out of disaster, while most of the other structures are being demolished with or without a permit.

Figure 1. Traditional house in Erbil citadel

The researchers tried in this research to explore intellectuals stand point regarding this issue to high light the case and try to pin point the causes of such a disastrous status.
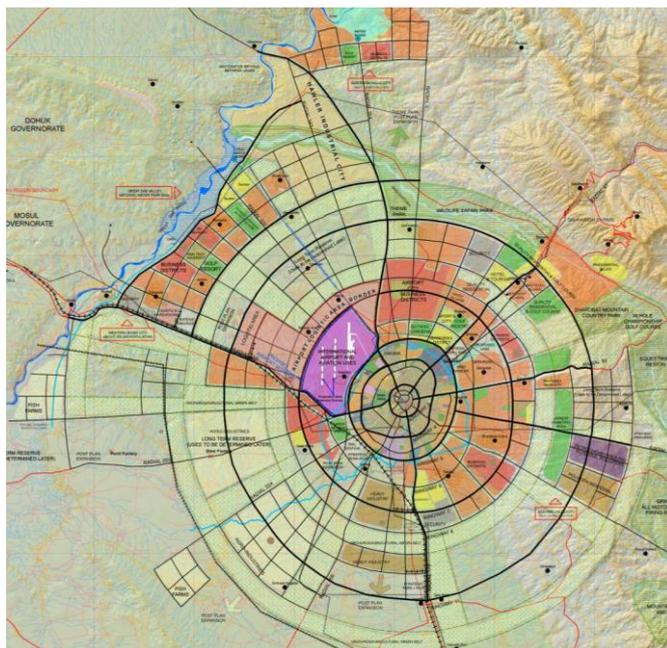

Figure 2. Map of Erbil city

X. SEMANTIC SCALE

The Semantic Differential (SD) measures people's reactions to stimulus words and concepts in terms of ratings on bipolar scales defined with contrasting adjectives at each end [5].

Some adjective scales are almost pure measures of the EPA dimensions; for example, good-bad for Evaluation, powerful-powerless for Potency, and fast-slow for Activity.
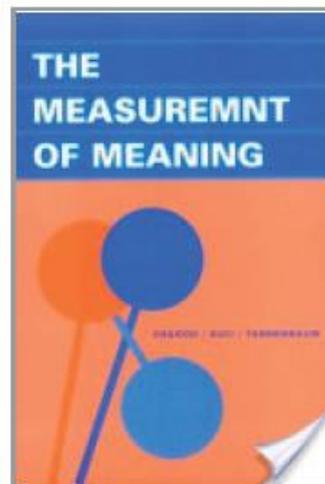

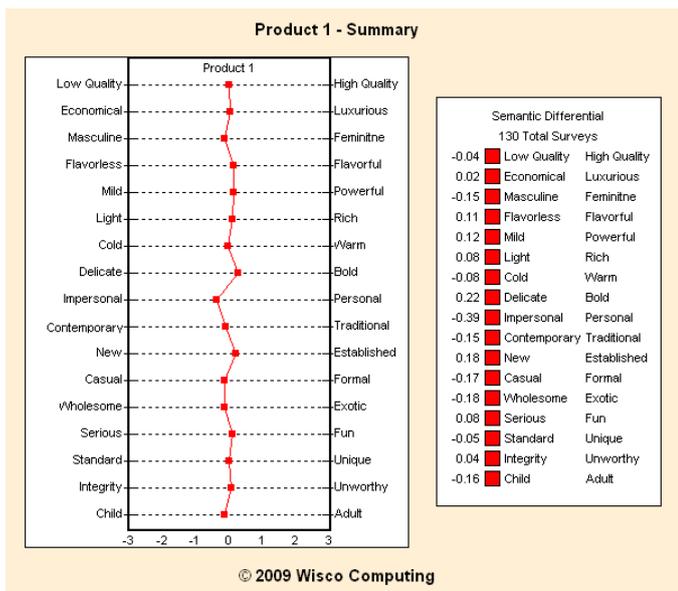Figure 3. Charles Egerton Osgoo, University of Illinois 1957

Figure 4. Wsico computing developed software in various orientations

The scale was translated to more than 15 languages including Arabic and the polar adjective pairs were tailored as per the subject including architecture **[6].**

XI.   QUESTIONNAIRE

For the sake of this paper the here under questionnaire was developed including 2 direct question lists and one polar adjective list.

Dear participant:

The following questionnaire is part of a research entitled (Erbil city's traditional and vernacular architecture disastrous status: A perception survey using semantic differential scale).

Your participation will be so appreciated.

Researchers:

Dr. Mahmood Ahmed Bakir Khayat (Assistant Professor).

Binyad Maruf Abdulkadir Khaznadar (Assistant Lecturer).

Participant's information:

-Gender:

*Male   *Female

-Age:

-Academic degree:

* Ph.D.   * M.Sc.   *B.Sc.   *Student.

-Date of last graduation:

-Areas of profession:

* Academic institutions.   *Employee.   *Private sector.

-Living in Erbil city for the last (   ) years.

-Born in Erbil city:

* Yes   *No

-Family living in Erbil city for more than one generation

* Yes   *No

Table 1. Questionnaire 1 (direct questions regarding collapsed heritage structures)

Questions	Yes	Neutral	No
1- Do you support renovation actions of such buildings?			
2- Do you regard architecture of the old sectors of Erbil city as an important factor of cultural identity?			
3- Do you support spending money on renovating such buildings?			
4- Do you support academic studies regarding old sectors of Erbil city?			
5- If you were a decision maker do take the decision to demolish such building?			
6- Does this building have anything to learn from?			
7- Do you regard such architecture as the outcome of thousand years of civilized architecture practice in Erbil city?			

Table 2. Questionnaire 2 (direct questions regarding renovated heritage structures)

Questions	Yes	Neutral	No
1- Do you regard Erbil Authorities renovation of Erbil citadel as an important action?			
2- Do you regard adding Erbil citadel site on the world heritage list as an important action?			
3- Do you support Erbil Citadel Buffer zone legislations and limitation of construction in the Erbil city center?			
4- Do you support using local architectural elements in contemporary designs?			
5- Does historical and traditional building represent the identity of the city?			
6- Does historical and traditional building represent an important factor of the identity of the city?			
7- Do historical and traditional building has any role in forming the identity of the city?			

Table 3. Questionnaire 3 (indirect questions regarding heritage structures)

Simple	Neutral	Complicated
Beautiful	Neutral	Ugly
Passive	Neutral	Active
Strong	Neutral	Weak
Rational	Neutral	Intuitive
Unique	Neutral	Common
Ambiguous	Neutral	Clear
Exciting	Neutral	Calming
Plain	Neutral	Ornate
Interesting	Neutral	Boring
Delicate	Neutral	Rugged
Good	Neutral	Bad
Gloomy	Neutral	Cheerful
Permanent	Neutral	Temporary
Welcoming	Neutral	Forbidding
Chaotic	Neutral	Ordered
Uncomfortable	Neutral	Comfortable
Revolutionary	Neutral	Reactionary
Annoying	Neutral	Pleasing
Straightforward	Neutral	Contradictory

XII.   SURVEY SOCIETY

The survey society was selected from the department of architecture-Salahaddin University including students BSc., MSc. and PhD holders assuming that this group represents the most intellectuals in the realm of architecture.

XIII.   FINDINGS

Table 4. Change of population

Living in Erbil for the last ( ) years	Born in Erbil city	Family living in Erbil city for more than one generation
10	No	Yes
21	Yes	Yes
1	Yes	Yes
3	No	No
	No	No
21	Yes	Yes
8	No	No
18	No	Yes
16	No	Yes
20	Yes	Yes
8	No	No
9	No	No
8	No	No
22	Yes	Yes
24	Yes	Yes
10	No	No

The survey showed that 10 out of 17 of the survey society were not born in Erbil city and this may explain part of the question why they may not be very concerned about the traditional architecture of Erbil city.
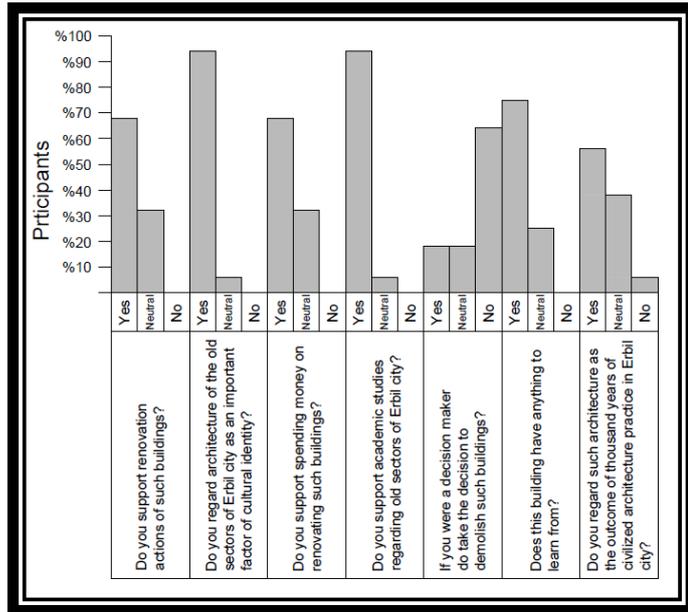

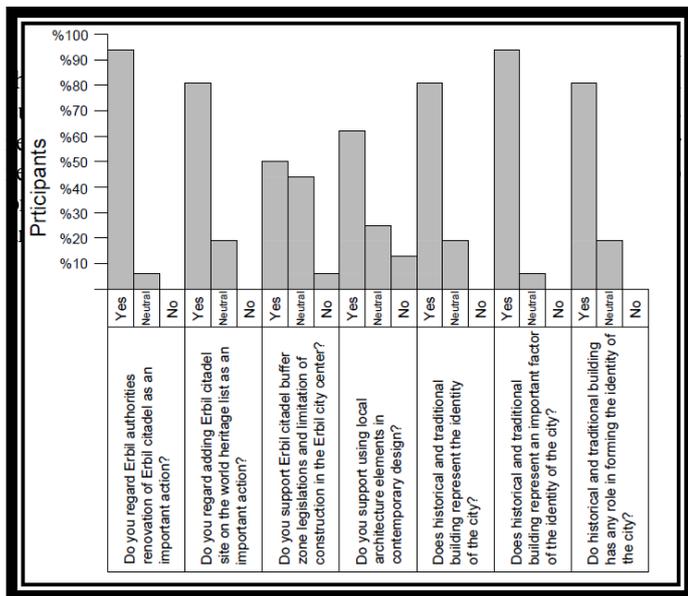Figure 5. Direct questions regarding collapsing heritage buildings

Figure 6. Direct questions regarding renovation of collapsing heritage buildings

In this group of questions the survey society agreed support authorities actions for renovation and adding the city on the world heritage list, and this heritage represents an important factor in forming the identity of the urban context, but on the other hand they were not supporting city center

construction limitations legislations, and this shows some kind of contradiction.

If the direct questions represent the conscious stand point of the survey society, the coming indirect semantic survey may represent the unconscious stand point.
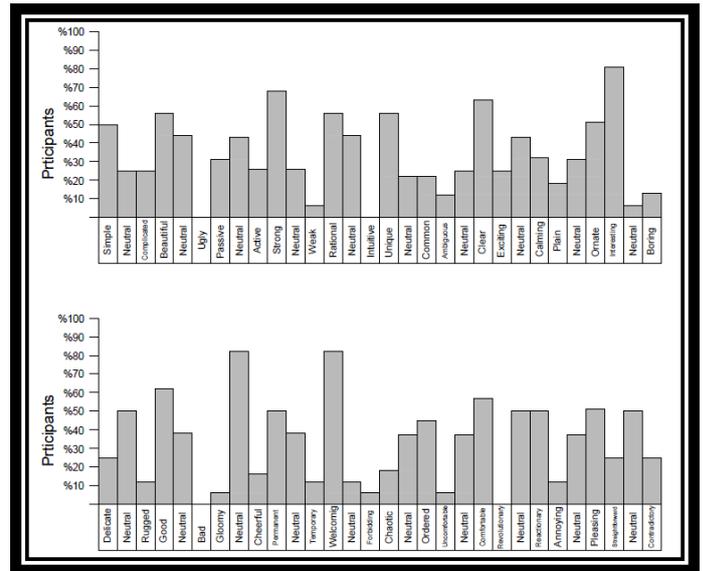

Figure 7. Indirect questions

This test showed that the survey society did not manage to have a common stand point regarding the collapsing structure in the figure 1.

A ratio of 80% of the survey society, agreed on adjectives of (interesting and welcoming), and 60% of the survey society, agreed on adjectives of (Good, Clear and Strong) while the decision regarding other polar adjectives were not clear.

XIV.   FINDING

The survey outcome support the proposition that traditional and vernacular architecture of Erbil city are not the core of interest of majority of intellectuals living in Erbil city

XV. CONCLUSION

The research reaches to a conclusion that the status of the vernacular and traditional part of Erbil city can be regarded as a disastrous one both physically and conceptually that need serious reforms to reinforce the role of traditional architecture as a subculture towards local identity of the future urban development.

XVI.   RECOMMENDATIONS

1- Start academic research regarding the role of traditional architecture in Erbil city.
2- Continue research in this approach on wider survey samples.
3- Make use of semantic differential statistic and analytic tools.

4- Make use of semantic differential software in coming research.

5-develop teaching programs in general and specifically in architecture schools towards highlighting the role local traditional architecture cultural identity.

6- Taking serious and rapid actions by the authorities to save the traditional architecture in Erbil city.

7- Using semantic differential scale as an analytical tool to get decisions and tasting the perceptional visions and approach in cultural orientated studies.

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